



ARTICLE

Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Derogatory Indigenous Proverbs: A Case Study of the Vhavenḁa Community in Vuwani

Muthuhadini Lufuno Muavha * , Thenjiwe Meyiwa 

Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, University of South Africa, Pretoria, Gauteng 0152, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This study explores how women and men in Vuwani perceive the use of derogatory Tshivenda proverbs, with a specific focus on gender disparities. In these proverbs, speakers often degrade women while portraying men in a more favorable light. Given the ongoing prevalence of gender-based violence, it becomes essential to critically reassess the use of such derogatory expressions, especially those targeting women. The study aims to educate the next generation, particularly young boys in Vuwani, to avoid using proverbs that demean women. As a significant part of the Vuwani community, women hold vital roles and deserve equal treatment to men. This research draws on masculinity theory and employs a qualitative approach to gain deeper insights into the perceptions of both women and men regarding the use of derogatory Tshivenda proverbs. The study purposively selected 18 participants from Vuwani. The researchers conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to collect data. Thematic analysis was then used to interpret the findings. The results reveal that proverbs have historically reinforced male dominance. Furthermore, Vhavenḁa women reported experiencing gender-based violence, which they partly attribute to the use of derogatory proverbs directed at them. Within the Vuwani community, comprising members of the Vhavenḁa culture, the study found that masculinity is linked to greater freedom of behaviour, as men do not face the same negative labelling as women. Based on these findings, the study recommends reevaluating the use of derogatory Tshivenda proverbs.

Keywords: Gender-Based Violence; Masculinity; Derogatory; Proverb; Tshivenda

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Muthuhadini Lufuno Muavha, Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages, University of South Africa, Pretoria, Gauteng 0152, South Africa;
Email: muavha13@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 4 April 2025 | Revised: 22 April 2025 | Accepted: 16 May 2025 | Published Online: 25 July 2025
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i8.9377>

CITATION

Muavha, M.L., Meyiwa, T., 2025. Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Derogatory Indigenous Proverbs: A Case Study of the Vhavenḁa Community in Vuwani. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 7(8): 1–15. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i8.9377>

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by the author(s). Published by Bilingual Publishing Group. This is an open access article under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Many scholarly studies have focused on the role of derogatory proverbs, and research has shown that these proverbs play a significant role in reinforcing gender disparities^[1, 2]. Hussein^[3] highlights how African proverbs often portray women in a negative light, associating them with subordination. The portrayal of women in proverbs often reinforces their perceived inferiority and submissiveness in comparison to men. Some proverbs explicitly suggest that women lack the intellectual capacity to make decisions about their own lives, thereby reinforcing and justifying male dominance. This contributes to the development of a patriarchal society, particularly when boys and girls are taught different messages about their identities and social roles. Such harmful cultural beliefs and practices often lead women to accept gender disparity under the guise of cultural and social expectations^[4]. The current study aims to examine how Vuwani women and men perceive the use of derogatory Tshivenda proverbs. Proverbs form part of language and are sometimes used to show gender disparity. Phiri, Mulaudzi, and Heyns^[5] contend that proverbs serve as instruments for depicting and articulating socio-cultural phenomena, community behaviours, and practices that are transmitted intergenerationally. Consequently, proverbs encapsulate the traditions and customs of a people. Ubiquitous in human discourse, proverbs emerge in virtually all contexts. Mafela^[6] postulates that proverbs apply to any communicative act, thus integral to human existence and societal interaction. Within narratives and musical expressions, they often function to underscore a conclusion or introduce the thematic content of a performance. As Gyan, Abbey, and Baffoe^[7] point out, African-gendered proverbs are fundamentally male-dominated, perpetuating disparities in gender status. In a similar vein, Kamwendo and Kaya^[8] argue that proverbs with gender implications in African cultures frequently support patriarchal frameworks, perpetuating women's enslavement. Within this perspective, Dickson and Mbosowo^[9] suggest that many African proverbs express deeply embedded, unfavorable gender stereotypes about women, emphasising the critical need for discussions targeted at reducing the public acceptability of such sayings.

Derogatory Tshivenda proverbs, such as “*musadzi ndi tsilu saṭhoho, u vhala luraru fhedzi*” [A wife is a fool just like a monkey; she counts only up to three], reflect deep-rooted

gender bias by portraying women as lacking intelligence and foresight. This proverb reinforces harmful stereotypes and sustains the perception of women as intellectually inferior to men. By likening a woman to a monkey and implying cognitive limitations, it normalises the denigration of women and upholds structural gender inequalities. As a result of such cultural expressions, women continue to face marginalisation both within and beyond the Vhavenda community. As noted by Goheen^[10], African proverbs, like stories, function as vehicles for transferring powerful views on gender that maintain the supremacy of certain communities by highlighting information and actions that support unfair treatment based on gender. A study carried out by Ndhobela^[11] on the role of language and cultural practices in depicting women in selected Venda communities found that many proverbs are shaped by patriarchal values, where women are urged to be submissive to their husbands, endure hardships, and safeguard their marriages. At the same time, men are granted the authority to control the family. In Tshivenda, the proverb “*munna ndi ṭhoho ya muḍi*” [A man is the head of the household] conveys the belief that men hold primary authority in the household and can make decisions without consulting their wives. This view remains widely accepted in the Vhavenda community, where cultural expectations require women to conform to this norm. Despite South Africa's democratic principles and its commitment to promoting gender equality, this traditional perspective continues to shape household dynamics and gender roles within the community. Recently, Wariboko and Mbonu^[12] reinforced the preceding ideas, observing that proverbs tend to establish a level of power inequality that encourages the marginalisation of women. Such proverbs inside the marriage institution establish a power imbalance to the detriment of women, which can occasionally result in a cultural climate that oppresses women^[12].

A review of previous studies on the use of derogatory proverbs reveals that African proverbs frequently associate men with qualities such as firmness and supremacy, while linking women to meekness, indignity, and powerlessness. These proverbs not only oppress women but also reinforce negative portrayals of femininity. Researchers consistently highlight how such proverbs depict women in submissive and stereotypical roles, thereby perpetuating gender inequality across cultural narratives^[3, 13]. In the same vein, several

studies on African proverbs and gender depictions, conducted by Balogun^[14], Machaba^[15], Mpungose^[16], and Ncube and Moyo^[17], yield startlingly comparable results across societies and methodologies. Previous investigations consistently show that African proverbs often degrade women while portraying men in a more favorable light. Although most existing studies have concentrated on how proverbs represent women, few have explored how individuals perceive these proverbs, an area this study specifically addresses. Gathering perspectives from Vhavenda First Language (L1) speakers in Vuwani is essential to understanding how these proverbs portray both men and women. Accordingly, this study aims to fill that gap by focusing on the following research questions:

- How do Vhavenda men and women perceive the use of derogatory Tshivenda proverbs?
- What impact do derogatory Tshivenda proverbs have on gender perceptions and societal attitudes in the Vuwani community?

1.1. Context of the Study

The Vhavenda people have lived in South Africa's Limpopo Province for centuries. While historical accounts suggest that their migration into the region began around the 16th century, the exact timeline remains uncertain^[18]. Recent demographic data from Statistics South Africa^[19] show that roughly 1.6 million people speak Tshivenda. Tshivenda is predominantly spoken in the northern region of Limpopo Province, where the Vhavenda community resides. As an indigenous language within the Niger-Congo family, Tshivenda is deeply intertwined with the cultural and linguistic identity of the Vhavenda people. It functions not only as a medium of daily communication but also as a vital tool for preserving and expressing their cultural heritage.

1.2. Literature Review

Proverbs are an integral part of language and often serve to highlight gender disparities. They serve as tools for depicting and articulating socio-cultural phenomena, community behaviors, and practices that are passed down through generations^[5]. In a study by Wang^[20] which investigates Chinese and English proverbs to show that they represent an extremely entrenched gender-biased worldview in a culture in which men are superior to women. Women are obedient

to men; men are powerful over women, and each of these languages explicitly discriminates against and humiliates women.

Rasul^[21] conducted an analytical study of Urdu and English proverbs, concluding that both linguistic traditions systematically portray women as weak, inferior, subordinate, and excessively emotional. A significant number of these proverbs depict women as lacking in intellect, rationality, strength, and discretion. Furthermore, they often characterise women as sources of discord, inherently untrustworthy, and driven by materialistic desires, thereby reinforcing their portrayal as morally degraded and objectified for the satisfaction of others.

In Greece, a study by Papadakis et al.^[22] explored the representation of women in computer science, using the Computer Science Department at the University of Crete as a case study. The statistical analysis yielded discouraging results, revealing a persistent gender imbalance in enrolment across all levels of study. This gender disparity has not only remained over time but has also worsened in recent years, despite numerous initiatives aimed at combating gender inequality within the country's educational institutions over the past few decades.

Another study by Papadakis^[23] investigated gender stereotypes in Greek computer science school textbooks. The research involved a thorough analysis of the textbooks to identify the stereotypical portrayal of male and female roles. The findings indicate that all three textbooks used in the three grades of the general lyceum in Greece continue to perpetuate gender-based stereotypes related to new technologies, albeit to varying degrees.

A study by Mubarak^[13] on the representation of women in Sundanese proverbs indicates a persistent portrayal of women in submissive and stereotypical roles. For example, the proverb "*Awewe mah dulang ti nande*" [women are like a giant rice bowl ready to be loaded] suggests that women are naturally dependent on male authority and demands. This linguistic representation not only reflects but also reinforces gendered power dynamics in Sundanese society. Another saying, "*Awewe mah tara cari ka Batawi*" [a woman does not need to go far to earn a living; she only needs to serve her husband], reinforces the notion of women being relegated to domestic duties.

In relation to a study by Balogun^[14], some Yoruba

proverbs that refer to women and violate their rights contain components that constitute semantic derogation. These proverbs additionally demonstrate prejudice toward women in Yoruba culture, which blatantly indicates the mistreatment of women because they are highly offensive and oppressive, and degrade the feelings of female references.

As pointed out by Rubab et al.^[24], gender inequality in the proverbs of the Mewati language reveal that these proverbs play a significant role in shaping gender norms within Mewati society. The study highlights how language functions as a tool to reinforce asymmetrical and patriarchal structures. In Mewati proverbs, women are depicted as weak, foolish, insignificant, immoral, disloyal, dishonest, and seductive, while men are portrayed as brave, intelligent, honest, and valuable. These linguistic patterns contribute to the reinforcement of gender inequality in the community.

In turn, Aragbuwa and Omotude^[25] explored the metaphorization of women in Yoruba proverbs in Nigeria and West Africa. By analysing 100 Yoruba proverbs that focus on the female gender, the researchers identified four major themes: women are weak, women are evil, women are promiscuous, and women are made to procreate. These recurring themes suggest that women are marginalized, negatively represented, and subordinated to men in the proverbial discourse. This cultural narrative implies that, within the Yoruba societal framework, husbands assume a dominant leadership role, while wives are positioned as subordinates.

African gendered proverbs are patriarchal in nature, and they promote gender inequality. Dzahene-Quarshie and Omari^[26] investigate gender-based proverbs in Ghana and Tanzania, discovering that these proverbs mostly focus on the female gender while making little references to men. The authors emphasize that the proverbial language in both nations subordinates women to male authority and, in Ghana, frequently sexualizes women. For example, Ghanaian proverbs state that a woman's glory lies in marriage, and no matter how outstanding a woman is, if she is always divorcing, she lacks respect. Similarly, a Tanzanian adage says that it is better to have a bad marriage than to be a good widow^[24]. These examples demonstrate how gendered proverbs frequently perpetuate traditional beliefs that place women in subservient roles.

Gebeyehu^[27] argues that Awngi proverbs not only oppress the feminine gender but also create powerful negative

portrayals of women. Some illustrative Awngi proverbs include: a home ruled by a wife and a garden grazed by a donkey cannot be improved; both a woman and a horse are like their trainer; or a person who gives birth to a daughter and a person who walks to the devil are alike. These proverbs carry strong negative overtones and denigrate women, highlighting the absence of mutuality in marriage within Awngi society. Another important feature of African gender-based proverbs is sexist stereotyping.

In South Africa, a study by Raphalalani^[28] on gendered approaches to Tshivenda proverbial expressions revealed that while proverbs play and continue to play an integral part in Vhavenda everyday social conversations, some of the Tshivenda proverbial expressions have been found wanting in the sense that they are gender-biased. They are tilted in favour of men and to the disadvantage of women. They afford unequal treatment to men and women in many spheres of life. They reflect gender bias in their syntactic structure, both literal and figurative, as well as in their interpretations.

Hussein^[3] examines the symbolic implications of the African proverb "*lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi*" [a woman's grave is at her husband's home]. Significantly, he argues that such proverbs often reinforce gendered stereotypes by linking men with dominance and authority, while associating women with submission and vulnerability. Consequently, the proverb reflects societal expectations for women to endure hardships within marriage, which may lead to emotional and psychological distress, including depression. Moreover, while previous studies have focused on how proverbs label women, they have largely overlooked individuals' emotional responses to these labels. Therefore, it becomes essential to investigate both male and female perceptions of such expressions to understand their broader cultural and social impact better. In light of this, the present study aims to address this oversight by exploring the effects of derogatory proverbs on women.

The present study aims to fill a critical gap by analysing derogatory Tshivenda proverbs and their role in reinforcing gendered stereotypes and power imbalances. Unlike earlier studies by Ndhobela^[11] and Raphalalani^[28], this research incorporates perspectives from both adults and youth, thereby providing a more holistic understanding. The current study examines perceptions, providing insight into how Vhavenda L1 speakers from Vuwani make sense of their community

and how they interpret and respond to the use of derogatory Tshivenda proverbs. Notably, the current study offers a localised lens on gender inequality, contributing to broader debates on equal rights. Moreover, the study highlights the tension between democratic ideals of equality and the everyday realities faced by Vhavenda women in the Vuwani community.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that was used to underpin this article is masculinity theory. According to Connell^[29], masculinity theory refers to the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which was developed to explain the social dynamics that sustain male dominance and hierarchy among men. In addition, the theory explores how societal norms and power structures define what it means to be a man and how these definitions contribute to the subordination of women and marginalised masculinities. This theory was primarily developed by Raewyn Connell, an Australian sociologist, who introduced the concept of hegemonic masculinity in the 1980s and 1990s. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the culturally dominant ideal of male behavior, which legitimises men's dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of women and other masculinities^[29].

Masculinity theory highlights the power imbalance between men and women by arguing that proverbs are socially constructed tools that reinforce gender inequality. In the Vhavenda context, women are often subjected to harmful expressions such as “*vhiḁa la musadzi li vhuhadzi*” [a woman's grave is at her husband's home], which emphasise submission and endurance. In contrast, men are celebrated through proverbs like “*munna ndi ndou ha li muri muthihi*” [a man is an elephant who does not graze from the same tree], which portray strength and autonomy. This disparity in representation reflects and sustains patriarchal values. Masculinity theory thus offers a critical lens through which to interrogate how language, particularly proverbs, shapes and maintains unequal gender roles in society.

2. Methodology

This study adopts a phenomenological design, a qualitative research approach that aims to understand and articulate how individuals experience a specific phenomenon from

their subjective perspectives. Phenomenology centers on the lived experiences of participants, striving to reveal the essence of these experiences without imposing prior theoretical assumptions or frameworks^[30]. Employing a qualitative methodology enabled the researchers to engage deeply with participants' experiences in a meaningful and contextually grounded manner, privileging their viewpoints rather than projecting the researchers' interpretations^[31]. Creswell^[32] defines qualitative research as a method that collects data primarily through interviews, enabling an in-depth exploration of participants' views with openness and detail. This approach helps researchers identify and interpret patterns or categories that emerge from the data^[33]. The flexible nature of qualitative research supports the construction of a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the phenomena under investigation. It also facilitates the exploration of complex social realities by emphasising participants' meanings, lived experiences, and perspectives within their natural contexts^[34].

Regarding this study, a case study approach was employed to provide richer insights and a deeper understanding of the specific context under investigation^[35]. In this case, the objective was to gain a clear understanding of how women and men in Vuwani perceive the use of derogatory Tshivenda proverbs.

Table 1 illustrates the coding system applied to identify the youth participants. As indicated, 8 participants took part in face-to-face interviews, all of whom were Tshivenda L1 speakers from Vuwani. Among these participants, two females and one male reported being unemployed, four were employed, and one was a student.

Table 2 presents the coding system used to label the older participants in the interviews. As shown, ten Vhavenda adults answered the interview questions. The study focused on Tshivenda L1 speakers from Vuwani. Among these, two females and three males were educators, some of whom indicated they were self-employed, while one participant was a traditional healer.

Walliman^[36] defines a sample as a subset of a population from which a researcher collects data. This study employed purposive sampling to select participants who were knowledgeable about the topic and could provide firsthand insight into the subject matter^[37]. The researchers conducted interviews with 18 Tshivenda L1 speakers, comprising 8

youth and 10 elders. They used face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to collect data, as this method allowed for an in-depth exploration of human experiences that are not easily quantifiable^[38].

Table 1. Youth participants codes and variables (n = 08).

Interview Codes	Gender	Age Range	Occupation
UMP 1	Female	26–36	Unemployed
UMP 2	Female	26–36	Unemployed
WRK 1	Female	26–36	Employed
WRK 2	Female	26–36	Employed
EMY 1	Male	21–36	Employed
EMY 2	Male	21–36	Employed
STM 1	Male	21–36	Student
UM 1	Male	21–36	Unemployed

Table 2. The elderly participants' codes and variables (n = 10).

Interview Codes	Gender	Age Range	Occupation
TH 1	Female	56–65	Traditional healer
EM 1	Female	46–55	Educator
EM 2	Female	46–55	Educator
SFE 1	Female	36–45	Self-Employed
SFE 2	Female	36–45	Self-employed
SME 1	Male	56–65	Self-Employed
SME 2	Male	36–45	Self-Employed
WK 1	Male	56–65	Educator
WK 2	Male	36–45	Educator
WK 3	Male	56–65	Educator

Participants were selected based on their recognition as custodians of indigenous knowledge within the Vhavenda community. By including both youth and elderly, the study gathered rich cultural and experiential perspectives. The aim was not to generalise the findings but to develop a deeper understanding of the sociolinguistic dimensions of derogatory proverbs. Prior to participation, researchers provided participants with clear information about the study, and they gave informed consent by signing consent forms. The research team ensured anonymity and confidentiality by avoiding the collection of personal identifiers. Participation was entirely voluntary, without any form of compensation, and all data was securely stored, accessible only to the researchers.

To ensure data reliability, the researchers compared responses from different participants on the same phenomenon. The researchers transcribed the recorded data, organised it, and assigned unique identifiers. The data was then coded and grouped into key themes. Thematic analysis was applied to interpret the data. The following section presents

the findings.

3. Findings

This subsection presents and discusses selected Tshivenda derogatory proverbs that inform the themes explored and synthesised in the study. The aim is to assess whether cultural expressions, particularly proverbs, serve as a catalyst for the oppression or protection of women. The following discussion highlights proverbs that reflect gender disparity and contribute to the understanding of how language reinforces or challenges gender roles within the Vhavenda community.

The study targeted two (2) sets of participants, which are young and adults Vhavenda. The responses from Vhavenda youth are presented as follows:

3.1. Findings from Vhavenda Youths

This section presents individual perspectives on the use of derogatory proverbs within the context of gender disparity.

Participants acknowledged that proverbs carry significant meaning and can serve as tools for degradation. Vhavenda male youth admitted to using certain proverbs to denigrate women, particularly within the context of marriage.

Emphasising this point, EMY 1, male youth aged 26–36 elaborated that:

“There is a proverb that says ‘*vhiḍa ḷa musadzi ḷi vhuhadzi*’, which means that if a woman is married where she got, marriage should be where she dies, even if she could face any difficulties in her marriage. In addition, when it comes to referring to men, I do not know any derogatory proverbs that show gender disparity.”

Expressing a similar view, EMY 2, male youth aged 26–36 mentioned that:

“On the use of proverbs, you will find that there are those that allow men to have multiple partners, ‘*musadzi muḥwe ndi khaladzi*’ [One wife is a sister]. This proverb gives power to man to marry many wives as he pleases. If we can look at the statistics of women who passed away, it is because of being undermined at home. If we can do thorough research, we can find that there were several signs before those killings; you may find that it was through the use of proverbs that show gender disparity.”

Moreover, STM 1, male youth aged 26–36 averred that,

“We also have the proverb that says ‘*vhiḍa ḷa musadzi ḷi vhuhadzi*’ which I feel like this proverb oppresses women. This is because women are being told to persevere in the marriage even when things are difficult. My question is, why can we not say the grave of a man is at the marriage?”

The findings reveal the existence of derogatory proverbs that perpetuate gender disparity. Participants also expressed limited awareness of derogatory Tshivenda proverbs targeting Vhavenda men. The results suggest that the use of these proverbs may contribute to the marginalisation of women, potentially influencing harmful outcomes, including their deaths. Additionally, the proverb ‘*munna*

ndi ndou ha ḷi muri muthihi’ is commonly used to praise men, with this sentiment being passed down to the younger generation.

WRK 4, female youth aged 26–36, affirms that:

“We also have the derogatory proverb of a woman who is working while a man is not working which is ‘*musadzi a shuma, munna ndi tshinamo*’ [If the wife works, the husband becomes a patch]. This could mean that if a man allows his wife to work, he will become a wife of the house. Men are known to be the head of the house’ mean that a man oversees everything in the house including decision making.”

WRK 2, female youth aged 26–36, posits that:

“They also use derogatory proverb that says ‘*mufumakadzi u fara lufhanga nga vhuhalini*’ [a woman holds the knife at the sharp end]. Which simply means that even in difficulties, a woman should be strong.”

According to Vhavenda, a female youth from the Vuwani community, a man who allows his wife to work is perceived as undermining his authority as the head of the household. The study further revealed that women facing hardship are often reminded of the proverb ‘*mufumakadzi u fara lufhanga nga vhuhalini*’, which reinforces societal expectations for women to endure adversity with resilience.

3.2. Findings from Vhavenda Adults

According to Vhavenda, male and female adults, derogatory proverbs are frequently used to demean women, often reinforcing unequal comparisons between men and women. Participants noted that these proverbs have existed for generations and continue to perpetuate gender disparity across time. In support of this observation, WK 3, a male adult aged 56–65, stated:

“We also have the derogatory proverb ‘*vhiḍa ḷa musadzi ḷi vhuhadzi*’. This proverb reprimands a woman that even if she encounters any difficulties in the marriage, she should not come back home.”

WK 1, male adult aged 56–65, commented that:

“There is a proverb that says *‘fuyu litwuku a li kundwi tshivhungu’* [A red fig does not lack a worm]. This proverb could mean that men should be careful when they choose a woman. They should not be deceived by the physical appearance of a woman. What they see might not be what a woman is because she might have a worse personality. In addition, there is a derogative proverb that says *‘musadzi ha na gota’* [A woman does not have a headman]. What this proverb implies is that women are not given any power to say or initiate anything in a family matter. Only men are the ones who initiate matters regarding the family.”

In a wide context WK 2, male adult aged 36–45 highlighted how certain proverbs perpetuate negative perceptions of women within the Vhavenda community. He explained:

“There is a proverb that says *‘musadzi ndi phandamulongo’* [A woman is a family disrupter]. This implies that a woman does not bring peace to a family and may even cause separation. I feel this proverb is used to undermine women because it presents them as disruptive rather than as individuals who can unite families. Moreover, people often say *‘mufumakadzi u fara lufhanga nga vuhali’* [a woman holds the knife at the sharp end]. This means that a woman is expected to endure all the pain that occurs in her family. If she holds the sharp end of the knife, and someone pushes it, she is still expected to bear that pain. Regardless of the challenges, whether involving her children or her marriage, she is expected to carry the emotional and physical burden.”

The proverb under study is perceived as contributing to mental health challenges, such as depression, among women who endure subordination and feel compelled to remain resilient within their marriages. Participants expressed their views as follows:

EM 1, female adult aged 46–55, highlighted how certain proverbs reinforce patriarchal control within the family unit. She explained:

“In Tshivenda, there is a derogatory proverb that says *‘mutupo u tevhela nombe’* [The totem follows the herd of cattle]. Through the use of this proverb, the husband is given power to control the entire family, as they are considered to belong to him. If a man pays lobola, the woman and the children take the man’s surname.”

This perspective illustrates how cultural expressions such as proverbs are used to legitimise male authority and diminish women’s autonomy within the family structure. The proverb highlights gender power dynamics, where the husband is positioned as the authority figure, controlling the family. It reinforces patriarchal structures by suggesting that the woman’s and children’s identities are subsumed under the husband’s. The practice of taking the father’s surname reflects the dominance of male lineage. Such expressions perpetuate gender inequality, framing women and children as property of men.

TH 1, female adult aged 56–65, affirmed that certain Tshivenda proverbs are used to justify the oppression of women within marriage. She stated:

“There is a derogatory Tshivenda proverb that says *‘mufumakadzi u fara lufhanga nga vuhali’* [a woman holds the knife at the sharp end]. This proverb is used to oppress women, implying that even when they face serious challenges, they must not leave. Another proverb says *‘vuhadzi ndi nama ya tholo ya fhufhuma ri a fhunzhela’* [a woman is like antelope meat that we roast when it drips fat]. This, too, is used to pressure women into staying in their marriages, regardless of the difficulties they face.”

Another interviewee identified as SFE 1, female adult aged 36–45, said:

“There is the proverb that says a *‘vuhadzi ndi nama ya thole, ya fhufhuma ri a fhunzhela’* [A wife’s in-laws are like lean meat, we keep the froth from boiling over with a spoon]. Women are being reminded that they should take care of their in-laws with care and respect under any circumstances.”

Derogatory Tshivenda proverbs like *'mufumakadzi u fara lufhanga nga vhuhalini'* and *'vhuhadzi ndi nama ya tholo ya fhufhuma ri a fhunzhela'* serve to oppress women by emphasising that they must endure severe obstacles without quitting, whether in general or during marriage. SFE 1, female adult, 36–45, presented a proverb emphasising the importance of women always caring for and respecting their in-laws: *'vhuhadzi ndi nama ya thole, ya fhufhuma ri a fhunzhela.'* These proverbs promote traditional gender roles and the expectations placed on women.

3.3. Perceptions on the Use of Proverbs that Show Gender Disparity

3.3.1. Youth Perceptions on the Use of Proverbs that Reflect Gender Disparity

Youth participants expressed critical awareness of how proverbs reflect and reinforce gender disparities. They emphasised the importance of unity and the harmful impact of language, noting that such sayings often elevate men while oppressing women, making gender-neutral expression challenging.

EMY 2, male youth aged 26–36, reflected on the proverb *'munna ndi phoho ya muḍi'* [a man is the head of the house], stating:

“For me, I feel like a head cannot stand if it does not have a body. The body represents the woman.”

His response highlighted the significance of unity within households and the need to be cautious of how language affects others. He emphasised that words carry power and can destroy a person's life.

Similarly, STM 1, male youth in the same age group, commented on the proverb *'munna ndi ndou ha li muri muthihi'* [a man is an elephant; he does not eat from one tree], asserting:

“I feel like women are being oppressed while men are praised and given power at the expense of women. It becomes difficult to use gender-neutral language when one gender is already elevated above the other.”

UM 1, another male youth aged 26–36, expressed concern about the implications of this same proverb:

“I feel like we are promoting problematic behaviour among men. In my view, we need gender-neutral proverbs that reflect fairness when both men and women exhibit the same behaviour.”

WRK 1, female youth aged 26–36, also shared her experience:

“We grew up with the proverb *'munna ndi ndou ha li muri muthihi'*. On the other hand, women are given a prescribed way to live their lives. When a woman lives differently from what society expects, derogatory proverbs are used to label her. I feel this is unfair, especially when men and women are doing the same thing.”

These responses underscore the youth's critical awareness of how traditional proverbs reinforce unequal gender norms. Both male and female participants advocated for more equitable and inclusive linguistic expressions that do not privilege one gender over the other. The findings reveal a shared concern regarding the gender bias embedded in the proverb *'munna ndi ndou ha li muri muthihi'*, which elevates men while marginalising women. Female youth highlighted how such proverbs perpetuate systemic oppression against women, while male youth acknowledged the problematic nature of these expressions and called for gender-neutral alternatives. Their reflections demonstrate an emerging consciousness of how cultural language use shapes behaviour and maintains gender disparities.

3.3.2. Adults' Perceptions on the Use of Proverbs that Reflect Gender Disparity

Adult participants expressed strong concerns regarding the unequal portrayal of men and women through Tshivenda proverbs, emphasising the role of these expressions in reinforcing patriarchal norms.

EM 2, female adult aged 46–55, reflected on the proverb *'musadzi muḥwe ndi khaladzi'* [one woman is like a younger sister] and highlighted its oppressive implications:

“The proverb *'musadzi muḥwe ndi khaladzi'*, when referring to a woman, I feel like women are being oppressed. Men can be gone for a whole week without returning home, and if a woman raises concerns, the man's response

will be that he is an elephant who does not graze from the same tree. Even if you take the matter to elders, they say the same thing. It is only fair that if both people are doing the same thing, they should be labelled the same way.”

This statement reveals the gender-biased interpretation of cultural proverbs, where male infidelity is normalised and even justified through the proverb that a man is an elephant who does not graze from the same tree. At the same time, women are reprimanded for the same behaviour. The proverb underlines unequal expectations, excusing male dominance and policing female agency.

SFE 1, female adult aged 36–45, asserted:

“I feel like the use of derogatory proverbs such as ‘*vhuhadzi ndi nana ya tholo, ya shufhuma ri a fhunzhela*’ [a wife is like antelope meat; when it boils over, we blow off the froth] means women are reminded to treat their in-laws with care under any circumstances. Additionally, when a man is dating multiple women, the phrase ‘*munna ndi thanga i a navha*’ is used. It compares a man to the hard reed that can stretch and engage with others. This perception has persisted and is likely to continue into future generations.”

These proverbs reflect cultural norms that enforce gender inequality, portraying women as passive and self-sacrificing while celebrating male promiscuity as a sign of strength. If left unchallenged, these constructs could reinforce harmful gender expectations and perpetuate inequality.

WK 1, male adult aged 56–65, offered a comparative view:

“Men are called ‘*munna ndi ndou ha li muri muthihi*’ while women are told ‘*vhiḁa la mufumakadzi li vhuhadzi*’. I feel there is inequality in the way these proverbs are used. Men are labelled in a positive way, whereas women are portrayed negatively. To be fair, if both genders are engaging in the same behaviour, they should be labelled equally.”

This perspective underscores the gendered double standards inherent in proverbial language, where men receive

praise, while women are burdened by expressions that tie their value to suffering, endurance, and submission. For example, the proverb ‘*vhiḁa la mufumakadzi li vhuhadzi*’ suggests that a woman’s pain is an intrinsic part of her role as a wife, reinforcing the idea that suffering is both expected and defining of womanhood.

These testimonies emphasise how Tshivenda proverbs function as cultural tools that sustain gender hierarchy, normalising male authority and women’s subjugation through language that valorises submission, endurance, and moral judgment. They reflect a growing recognition of the harmful impact of traditional language, urging a re-examination of these proverbs in the context of a modern, gender-equal society.

Theme 1: Uncovering Gendered Assumptions

The study reveals how proverbs contribute to gendered stereotypes by portraying women as the root cause of familial problems and instability. These proverbs simplify complex family dynamics and reinforce negative assumptions about women. Ultimately, they perpetuate harmful stereotypes that position women as inherently disruptive.

WK 2, male adult aged 36–45 affirmed that:

“There is a proverb that says ‘*musadzi ndi phandamulongo*’. The meaning of this proverb could mean that a woman does not bring peace in a family. Which could mean that woman separate families. Which I feel like it is used to undermine women.”

EM 2, female adult aged 46–55 expresses that:

“The proverb ‘*musadzi muḁwe ndi khaladzi*’ reflects the oppression of women, as it justifies male infidelity while excusing men for behavior that women are reprimanded for. She argues that men are often compared to elephants, which are not bound by the same expectations as women, and even elders reinforce this view. She believes it would be fair if both genders were judged equally for similar actions.”

The study finds that the proverb ‘*musadzi muḁwe ndi khaladzi*’ reinforces gender bias by justifying male infidelity and oppressing women who challenge it. The respondents highlight the unequal treatment between men and women,

with male behavior being excused through metaphors, while women face social reprimand for similar actions. This reflects the perpetuation of patriarchal norms within the culture.

The finding is congruent with Balogun's^[14] findings, which revealed that some Yoruba proverbs that refer to women and violate their rights contain components that constitute semantic derogation. These proverbs additionally demonstrate prejudice toward women in Yoruba culture, which blatantly indicates the mistreatment of women because they are highly offensive and oppressive, and degrade the feelings of female references. The current findings emphasise the entrenched assumptions within language that affect perceptions and behaviors toward women. It shows how culture can implicitly foster harmful stereotypes, affecting women's roles in society and reinforcing inequality.

Theme 2: Understanding How Society Perpetuates Gender Disparity

The findings highlight gender power dynamics, where the husband is positioned as the authority figure, controlling the family. One of the male youth participants coded, EMY 2 asserted that:

"The proverb that says '*munna ndi fhoho ya muḍi*' [a man is the head of the house]; for me, I feel like a head cannot stand if it does not have a body. The body represents the woman. Participants emphasised the importance of unity and the need to be mindful of how language can impact others. Words can destroy someone's life."

With the similar vein SFE 1, female adult aged 36–45 asserted that:

"When a man is dating multiple women, the phrase '*munna ndi thanga i a navha*' is used, which compares a man to the hard reed that serves as an underlay between the timber roof structure and the thatch above. This metaphor suggests that he can stretch from side to side and engage with another woman. This perception has persisted and is likely to continue into future generations."

WK 1, male adult aged 56–65, commented that:

"There is a proverb that says '*musadzi ha na*

gota'. What this proverb implies is that women are not given any power to say or initiate anything in a family matter. Only men are the one that initiate matters regarding the family."

The study reveals how Tshivenda proverbs reinforce gender disparity by promoting male dominance and freedom while limiting women's roles. Proverbs like '*munna ndi fhoho ya muḍi*' position men as household heads, sidelining women. Proverbs such as '*munna ndi thanga i a navha*' and '*munna ndi ndou ha li muri muthihi*' justify men's multiple relationships, reflecting and reinforcing patriarchal norms. These linguistic expressions uphold societal structures that favor men and normalize unequal gender expectations.

The findings of this study concur with that of Wang^[20] which investigates Chinese and English proverbs to show that they represent an extremely entrenched gender-biased worldview in a culture in which men are superior to women. Women are obedient to men; men are powerful over women, and each of these languages explicitly discriminates against and humiliates women. The proverb '*munna ndi fhoho ya muḍi*' reflects how Tshivenda proverbs can contribute to gender-based violence, as they create an expectation that women should endure hardships silently, leading to the normalisation of male dominance and female subjugation. The research underlines that, culturally, this reinforces a hierarchical, unequal society of the Vhavanḍa community in Vuwani.

Theme 3: Derogatory Proverbs and their Impact on Women

The article's findings reveal that some Tshivenda proverbs suggest that women are expected to silently bear burdens in marriage, regardless of the suffering they endure. Such expectations normalise gender-based violence and emotional neglect, contributing to systemic inequality. Talking about this phenomenon, one of the participants coded TH 1, a female adult aged 56–65, affirmed that:

"Derogatory proverb for women is '*vhuhadzi ndi nama ya tholo ya fhufhuma ri a fhunzhela*'. This proverb is used to oppress women so that even though she is facing a difficult challenge, she must not quit her marriage."

By the same token, WRK 2, female youth aged 26–36, posits that:

“Tshivenda use derogatory proverb just like ‘*mufumakadzi u fara lufhanga nga vhuhalini*’ [a woman holds the knife at the sharp end]. Which simply means that even in difficulties, a woman should be strong.”

In addition, EMY 1, male youth aged 26–36 elaborated that:

“There is a proverb that says ‘*vhiḁa ḁa musadzi ḁi vhuhadzi*’, which means that if a woman is married where she got, marriage should be where she dies even if she could face any difficulties in her marriage. In addition, when it comes to referring to men, I do not know any derogatory proverbs that show gender disparity.”

This theme highlights the emotional and psychological toll that derogatory proverbs impose on women. Proverbs such as ‘*musadzi ndi phandamulongo*’ and ‘*vhuhadzi ndi ḁama ya tholo ya fhufhuma ri a fhunzhela*’ portray women as inherently subservient figures who must care for their families regardless of personal sacrifice. These expressions reinforce cultural norms that expect women to bear immense emotional and physical burdens without protest. For example, the proverb ‘*mufumakadzi u fara lufhanga nga vhuhalini*’ emphasises the expectation for women to endure pain and hardship with strength and patience. It reflects a societal belief that women should silently face the struggles of marriage and motherhood. Similarly, ‘*vhiḁa ḁa musadzi ḁi vhuhadzi*’ conveys a deeply entrenched patriarchal ideology in Tshivenda culture, suggesting that married women must endure all marital circumstances, including abuse, neglect, or unhappiness, without returning to their parental homes. These proverbs collectively frame female suffering as an expected and natural part of womanhood, thereby marginalising women’s mental and emotional well-being. Consequently, they sustain harmful gender roles that hinder women from challenging or escaping traditional expectations.

The current study’s findings align with those of Mubarak^[13] regarding the representation of women in Sundanese proverbs, which often portray women in submissive and stereotypical ways. For example, the proverb ‘*Awewe mah dulang ti nande*’ [women are like a large rice bowl waiting to be filled] implies women are docile and rely on men’s

demands. Another proverb, ‘*Awewe mah tara cari ka Batawi*’ [a woman does not need to travel far to make a living; all she must do is take care of her husband], underscores the idea that what women do is limited to domestic responsibilities. Similarly, the proverbs ‘*Babon kapurba ku jago*’ [a woman must obey her husband] and ‘*Sapi anut ka banteng*’ [a woman should be devoted to her husband] reinforce the notion that women occupy a subordinate position about men.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that traditional Tshivenda proverbs play a significant role in perpetuating gendered assumptions that degrade and marginalise women. Proverbs such as ‘*musadzi ndi phandamulongo*’ and ‘*musadzi munwe ndi khaladzi*’ not only misrepresent women’s roles within families but also serve to normalise male infidelity while condemning women who challenge these behaviors. These linguistic expressions embed patriarchal ideologies into everyday discourse, reinforcing stereotypes that portray women as inherently disruptive or morally inferior. Similarly, proverbs such as ‘*vhuhadzi ndi ḁama ya tholo ya fhufhuma ri a fhunzhela*’ metaphorically cast women as fragile and easily dismissed components of marital relationships, expected to endure suffering without complaint. These findings align with Balogun’s^[14] and Mubarak’s^[13] conclusions that proverbs in various African and Asian contexts serve as vehicles for semantic derogation, where the social and emotional degradation of women is culturally sanctioned. Collectively, these proverbs reflect a deeply entrenched worldview in which women’s worth is subordinated to male authority and expectations.

Furthermore, the findings illustrate how society, through language, upholds structures that maintain gender disparity by promoting male dominance and female submission. Proverbs like ‘*munna ndi ḁhoho ya muḁi*’ and ‘*munna ndi thanga i a navha*’ glorify male authority and sexual liberty while implicitly prescribing submissive roles for women. The proverb ‘*munna ndi ḁḁou ha ḁi muri muthihi*’ further justifies male promiscuity while discouraging similar behavior in women, reinforcing unequal moral standards. These expressions naturalise a patriarchal order, rendering male dominance not only acceptable but ideal. Proverbs like ‘*mufumakadzi u fara lufhanga nga vhuhalini*’ and ‘*vhiḁa ḁa*

musadzi li vuhadzi’ communicate that women are to bear burdens in marriage, regardless of suffering silently. Such expectations normalise gender-based violence and emotional neglect, contributing to systemic inequality. These findings align with Wang’s^[20] research on Chinese and English proverbs and Mubarak’s^[13] analysis of Sundanese expressions, confirming that proverbs globally reflect and reinforce cultural frameworks that undermine women’s autonomy and dignity.

5. Recommendations

The study recommends fostering community dialogues and cultural forums to examine how proverbs influence gender norms. It encourages collaboration between traditional leaders and youth to challenge or reinterpret harmful expressions. Educators are encouraged to incorporate critical discussions on language and gender into their local curricula to raise awareness. Additionally, gender equality policies should include culturally sensitive campaigns that address linguistic bias. Supporting the revitalisation of inclusive language is key to aligning cultural heritage with human rights.

6. Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal that derogatory Tshivenda proverbs perpetuate gender disparity by reinforcing patriarchal norms, where men are portrayed as superior and women as subordinate. Both male and female participants acknowledged the existence of these gender-biased proverbs, which often justify male behavior while oppressing women. Proverbs such as *‘munna ndi fhoho ya muḍi’* and *‘musadzi ha na gota’* portray men as decision-makers and women as passive, reinforcing unequal power dynamics in households. The youth, however, showed a growing awareness of these disparities, calling for gender-neutral proverbs that promote equality. While older generations maintain traditional views that uphold these stereotypes, the younger generation advocates linguistic change. The study also highlighted that these proverbs contribute to mental health issues for women, especially those who endure subordination. The cultural influence of proverbs on gender roles is evident in the way they are passed down and accepted, often without question. Ultimately, the findings suggest a need for critical reflection and

a shift toward more equitable expressions in the community.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, M.L.M.; methodology, M.L.M.; validation, T.M.; formal analysis, M.L.M.; investigation, M.L.M.; resources, M.L.M.; data curation, M.L.M.; writing—original draft preparation, M.L.M.; writing—review and editing, T.M.; visualization, T.M.; supervision, T.M.; project administration, M.L.M. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

This work received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Ethical clearance was granted by UNISA’s Research Ethics Committee for the period 23 January 2024 to 23 January 2025 (NHREC #: Rec-240816-052; CREC Ref #: 66477301_CRECHS_2024).

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical restrictions. Access to the data may be granted upon reasonable request and with approval from the relevant institutional ethics board.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- [1] Bachore, M.M., 2022. Analysis of gender representation in English language learning materials: the case of grade ten textbook in Ethiopia. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*. 11(5), 175–185.
- [2] Kesebir, S., 2017. Word order denotes relevance dif-

- ferences: the case of conjoined phrases with lexical gender. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 113(2), 262.
- [3] Hussein, J.W., 2005. The social and ethno-cultural construction of masculinity and femininity in African proverbs. *African Study Monographs*. 26(2), 59–87.
- [4] UNICEF, 2000. *Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls*. United Nations Children Fund Innocenti Research Center: Florence, Italy.
- [5] Phiri, S.S., Mulaudzi, F.M., Heyns, T., 2015. The impact of an indigenous proverb on women's mental health: a phenomenological approach. *Curationis*. 38(2), 1–9.
- [6] Mafela, M.J., 2005. *Tshivenda Literature*. Khande Publishers: Pretoria, South Africa.
- [7] Gyan, C., Abbey, E., Baffoe, M., 2020. Proverbs and patriarchy: analysis of linguistic prejudice and representation of women in traditional Akan communities of Ghana. *Social Sciences*. 9(22), 1–10.
- [8] Kamwendo, J., Kaya, H.O., 2016. Gender and African proverbs. *Studies of Tribes and Tribals*. 14(2), 92–99.
- [9] Dickson, A.A., Mbosowo, M.D., 2014. African proverbs about women: semantic import and impact in African societies. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 5(9), 632–641.
- [10] Goheen, M., 1996. *Men Own the Fields; Women Own the Crops: Gender and Power in the Cameroon Grass Fields*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison, WI, USA.
- [11] Ndhobela, A.J., 2022. The role of language and cultural practices in portraying women in selected Vhavenda communities [Doctoral thesis]. Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa.
- [12] Wariboko, O.P.C., Mbonu, C.N., 2020. Di bu ugwu nwanyi (Husband is the dignity of a woman): Reimagining the validity of an Igbo aphorism in contemporary society. *Journal of Gender and Power*. 14(2), 103–122. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/jgp-2020-0016>
- [13] Mubarak, Y., 2017. Representation of women in the Sundanese proverbs. *International E-Journal of Advances in Social Sciences*. 3(7), 205–213.
- [14] Balogun, O.A., 2010. Proverbial oppression of women in Yoruba African culture: a philosophical overview. *Thought and Practice: A Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya (PAK) New Series*. 2(1), 21–36.
- [15] Machaba, R.L., 2011. The portrayal of women in Xitsonga literature with special reference to South African novels, poems and proverbs [Doctoral thesis]. Pretoria, South Africa: University of South Africa.
- [16] Mpungose, Z.M., 2010. Perceived gender inequality reflected in Zulu proverbs: a feminist approach [Master's Dissertation]. Durban, South Africa: University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- [17] Ncube, B., Moyo, T., 2011. Portraying women as the other: Ndebele proverbs and idioms in the context of gender construction. *Africana*. 5(3), 126–142.
- [18] Schoeman, C.J.W., 1983. *The history of Venda*. Pretoria, South Africa: J.L. van Schaik.
- [19] Republic of South Africa (RSA), Department of Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), 2022. Statistical release P0302: Mid-year population estimates. Statistics South Africa: Pretoria, South Africa.
- [20] Wang, S., 2012. On sex discrimination in English proverbs and their translation. *International on Lecture Notes in Information Technology*. 16, 150.
- [21] Rasul, S., 2015. Gender and power relationships in the language of proverbs: image of a woman. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*. 9(2), 53–62.
- [22] Papadakis, S., Tousia, C., Polychronaki, K., 2018. Women in computer science. The case study of the Computer Science Department of the University of Crete, Greece. *International Journal of Teaching and Case Studies*. 9(2), 142–151.
- [23] Papadakis, S., 2018. Gender stereotypes in Greek computer science school textbooks. *International Journal of Teaching and Case Studies*. 9(1), 48–71.
- [24] Rubab, I., Sadia, S., Ajmal, M.M., 2023. A descriptive study of gender inequality in proverbs of Mewati language. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*. 10(1), 2152946. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2022.2152946>
- [25] Aragbuwa, A., Omotunde, S.A., 2022. Metaphorisation of women in Yoruba proverbs: a feminist critical analysis. *European Journal of Literature, Language and Linguistics Studies*. 5(4), 1–19.
- [26] Dzahene-Quarshie, J., Omari, S., 2021. Viewing gender through the eyes of proverbs: reflections of gender ideology in the Akan and Swahili societies. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 174, 128–142.
- [27] Gebeyehu, T.A., 2019. The negative representation of women in the language of Awngi proverbs. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews (IJRAR)*. 6(2), 479–490.
- [28] Raphaelalani, T.D., 2021. A gendered approach to Tshivenda proverbial expressions. *Gender and Behaviour*. 19(2), 17783–17787.
- [29] Connell, R.W., 1995. *Masculinities*. University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, USA.
- [30] Creswell, J.W., 2013. *Qualitative inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. SAGE: London, UK.
- [31] Brynard, D.J., Hanekom, S.X., Brynard, P.A., 2015. *Introduction to Research*. Van Schaik: Pretoria, South Africa.
- [32] Creswell, J.W., 2014. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th ed. SAGE: London, UK.
- [33] Blanche, M.T., Blanche, M.J.T., Durrheim, K., et al., 2006. *Research in Practice: Applied Methods for the Social Sciences*. Juta and Company Ltd.: Cape Town, South Africa.

- [34] Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S., 2005. Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In: Denzin, N.K., Lincoln, Y.S. (eds.). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. SAGE: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- [35] Creswell, J.W., 2007. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. SAGE: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
- [36] Walliman, N., 2011. *Research Methods: The Basics*. Routledge: Canada.
- [37] Nieuwenhuis, J., 2011. Qualitative Research Designs and Data Gathering Techniques. In: Maree, K. (ed.). *First Step in Research*. Van Schaik: Pretoria, South Africa.
- [38] Kumar, R., 2005. *Research Methodology: A Step-By-Step Guide for Beginners*. SAGE: Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.