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Influence of cultural values on rural girls' education in Zambia: A pairwise case of the Bemba and Tonga ethnic groups

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The aim of the study was to profoundly gain understanding into specific cultural values that underlie traditional practices which pose as barriers to rural girls' education in Zambia. A pairwise case study approach was used to identify and describe types of cultural values prevalent in the Bemba and Tonga ethnic groups of Zambia. A total of 28 interviews (16 focus group discussions and 12 key informant interviews) were carried out with community members and school heads in Choma and Kasama, to verify specific proximate barriers associated with school-going girls. Thematic data analysis was performed using NVivo 12. The study identified six broad values that the two ethnic groups mutually desired. Security and protection, purity and propriety of a woman, conformity, respect, generosity and hard work. Conversely, power and possession, and unity were specific to Tongas and Bembas, respectively. The value of "unity" portrayed more impetus than that of "power and possession" to restrain girls from attending school. While both social groups indicated desire to uphold these values, modes of value expression and collective practices were clearly differentiated. The study established that specific practices and norms chocking rural girls' education are performed through the process of cultural value activation. Further, the study demonstrates that cultural values have underlying associations with rural girls' education advancement especially at higher ages. Gaining detailed knowledge of cultural values underpinning specific social groups through case study research is important in order to inform the design of more effective girls' education promotion interventions.

Key word: Cultural values, rural girls' education, ethnic groups, traditional practices, norms, Bemba, Tonga.

INTRODUCTION

Education presents some of the vivid examples of discrimination and barriers that women encounter. Everyday, more than 62 million girls in developing

countries face hurdles that stand in their way to achieving an education (Plan International, 2019). Among several barriers, poverty, the need for girls to help with family

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chores, cultural assumptions and norms, informed by underlying cultural values, frequently play a complex role in inhibiting girls' school attendance in many regions and communities especially rural ones. Access to quality education is one most potent equalizer of opportunity for both rural and urban adolescents. But the magnitude of challenges rural girls face is enormous. While poverty and house minding roles could be addressed through select programme interventions, cultural norms are inflexible and difficult to change (Rahman and Westley, 2001). Fundamentally, norms are rules about what persons ought to or not to do in given circumstances, enforced by the threat of sanctions in the case of transgression (Thome, 2015). Community and family norms are typically anchored on various (and often competing) values. These values are considered to play crucial roles in motivating and guiding human action and to be constitutive elements in the construction of personal and collective identities (Thome, 2015). Values stand at the very core of human decision-making. The traditional value emphases express conceptions of what is good and desirable, the cultural ideals (Hofstede, 2001; Markus et al., 1991; Schwartz, 1999; Yu and Yang, 1994).

The effect of cultural misgivings about girls education is evidenced to account for a considerable proportion of absenteeism and dropouts in many regions because of practices such as young girls serving as principal caregivers for younger siblings or forced child marriages (Kainuwa and Najeemah, 2013; Moletsane, n.d.; Stark, 2018; UNICEF, 2015). School dropout rates have remained worrisome to the advancement of girls education in Zambia. In 2014, the number of out-of-school girls doubled that of boys at 44, 451 to 22,590 among lower secondary school pupils with rural children more likely to be out-of-school at 14.6% in rural areas compared with 8.1% in urban areas (UNICEF-Zambia, 2014). At the regional level, initiatives like the 2010 Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children have been launched to create a regional impetus to accelerate efforts to achieve primary education for all children (UNICEF, 2013). To augment regional efforts, a number of country initiatives have been implemented to curb entrenched intricacies, including cultural norms that constantly deter anticipated progress. In 1997, Zambia's Ministry of Education introduced a school re-entry policy as a strategy to bring back school-going girls that dropped out due to pregnancies (MOE, UNICEF, 2004). While the re-entry policy has had its positive scores, the effect of cultural practices and norms like child marriages are a tenacious deterrent to rural girls' schooling. Another intervention, Keeping Girls in School (KGS), was launched in 2016 targeting 14,000 secondary school girls to remain in school (MoGE, 2017). However, besides regional and government initiatives, family support acts as a powerful tool for boosting student motivation, and is one crucial element in improving girls' education

outcomes. This study aimed to investigate the underlying cultural values expressed as practices that affect rural girls' school progression in Zambia.

METHODOLOGY

Study design

A pairwise case study approach was used to explore and identify types of cultural values practiced among the Bemba and Tonga ethnic groups and further understand the underlying essence of such values. The pairwise case was appropriate considering differences in social systems of lineage. Bemba's are a matrilineal group where, among other things, a prospective husband is expected to pay bride-wealth and after marriage, the marital residence for the couple is a woman's village. By contrast, Tongas are patrilineal, where newlyweds take up a man's village as the marital residence.

Study setting

The study was conducted in Kasama and Choma districts, the main provincial towns of Northern and Southern provinces of Zambia. Kasama is predominantly inhabited by the Bemba ethnic group and Choma, by the Tonga people. In 2015, Northern province had a population of 1,430,543 with a population density of 18.4 persons/km² and a total of 1,421 schools (CSO and MOH, 2014; Global Data Lab., 2015). In 2011, the annual number of Out of School children between ages 7 and 15 was 22,348 (Central Statistical Office (CSO) [Zambia], Ministry of Health (MOH) [Zambia], 2015). Southern province had a slightly higher population (1,852,361) with population density of 27.1 persons/km² (Central Statistical Office, 2010). Education statistics show that in 2010, the province had a total of 1, 155 schools; 30,390 out of School Children between the age 7 and 15 (MoGE, 2010).

One urban and one rural community site were selected from each town for investigation. Considering that the target districts are largely rural, the criteria for selection of a rural community were location. The community had to be located at least 45 km away from the main town and a minimum of 15 km away from the main road. In terms of amenities, the selected community had no access to piped water, electricity, postal services and a police station and the opposite was considered for selection of urban communities.

Participant recruitment and procedure

The study used a purposive sampling technique to recruit the participants. Two types of participants targeted by the study were community members, who participated in focused group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs), and teachers, who were interviewed as key informants. A description of the study, including the purpose, the voluntary nature of participation and how to register to participate, was shared with would-be participants in community gatherings such as church meeting groups and central trading areas. Individuals who expressed willingness to participate in the interviews were invited to participate and recruited. Courtesy visits were paid to community/traditional leaders; this opportunity was used to extend invites for interviews. Altogether, 12 FGDs, 12 key informant interviews (KIIs) and four IDIs were carried out with an equal number in each of two study sites. Homogeneity in sex composition of FGDs was necessary to allow for open discussions. Therefore, interviews were stratified into three groups: "women group", "men group" and "mixed group" for

Table 1. Value type and central motivational goal.

Value type	Central motivational goal
Achievement	Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.
Benevolence	Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact
Conformity	Restraint of actions, inclinations, & impulses likely to upset or harm others & violate social expectations or norms.
Hedonism	Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.
Power	Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.
Security	Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.
Self-Direction	Independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring.
Stimulation	Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.
Tradition	Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self.
Universalism	Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.

Source: Adapted from Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990's ten value motivational goals of the Values Theory

both rural and urban communities.

Research instruments

To facilitate group discussions, semi-structured discussion guides were developed for the three types of interviews. The guides were decisive for maintaining consistency across all levels of interviews in the two locations. To validate for cultural equivalence in meaning, an instrument validation discussion session was held with community leaders in two study sites: Kasama and Choma. Participants to this discussion were selected on the criteria of competence and experience to comprehend, translate, and speak in relation to the two languages.

Data analysis

Analysis of data was performed in NVivo 12. All 28 voice recordings were transcribed from Bemba and Tonga to English. Seven major nodes were created for data processing. They included cultural values on family, death, marriage, rites of passage, education and livelihood. These were helpful in ensuring that small pieces of important information from participants were captured for analysis.

In order to understand and present gathered data, the study utilized the Values Theory in which values are defined as desirable, trans-situational goals, varying in importance whilst serving as guiding principles in people's lives. The theory describes ten motivationally distinct values based on three human conditions requisites regarded as universal (Schwartz and Bilsky, 1990). Table 1 describes the ten basic values that social groups seek and their motivational goals.

The Values Theory is further used in the discussion in form of the Values Conceptual Framework to exemplify the linkage between cultural values and the effect they present on girls education prospects. The study identifies some important values that align with those in the theory although not in perfect order and specificity as enlisted in Table 1.

RESULTS

Background characteristics

A total of 105 participants took part in interviews, 89 in 12

FGDs, 12 in KILs and 4 in IDIs. The age range for urban participants was wide (23 to 76 years) compared to the rural participants (34 to 70 years). Over three-quarters (77.5%) of participants indicated that they were married with few (9.0 and 5.6%) reporting having ever been married but were currently widowed or divorced, respectively (Table 2). Results also reveal that about 35% of Tonga men were in polygamous marriages compared to less than 5% Bemba men.

Table 2 further illustrates that overall, the majority (34.8%) of participants had attained primary as highest level of education. More (14.6%) participants from Choma rural had attended primary than secondary education (5.6%), while 31.5 and 6.7% had attended secondary and primary level education, respectively among Choma urban Choma discussants. Education attendance proportions were similarly higher for primary (10.1%) and secondary (10.1%) for rural and urban Kasama participants, respectively.

Cultural values identified in the Bemba and Tonga ethnic groups

In line with Schwartz and Bilsky's value types in Table 1, the study identified two categories of values: *common values* – desired cultural goals which were generally comparable between the Bembas and Tongas, and *distinct values* – goals that seemed quite discrete between the two social groups in terms of emphasis and expression.

Common values

Six broad values commonly practiced by the Bemba and Tonga ethnic groups were identified. They include: security and protection, purity and propriety of a woman, conformity (to expected ignorance on matters of sex and

Table 2. Summary of interview types and background characteristic.

Type of Interview	Overall, (%)		Proportion (%)		
	n=105	All Tonga Males	All Tonga Females	All Bemba Males	All Bemba Females
FGDs	89 (84.8)	19 (18.1)	24 (22.9)	18 (17.1)	28 (26.7)
KIIs	12 (11.4)	2 (1.9)	4 (3.8)	5 (4.8)	1 (.95)
IDIs	4 (3.8)	2 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	2 (1.9)	0 (0.0)
Total	105 (100)	23 (21.9)	28 (26.7)	25 (23.8)	29 (27.6)
Characteristics	n=89	Choma Urban	Choma Rural	Kasama Urban	Kasam Rural
Sex					
Male	37 (41.6)	7 (7.9)	11 (12.4)	8 (9.0)	11 (12.4)
Female	52 (58.4)	12 (13.5)	16 (18)	10 (11.2)	14 (15.7)
Marital status					
Single	7 (7.9)	2 (2.2)	0 (0.0)	4 (4.5)	1 (1.1)
Married	69 (77.5)	15 (16.9)	24 (27.0)	12 (13.5)	18 (20.2)
Widowed	8 (9.0)	2 (2.2)	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	5 (5.6)
Divorced	5 (5.6)	0 (0.0)	2 (2.2)	1 (1.1)	1 (1.1)
Educational level					
No education	22 (24.7)	1 (1.1)	8 (9.0)	2 (2.2)	11 (12.4)
Primary	31 (34.8)	6 (6.7)	13 (14.6)	3 (3.4)	9 (10.1)
Secondary	28 (31.5)	9 (10.1)	5 (5.6)	9 (10.1)	5 (5.6)
Tertiary	8 (9.0)	3 (3.4)	1 (1.1)	4 (4.5)	0 (0.0)

reproduction among children), respect, generosity and hard work. Although both social groups indicated desire to attain these motivational goals as eminent, ways in which they expressed the desire and primacy assigned to each of these goals or values was varied.

Security

Enlisted as one of the value types of the Values Theory, security refers to the state of feeling safe from danger and harm (Brauch, 2011). In the Bemba and Tonga traditions, ensuring security and protection for households, possessions and assets were essential and a preserve of men. Upon marriage for example, in the Bemba culture, a man is presented with an axe and a hoe from the wife's family to denote relegation of the 'tools of security'. Similarly, in the Tonga culture, a spear is handed out to the groom. The perception of security in this sense is not narrowed to body harm protection but encompasses security for food and property.

Propriety of a woman

This value is highly accentuated in both the Bemba and Tonga tradition. During the FGD with Bemba rural women, they revealed that a woman is considered as 'an asset' of

a household and a major factor to family unity. The assertion is stated as follows:

"in our culture, a woman symbolizes an important asset such that if that asset is missing in a home, then that home is incomplete. A woman's good character is therefore important in many aspects including marriage and family unity".

Bemba woman (Women FGD) – Kasama rural community

This value is much broader than the value types shown in Table 1. It actually embraces four different value types, namely achievement, benevolence, conformity and tradition. It was emphasized among men and women in rural Kasama and Choma that "*propriety*" represented good behaviour, and a crucial selection criterion for a bride by the man's family.

Conformity (to expected ignorance on matters of sex and reproduction among children)

Both ethnic groups believed details reproduction are better saved for grown up and more mature children in order to maintain sound morals among young people and within society. For this reason, any aspect of life that attempts to unsettle this belief becomes undesirable. Education, in this sense turns to be the major culprit.

“school interferes with our norms because children are taught a lot of things that we would otherwise prefer to withhold or delay to share with children until they are of age. For instance, what sex is, how children are conceived and so on...in school children are taught all these as around fourth or fifth grade when they are really young”

Bemba man (Men FGD) – Kasama Urban Community

Generosity (Benevolence)

Generosity is identified as an independent value type in the Values Theory. And this value came out as one prominent value desired in both Bemba and Tonga cultures. Generosity was particularly a required virtue in women. It was also highly perceived as a motivational goal for unity in families and communities especially for the Bembas.

“we are different from other tribes because when [somebody] visits a home in the Bemba land and you find us eating, we will not ask you to wait until we prepare you your own food because we did not count you in. Even when food is little, we believe in sharing; Bemba people would rather leave the food for visitors to eat than not share”...

Bemba man (All FGD) – Kasama rural community

Respect

This value was found to invoke esteem and confidence in the recipient. Even if the Values Theory categorizes respect under the ‘tradition’ value type, ‘respect’ was perceived more than simply tradition in the Bemba and Tonga cultures. This signified control or dominance over people and resources and was mainly a responsibility of girls and women to ensure boys and men were highly respected.

“we Tongas, ... when a girl child reaches puberty we keep that girl in the house and in that house she is taught how she is supposed to grow up, the respect that she is supposed to have for [towards] people and in her home when she is married”.

Tonga woman (mixed FGD)-Choma rural community

“respect is very important in our culture, to emphasize the importance we Bemba people use the proverb “ubufumu buchindikwa nabene” [translated as “a chieftom is respected by its own people”] which means that if a wife respects her husband, it becomes easy for such a man to command the respect of other people. Lack of respect from a wife brings shame and disunity in the family”.
Bemba woman (Women FGD) – Kasama rural community

Hard work

In both traditional customs, hard work was greatly revered. Often times, hard work was as a yardstick for choosing a suitable future wife. If a prospective husband is proved not hard working enough, the girl’s family would rescind their approval to give their daughter for marriage. For Tongas, hard work is an important value. A woman considered not hardworking enough can even jeopardize her marriage by making the husband seek out for additional spouses.

Distinct values

Power and possession, as a motivational goal among others, stands out as a core value type in the Value Theory. In the study, Tongas were found to believe a great deal in the accumulation and ownership of property as a sign of hard work and wealth. Almost every household in rural Choma owned at least a dozen cattle, goats and tens of chickens. This somewhat explains why average sized farming plots seemed approximately three times larger than those of the Bembas. Whereas having more than one wife in the Bemba culture was not widely accepted, polygamy was a sign of power and wealth for Tonga men.

“the main reason for marrying more than one woman is that you want to increase the family in terms of labor. It is not our culture to pay for extra labor required, like other cultures do, you need to simply own enough of it”.

Tonga man (All FGD) – Choma Rural Community

Both men and women felt polygamy was a desired practice for farming and many household chores. Since values are said to assume a hierarchical system (Caldwell, 1982; Sen, 2007a), although the study did not specifically identify components of the values order, power and possession especially among Tongas showed prominence relative to other values types.

It was observed that of all values mentioned, *Unity* was highly emphasized among the Bembas. Despite that this value is not represented as a core value type in the Values Theory; *Unity* is believed to be a central motivational goal that embraces sub values such as benevolence, respect, security and hard work. To promote unity in the Bemba tradition, a special hut called “Insaka” is built. Members of the extended family regularly meet in the “Insaka” for communal meals and social times. Three or four households within a village would have meals prepared separately but all brought to the “Insaka” to eat together, although it is rare for women to eat with men in the same “Insaka”, women would sometimes join men on special times for socializing. “Insaka” are places used by elderly people to pass knowledge, share cultural values and give counsel to

younger generations or even fellow elders. Respect, generosity, hard work and security which are the other values significantly desired and at the same time reinforced by the unity value and motivational goal.

How values are activated into expressions and actions

The crucial content aspect that distinguishes between values is the type of motivational goal they express. Norms, beliefs, actions and attitudes are modes of expression used for the purpose of coordination among cultural group members in the pursuit of goals that are deemed important. In congruent with this view, the study established that even with values identified to be common in the Bemba and Tonga cultures, variations in the type of actions and practices stimulated in pursuant of different motivational goals were evident.

The central value of tradition in the Values Theory, which embodies respect, hard-work and unity as motivational goals identified as core values in this study, is activated through, among other actions, rites of passage practices. In the Bemba culture, when girls become of age they are put on house detention for no less than a month. This is to allow for proper initiation from childhood to adulthood by elderly women. The study established that Bembas place a higher priority on respect, hard work and unity motivational goals than Tongas do. The Bemba ethnic group expresses great emotional attachment to rites of passage and is willing to keep a girl in a house for a possibly longer period. This practice helps to build, in young women, characters that bring honour to her family and is desired for marriage and in society.

“according to the Bemba custom, when a girl becomes of age, we teach her about her own hygiene and that of those around her. Most importantly, she is taught how to respect a man [husband-to-be] and how well to receive her husband-to-be’s family.”

Bemba woman – Kasama rural community

“in our culture when a girl is of age, elderly women keep her in the house for about 4 weeks where she is taught on matters of life and well-being. During the period of incubation in the house, the girl is taken to the bush for at least a week, there they teach her to dance and she is also oriented to different traditional medicines that women use in marriage.”

Bemba woman – Kasama rural community

“the time a girl begins to menstruate, she is kept in the house for a few days. This is where she is taught how to take care of a family especially the husband and also how to be charming in receiving the husband-to-be’s relations...”

Tonga woman – Choma rural community

It was observed that in rural compared to urban areas, girls are kept in the house for longer periods within the same ethnic group.

“yes, a girl is kept in the house for just about three to four days and she’s ready to go even go to school unlike in the village where a girl would be locked up in the house for a month. It is an important practice for orientation into adulthood...”

Bemba woman – Kasama urban community

In order to activate values of power, respect and unity, both the Bembas and Tongas assign distinctive roles to men and women. It was observed that even though identified values were collectively desired goals, pursuing the achievement of social motivational goals depends on what goal or value it is. Values such as power and possession and security, were defined as masculine while benevolence, conformity and tradition as largely feminine. A man is considered the sole head of a household and his task is to provide basic needs while that of a wife is subservience to the husband and managing the welfare of a home.

“as a Bemba tribe, it is our culture that a man is the head of the house; thus, it is also our culture that a woman is submissive and respectful to her husband...”

Bemba man (Men FGD) - Kasama rural community

Given that men are traditionally assigned a superintendent role over the affairs of a household and communities, it was evident that parents in both social groups felt permitting boys and young men to take up opportunities which assured better income prospects in future was desirable. It was observed that men were less supportive of the idea of sending girls to school than were women contending that women are subservient beings and encouraging education would lead to an extinction of this important virtue about them. On the contrary, women participants in both ethnic groups consistently referred to the benefits that accrue to the family when a girl is educated as more important.

“a man is the head of the house and his role is to provide for his household and larger family circle. So, parents prefer that the head of the household should be educated in order for him to provide adequately and remain in control.”

Tonga man (Men FGD) - Choma rural men community

“just as my friends have already said, a boy child whether he is educated or not does help but not as much as a girl child. When he gets married, he cares more for the wife’s family while a girl child will help you should you face any problem...”

Bemba woman (Women FGD) Kasama urban community

Education for girls was perceived to conflict with the

achievement of power for men, benevolence and tradition values. In both cultures, education gives women much leverage to challenge men's social roles which is a clear conflict with the values of tradition and conformity.

"nowadays a man has become less powerful because of education... a woman is not supposed to be at the same level [social and economic] as a man. A man should be able to ask his wife not to do something and she should obey. But at the moment, because of rights and education, a wife can even answer her husband back ... If possible, let women be uneducated so that we can live as one [in unity]"

Tonga man (All FGD) - Choma rural community

The study found that Tongas were more engaged in medium to large scale farming than Bembas who mainly engaged in subsistent farming. For Tongas, polygamy was a norm practiced in tandem with the prominent values of power, wealth accumulation, security and possession. To achieve these values, Tonga men are encouraged to marry several women and have more children. Although polygamy existed among Bembas, it was not as widespread and mainly practiced as a result of death, sickness or old age of a married woman.

"polygamous marriages are encouraged especially in villages [rural communities] because there is too much work so men need to marry more than one wife so that they help each other in farming."

Tonga man of Choma (Men FGD) - Choma urban community

"we Tongas are in polygamous marriages because of too much work. Each family has several farms such that one woman would not manage to work all by herself; for example, in a field or farm as big as 10 ha. Therefore, we marry more women in order for them to help with farming..."

Tonga man (mixed FGD) - Choma rural community

The practice was enlisted as a norm of selecting a future wife and more prominent in the Tonga culture than was in the Bemba. Parents of a man have a task to search in the village for a woman with virtues befitting their desired son's wife. Among merits considered for selection were good behavior, respect and hard work. For this reason, it was incumbent upon families with daughters to ensure their girls are nurtured right. If girls of a particular family were perceived to fall short of the ascribed standards, the family was ridiculed.

"the reason why parents choose that their son marries a certain family is because some families have problems such as mental illnesses, bad behavior and so on... parents would rather choose for their sons because they better understand more about the conduct of families and behavior of girls in their localities"

Bemba man (Men FGD) – Kasama rural community.

"parents can tell that that home is peaceful, which means that is the home where our son should marry from. The decision was only reached after consultation with the traditional fortune teller. Then, when they did that, you would find that marriages lasted a lifetime."

Tonga man (All FGD) – Choma rural community.

"parents would organize a girl for you without you knowing. You only came to know her when your parents inform you ... Usually you cannot reject your parents' choice, so you just go ahead to marry."

Tonga man (All FGD) – Choma rural community.

At times girls are secured for marriage by a man's family long before their puberty. The girl could be as young as five to eight years old. As soon as the girl reaches menarche, her family gives her in for marriage. This is mainly done to avoid premarital sex. The practice helps to preserve the value of 'purity and propriety of a woman' which brings a sense of pride and honour to the woman's family.

"girls do not go far in school because they get engaged for marriage even before they become of age, the parents to the girl would not allow her to go to school because they wanted to enjoy the dowry..."

Bemba woman (All FGD) – Kasama rural community.

"pregnancies are not rampant; we only get like two cases each year or sometimes we do not even record any but still dropout rates are high for girls. It's like girls just do not have interest in school."

Head teacher, Kasama urban.

"... from grade 1 to 4 we hardly lose any of the [girl] children except for transfers and deaths, but not dropouts. We start having challenges from grade six, that's where we lose more girls because they go into early marriages"

Head teacher, Kasama rural.

DISCUSSION

In order to fully understand the effect of cultural values and value judgments on girls schooling, we used the four linking processes as stipulated in the Values Theory. The Values Conceptual Pathway in Figure 1 elaborates the process.

Upholding traditional stereotypes such as the 'son preference' for educational support are subtle ways through which the study finds value activation to occur. This finding is consistent with several studies and specifically what Mollel and Chong (2017) found in Tanzania, where 70% of parents preferred to educate boys than girls (Hatlebakk, 2017; Mollel and Chong,

Cultural Values Linking Process and Effect on Rural Girls Education

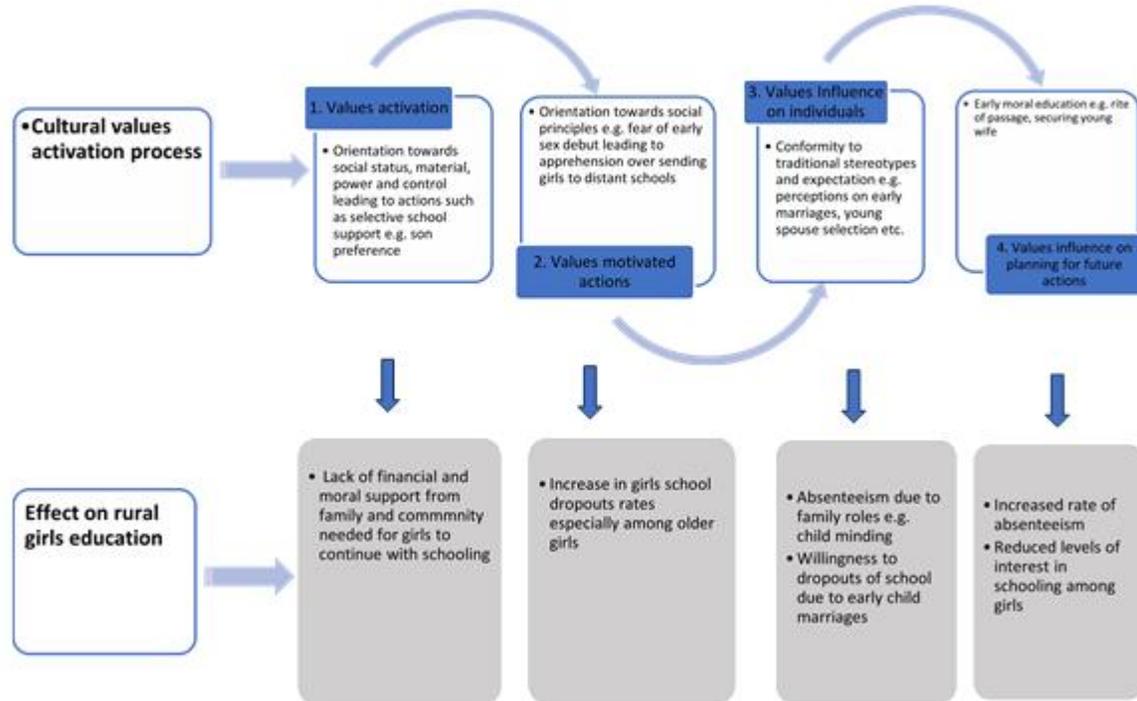


Figure 1. Cultural values linking process and effects on rural girls education.

2017; UNFPA, 2010). Parents in the Tonga culture particularly, revealed that sending a girl to school would not benefit them much because even if she were educated, upon marriage, the husband and his family would become primary beneficiaries of their daughter's future earnings. As shown in Figure 1, orientation towards material gain and fear of uncertain repercussions for supporting daughters' education make parents less willing to send girls to school. Withdrawal of financial and social support by parents leaves many girls without options but to drop out of school.

According to Feather (1988), individuals or social groups are improbable to act unless they are assertive about their capacity to undertake an action and that it will produce preferred results (Feather, 1988). This element explains the fear that parents expressed during the study for unsanctioned sexual debut or premarital sex. Sending girls, especially teenage girls, to school in the rural areas means allowing them freedom to walk long stretches to and from school without a watchful eye (UNGEI, 2014; World Bank Group, 2015). Study participants expressed that overtime girls become acquainted with regular interactions with males, a habit which ultimately predispose them to indulge in premarital sex. This phenomenon is not alien per se. Another study by, Burde and Linden (2013) discovered that demand for education for both boys and girls was present in a small

village in Northwestern Afghanistan, yet because of conservative cultural norms, a family would not be willing to send their daughters to school if the school was located outside the village (Burde and Linden, 2013). The second link (2. Values Motivated Actions) in Figure 1 illustrates imminent consequences.

Parsons and Bales (2014) also argue that the allocation of women to nurturing roles reduces competition and preserves family harmony, both important factors in attaining the unity value (Parsons et al., 2014). Women assume more "expressive," person-oriented roles whereas men engage in and learn more "instrumental," task-oriented roles. Childbearing, for example, assures continuity of an ethnic group and thus brings stability in a marital union. This expectation fulfils the central value of security of culture. Because of the type of roles women are assigned, psychoanalytic theorists contend that "women are more related and more affiliated with others than men, whereas men are more autonomous and more individuated" (Chodorow et al., 2013). Even if parents understand the value of sending girls to school, so long as they are unable to control for or prevent adverse effects, they will remain diffident about supporting their daughters (Saraswati, 1999). Such attitudes contribute substantially to girls school dropout rates (UNFPA, 2010). A report by UNICEF (2014) reaffirms that among children aged 14 to 15, the proportion of females who were out-of-

school was almost twice that of males, 14.8% compared to 8.9%, an outcome attributed to high drop outs of girls from fifth grade onwards leading to fewer girls than boys transitioning to eighth grade in Zambia (UNICEF, 2014).

The third linking process illustrates that cultural values influence individuals' and social groups' definition of situations in light of values they hold important. Different values usually suggest different actions and as such, attention, perceptions and interpretations of situations will depend on the underpinning values of a specific social group. Two cultural practices found in both Bemba and Tonga traditional groups that can be explained using this process are parents' interest and support for early marriages and young spouse selection. In order to curb premarital sex, parents perceive early marriage as a desired solution. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) report on early marriages in Ethiopia found parental preoccupation with the risk of rape, premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy were among key drivers of early marriage (Jones et al., 2014). To an extent where parents perceive early marriage as a way to 'protect' their daughters from defamation or shame, but more importantly, to protect their reputation or family honour (Boyden et al., 2012; Bunting et al., 2016; Erulkar, 2013; Jones et al., 2014; Tefera et al., 2013). Similar study results have been reported in Tanzania (Mmari, 2013; Stark, 2018), Malawi (Clark and Poulin, 2007; Swidler and Watkins, 2007), South Africa (Moletsane, n.d.) and several other countries in the African region (Bayisenge, 2010; Johnson-Hanks, 2007; Juma, 2014; Kainuwa and Najeemah, 2013; Stephens, 2000; Temba et al., n.d.; UNICEF, 2015). The effect of these practices on the advancement of rural girls' education is appalling. No sooner are girls informed they are brides-in-waiting, than they lose interest in school and anxiously begin to anticipate marriage life. This situation, again, directly contributes to increased school dropouts among girls especially those who reside in rural areas (UNICEF, 2015).

The fourth process of the value theory reveals the influence cultural values have on planning for action such that important goals induce stronger motivations to plan thoroughly. This process helps to explain why in our study both the Bemba and Tonga cultures plan to coach girls at young ages about taking care of their wellbeing and those of others particularly men. We find that Bembas regard 'Unity' as a central value in their matrilineal system, all factors that matter in ensuring that this value is upheld are effectively planned for. One prime opportunity observed is the rites of passage when girls attain menarche. A girl is detained in a house for up to a full month, to adequately prepare her for responsibilities of motherhood and being a wife in ensuring that the values of 'unity' and 'respect' are comprehensively tutored and internalized. The effect of this practice on education is twofold. In the immediate term, it will contribute to absenteeism from school which later affects

performance depending on the length of time the girl is kept in the house and away from school (Mollel and Chong, 2017). In the intermediate term, the practice contributes to loss of interest in school as girls are overwhelmed with new information. Tongas with their patrilineal system and central focus on '*power and possession*' values also shared the view that it was imperative to marry off a girl as soon as she attained menarche. The preoccupation here includes bride price. Bride price among Tongas often comprises several cattle and money which add to the girl's family possession and wealth. If at the moment of menarche, the girl was enrolled in school, the chances are that pressure from family and her peers for marriage would raise the chances of her dropping out of school (UNICEF, 2014).

From a capability perspective, Sen (2007a, b) argues that poverty, "*is a 'capability failure' in achieving certain vital functioning up to a minimally adequate standard*" (Sen, 2007b). Although what constitutes basic capabilities is not absolutely clear, value judgments of individuals and groups of people are essential in distributing resources and opportunities to potential beneficiaries. Understanding specific values that make social groups hold certain value judgments is important for social development. The study findings suggest a causal link between cultural values and behaviour towards a variety of stimuli. It identifies some common values in the Bemba and Tonga cultural groups and the deep commitment they possess to uphold these beliefs. Such cultural inclinations ignore the lifelong benefits that come with educating girls. The World Bank in 2013 estimated that, an extra year of secondary schooling for girls could increase their future wages by 10 to 20%; women with secondary education had, on average, 1.5 fewer children than those with primary schooling; and that secondary education reduced the vulnerability of girls from several forms of abuse, among other benefits (World Bank, 2013). In this study, we find that both groups initially allude to education for girls as conflicting with the achievement of values of '*benevolence and tradition*' and '*power and possession*'. When a girl is educated, the two cultural groups remonstrate the difficulty to completely own their girl and adequately inculcate values of '*respect*' and tradition (Rihani, 2006; UNGEI, 2014). Therefore, any kind of intervention aiming to promote girls' education in these communities, would not have an auspicious outlook if implementers do not keenly understand the value make up of ethnic groups especially rural ones.

Conclusion

The study was to gain detailed understanding of cultural values that underlie traditional practices and norms which pose as barriers to rural girls' education using the case of the Bemba and Tonga cultural groups of Zambia. The

study finds fundamental association between education attainment for girls in rural areas and entrenched cultural values which activate a variation of actions often expressed as practices, beliefs or norms. These traditional actions align with different motivational goals to an extent where even ethnic groups thought to have related traditional customs may possess distinctive underlying cultural values. Evidence from this study revealed such distinctions among the Bembas and Tongas which ultimately impede girls education. Therefore, in order to inform the design of effective and target specific girls' education advancement interventions, cultural obstacles specific to regions and communities of interest must be fully and accurately investigated through case study research.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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