THE AUSTRALASIAN REVIEW OF AFRICAN STUDIES

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Editor's Introduction

The Australasian Review of African Studies (ARAS) is a cross disciplinary and peer reviewed journal that offers an outlet for publication on African affairs to established and emerging scholars alike. Over its history of more than forty years, the journal has covered historical and current aspects of African affairs but has also given space to studies of the African diaspora in Australia and New Zealand, in part because of the geographical location of most of its editors. The policy of the journal to encourage papers by postgraduate candidates has been marked throughout its history, and such papers are of course subject to the same standard of peer review as all others.

A notable feature of the journal is its independence and lack of reliance on a major publishing house for its existence: it is the organ of the African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) and successive editors and editorial boards have valued the open source mode that this makes possible. In the current period the journal is moving to a subscription-based service that will preserve access to members of AFSAAP and more generally to readers through library memberships. Details will be circulated to members and libraries throughout the world in the next few months.

The activities of the Association take shape also in conferences and symposia, which under the circumstances of Covid were largely online. Now a return to physical gatherings is re-joined and in May 2023 a symposium will take place in Sydney, at Western Sydney University. Details are noted at the foot of this introduction.

The diversity supported by the journal is reflected in the current issue. The leading article on the management of disasters in Ethiopia, jointly authored by Didanna and others, rests on extensive fieldwork and contains a range of policy recommendations that apply not just to Ethiopia but more generally to the South in many places; as in earlier articles on related themes, the responsibilities of the North are evident throughout. Next, the critical account offered by Osiebe of the censorship of music in Nigeria shows how the conditions of the Internet have rendered old laws obsolete, an effect not lost on the artists he documents; again, the argument can be extended beyond the specific locale of the paper. The emphasis of the journal on the African diaspora is well reflected in the article by Kuyini and others that examines African women's experience of domestic violence in Australia, again with a number of policy recommendations and with linkages to earlier papers by other authors in the related literature.

The paper by Alexander Whitehead assesses the reality of life in Sahrawi currently and is an example of a younger scholar's attention to the

documents and literature of what is to some a controversial subject, to which he brings cool light. The concluding interview between Charlotte Mackay and Cécile Dolisane Ebosse will give heart to those wishing to see the further development of African studies in Australia, especially in remedying the Anglocentric emphasis that has been dominant for so long (including in ARAS to some degree, it could be said); her Francophone journey must surely encourage others.

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African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific

Locating African Studies in the Global South: Fostering New Directions and Global Solidarities

AFSAAP Symposium
Western Sydney University (WSU), Sydney
Parramatta City Campus May 24-25th 2023

The terms ‘Global South’ and ‘Third World’ are often used interchangeably to describe a broad political project rather than a narrow geographic grouping. Balakrishnan Rajagopal argues that the concept of the 'Third World' remains valid in the post-Cold War era for exposing 'the hierarchical ordering of the international community' and 'for locating the roots of this hierarchy in the history of colonialism' . What animates the Global South, then, is an anti-colonial, anti-racist, decolonial opposition to a historically constituted ‘Global North’ that is tied to global imperial hierarchies and the racialisation of non-European states and people. We pose the question: what does it mean to place African Studies in the Global South and the Global South in African Studies? How might African Studies strengthen solidarities with scholars and projects of the Global South including projects of the Global South in the Global North?

This symposium will map, explore, and build on a range of current debates about the relationship between African Studies and the Global South.

We hope to enrich these debates by taking stock of where we are in the current juncture in African Studies and how we might renew attention to this relationship and set new direction for a shared research agenda. Possible topics include, but are by no means limited to the following:

- What is the state of African Studies today? Where and how is African Studies discussed in Global South scholarship and how is the Global South discussed in African Studies?

- How might African Studies contribute to anti-colonial and decolonial projects of the Global South?
- What impact have grassroots social movements, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, and the Global Climate Movement had on African Studies?
- What are African Studies' complicities in colonial and imperial legacies?
- What does Africa's presence in international institutions such as the International Criminal Court tell us about the limits and possibilities of resisting global hierarchies? How should we engage with calls for epistemic justice in response to colonial legacies and hierarchies of knowledge? In particular, how might we engage with current global initiatives to decolonise science both in terms of the creation of scientific knowledge and its dissemination?
- How should African Studies engage with the urgent demands of the climate crisis given its roots in colonial legacies and disproportionate impacts on the Global South?
- How should we approach African Studies as a site of pedagogy and teaching? What has been the experience of teaching African Studies?
- What institutional and funding pressures impact on teaching and research on Africa in the diaspora and more generally? How might we maximise education access and scholarship opportunities for African students wishing to study at universities located in the Global North?

We welcome and encourage interdisciplinary projects, empirical studies, and different methodological and theoretical approaches including, decoloniality, postcolonial theory, Third World approaches, political economy, subaltern theory, and critical race theory. We invite papers that engage with the relationship between African Studies and the Global South. Graduate students and early career scholars are especially encouraged to submit an abstract.

To attend the symposium, please contact the AFSAAP Secretary, Dr Souheir Edelbi, secretary@afsaap.org.au

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Managing disaster risks through adaptation and mitigation strategies in Wolaita, Southern Ethiopia

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Abstract

Disasters have been affecting human and animal lives and the livelihoods of communities more recently than before and pose dangers to the communities in the Wolaita zone in southern Ethiopia. A lack of comprehensive, participatory, and location-specific research on multiple risks and various adaptation strategies has impeded more focused strategies to reduce risks and vulnerability. This study assessed the types, mitigation and adaptation strategies of humanitarian risks in the zone. Data were collected through focus group discussions, key informant interviews, storytelling of victims, and secondary sources. Results show that the area has been susceptible to drought, erratic rainfall, floods, pest infestation, human and livestock diseases, the high cost of fertilizer and improved seeds, population pressure, land scarcity, youth unemployment, water scarcity, and poor infrastructure. Adaptive included the Productive Safety Net program, relief and rehabilitation assistance, early warning, small income generation, and saving works. The mitigation options that can sustainably reduce the potential disaster include livestock feed production and disease control, small-irrigated crop farming, integrated pest management, select seed supply, natural resource conservation, land fertility management, infrastructure, social service development, family planning, and arranged or regulated migration. These call for integrated action in an interdisciplinary and community-centered approach by government, civil society, and humanitarian organisations to reduce exposure to hazards and vulnerabilities and subsequently to enhance the resilience of communities to manage risk.

Keywords: Disaster, Risk management, Vulnerability, Participatory, Rural Ethiopia

Introduction

The number of people affected by humanitarian crises has almost doubled over the past decade and is expected to keep growing. In early 2014, international aid organisations targeted to help 52 million people in crisis, and millions more people needed help from their communities, local organisations and governments. The cost of international humanitarian aid has increased in the last decade (United Nations, 2014). The same study disclosed that global challenges—such as climate change, population growth, food- and energy-price volatility, water scarcity and environmental degradation—are increasing risks for vulnerable people. They are wearing away people's ability to cope with shocks, making crises more extended and recurrent, and undermining sustainable development. These trends have become as likely to cause humanitarian crises as disasters and conflicts. Disasters pose multiple concerns: damage and losses to production; the deterioration of land, forests, water, fish stocks and other natural resources; declining rates in productivity growth; and added pressures on already fragile agricultural livelihoods and ecosystems (FAO, 2017).

The Sendai Framework was adopted at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan in 2015 to build the resilience of nations and communities to disasters. It articulates the needs, among others, for improved understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of exposure; the strengthening of disaster risk governance, including accountability for disaster risk management; a preparedness to "Build Back Better"; and platforms for disaster risk reduction (United Nations, 2015). A shift towards a more preventative approach to humanitarian crises is also required. Most crises can be anticipated, and while they cannot always be prevented, the suffering they cause can often be greatly reduced. But humanitarian aid today is tremendously focused on responding after crises occur. Governments and their partners have failed considerably to reduce risks to the world's most vulnerable people. It is time for an important change in approach. Crisis-risk management needs to be incorporated into the humanitarian aid system. This includes systematically identifying risks, reducing their impact and coping with the residual effects (Metcalfe et al., 2011).

Every humanitarian crisis is different, but a risk-management approach can and should be applied universally. It should go hand in hand with responding to need. Humanitarian organisations cannot fix this alone. Preventing and mitigating crises necessitate the commitment of

governments, development organisations, and many others. Hence, community-based humanitarian risk identification, mitigation and adaptation mechanisms need to be developed and implemented side by side with the core development activities. This will also provide a basis for formulating policy that supports humanitarian risk reduction. However, challenges arise when dealing with hazards and the impacts of disasters owing to gaps in the availability of and access to data and information.

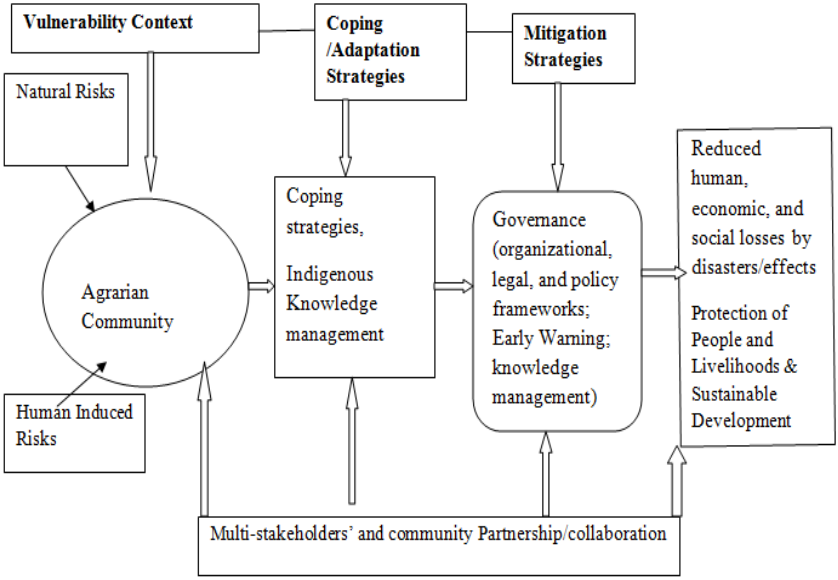
Ethiopia is one of the most disaster-prone countries in Africa. Without careful management, disaster effects can undermine food security and socio-economic advances. Disaster risk reduction planning, including contingency and risk mitigation/adaptation, is under the national system of the country. Yet, numerous barriers stand in the way of Ethiopia's ability to deal with disasters, including a lack of comprehensive, participatory, and location-specific research on multiple risks and various adaptation strategies. Recurrent disasters have been occurring and affecting human and animal lives and the livelihoods of communities, and there are still potential dangers to the rural communities in the study area (Wolaita zone). Considerable knowledge gaps exist on the types of disasters and their coping mechanisms, which hinder the design and implementation of more attentive mitigation strategies for disaster management to reduce disaster risks and vulnerability to poverty reduction and unsustainable development. This study was thus aimed at identifying disaster risks, and adaptation and mitigation options with local communities and experts in NGOs and government offices. This would contribute to a multi-hazard integrated approach and management of disaster risk reduction and development by government, donors, service providers, and international organisations in their efforts related to humanitarian risk management in the country.

Conceptual framework of the study

The rural community has been living in a complex environment of both natural and human-induced hazards, which are caused by various risk factors. The presumed key factors include natural risks (i.e., abnormal seasonality, fluctuating rainfall, high temperatures, and diseases) and human-influenced or socio-economic risks: market risk (i.e., input and output prices), financial risk, health risk, institutional and political risk. The major possible outcomes that can be caused by the above-mentioned factors include the disasters of drought (Duguma et al., 2017), flood (Cordaid and IIRR, 2011), land slide

(Bekele et al., 2010), human and livestock diseases (Bahal'okwibale, 2017), crop pests, conflict, food insecurity, population pressure, diseases, and higher food prices. Therefore, these multi-hazard/disaster risks and their management approaches were the strategic components of the framework for the analysis in the study, as shown here (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study (developed by authors)



Research methods

Study Area

Ethiopia is administratively divided into regional states, zones, districts/woreda and kebeles. Zone is an administrative unit lower than region that comprises all districts and kebeles/ smallest administrative unit/ in the area. Woreda is the administrative unit above kebele. The Wolaita zone of this study is composed of three populous areas in southern Ethiopia. Since the administrative restructuring taken by the SNNPR of

Ethiopia in 2006, the zone is further subdivided into twelve rural Woredas and three administrative towns. As it is explained in the methodology section, five rural Woredas were selected as the study sites: Boloso Sore, Boloso Bombe, Kindo Koysha, Duguna Fango and Humbo. These are shown in Figure 2. Within those Woredas, the Kebeles studied are shown in Figure 3.

Bio-physical features of the zone

Wolaita is one of the zonal administrations in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPR). The capital of the zone, Wolaita Sodo, is located about 330 km from Addis Ababa. The Wolaita zone is located at an altitude that varies between 900 and 2600 meters above sea level. It comprises a total area of 4471 km2, or 438,370 hectares, which makes up 4.03 percent of the total area of the SNNPR (Wolaita Zone Finance and Economic Development Office [WZFED], 2016). Wolaita is roughly divided into two altitudinal zones: the lowlands with hot and semi-dry conditions and the highlands with relatively cooler and sub-humid conditions, with variation in the average temperature from 15°C to 31°C. Rainfall occurs in two seasons: the main rains (called 'kremt' rains) occur in roughly June, July, and August, and a shorter rainy season (called 'belg' rains) occurs roughly from mid-February to mid-May. Average annual rainfall varies between 803 mm at Abela Faracho in the lowlands to 1189 mm at Sodo in the highlands. Eutric Nitisols associated with Humic Nitisols, which are dark reddish brown with deep profiles, are the most prevalent soil types in zone (Tesfaye, 2003).

Declining soil fertility due to continuous use, organic matter removal, and poor soil management practices, are some of the key problems constraining agricultural production in both the highlands and the lowlands (Pound and Jonfa, 2005). In the highlands, cereals, root crops, and perennials are widely grown, while the hot and semi-dry conditions in the lowlands allow the cultivation of only limited types of crops. Like everywhere in the highlands of Ethiopia, livestock are an integral part of the farming system.

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Figure 2: Map of the study Woredas

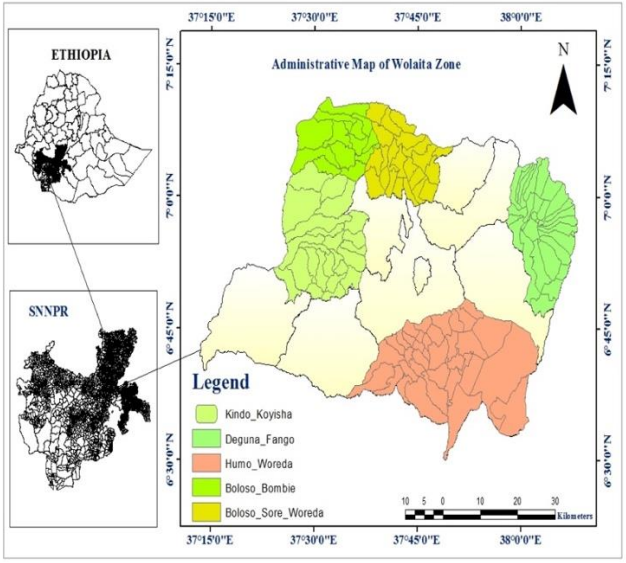
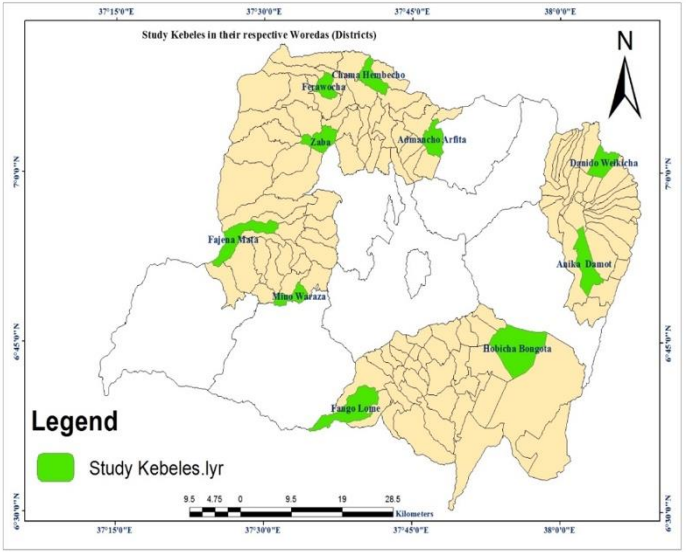


Figure 3: Map of the study Kebeles



The study design

It is important to collect information about farmers' perceptions of mitigation and adaptation measures. One approach for collecting such information that has been used for mitigation and adaptation research is qualitative, using open-ended survey questions or group discussion to understand individual and group opinions (Barnes et al., 2008). This study mainly involved qualitative research, and the survey-based design included focus group interviews, oral histories, and observation for the humanitarian risks assessment, specifically to identify farmers' exposure to various disaster risks, their levels of coping ability, and sustainable mitigation strategies.

Sampling procedure

As the assessment is addressing districts across the zone, rural kebeles, individuals, groups, organisations, public sectors, and natural phenomena, the sampling procedure should maintain a balance between the scientific quality of the sampling procedures and the complexity and comprehensiveness of the research coverage. The sampling procedure for this comprehensive assessment would be more illustrative (mainly with purposive and convenient sampling) than representative (or probability).

Multi-stage sampling was used for the study. First, the Wolaita zonal administration was picked purposively, as it is the target intervention area of a collaborating organisation (Ayuda en Accion Ethiopia, an NGO prominent in support of disaster-affected communities). Then, as zonal risk assessments had to draw data from many different sources, posing challenges in terms of data traceability, reliability, proper documentation, intro-probability, and more, it was important that data sources were explicit, including concerns about the use of expert know-how. With this understanding, the strategic partners who are working on the issue of humanitarian risk management have been systematically identified. Then, five districts were included in the study based on the selected intervention areas of the project in terms of their maximum vulnerability to humanitarian disaster risks. Two kebeles from each district (totaling ten) were selected randomly based on their agro-ecology. Participants included in the study were 50 in the focus group discussion, 10 in the key informant interviews, 10 in the community stories, and 35 in the inception workshop.

Methods of data collection

A situation inquiry was conducted from December 2018 to February 2019 to articulate the process of information gathering concerning the objective through an interview guide, audio-video tape recorder, pictures, notes, field notes, and an observational check list. Basic issues were discussed at the zonal, districts/woredas, and kebele levels to confirm the research agenda and establish a timeframe for collaborative participation.

Selection of focus group discussion (FGD) participants

The selection of target groups/ FGDs members was based on the social skills of the counterparts for participatory research, and their demonstrated superior communication abilities in the local language(s) of the participating villages. This involved a set of community representatives in each kebele i.e., a chairman, a leader of a religious organisation, the head of a cooperative, a model farmer or two, the head of the women's affairs department, an officer of the youth and sports department, the head of local institutions like Iddir (a traditional or informal financial and social institution for funerals), and an extension worker. The group subscription rules and rules for group functioning were set first. Then, discussions were held after introducing the purpose of the research.

Choice of key informants

Three levels of informants were surveyed in this study: zonal level participants, non-governmental organisations, and government experts, including the Agricultural Office, the Disaster and Risk Management Office, the Food Security and Natural Resource Management Office, and the Department of the Early Warning System. A key informant interview checklist was used to conduct in-depth interviews with individuals who could provide details and knowledge-based information about the humanitarian risks in the study areas.

Case stories

These help to get detailed data about individual and household cases of purposively selected ten case participants. The researchers used open-

ended questions and made them free to narrate their experiences and stories concerning hazards and outcomes they encountered.

Secondary data

A desk study of existing information was reviewed, including other reports and published articles. The main information sources included existing knowledge among local government, agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other notable research institutions in the vicinity of the study area. The secondary data served as background material, particularly in relation to the contemporary context of humanitarian risks over time and disaster management.

Data analysis and presentation

After the data were collected, there was cross-examination to ascertain their accuracy and completeness, and they were analysed according to the themes in the research objectives. Qualitative data was transcribed by experts and native speakers of the languages of the respondents and translated to English. Then, frequent responses were identified and set aside as a list of themes for further analysis and interpretation. In other words, thematic and content analysis were then made to describe information into a ranking of disaster risks and to summarise adaptation and mitigation strategies in tables.

Results and discussion

Humanitarian/disaster risks identified

The agrarian production system in Wolaita is highly endangered because of so many risks, including both natural and human-induced disasters. Some of the major humanitarian risks that challenge the agrarian communities include natural disasters (droughts, flooding, and snow); social/human disasters including population pressure, unemployment, disputes, and mass movements of migration; environmental disasters (landslides, scarcity, and loss of natural resources such as water, pasture, delayed or erratic rain fall); biological hazards like livestock diseases and deaths (Blackleg, Anthrax, Trypanosomiasis), human diseases, food shortages, hunger, and crop pests and diseases; and agricultural risks including land degradation, farmland fragmentation, and uncertain agricultural inputs, uncertain markets, and crop failure. Infrastructural

development such as roads and electricity has also not been accessible (Table 1).

Table 1. Risk Matrix/ranking of respective disasters across the woredas and kebeles

Disaster Risk Category	Boloso Bombe		Boloso Sore		DegunaFango		Humbo		KindoKoyisha	
	Ose	Zaba	Afama Bancha	Dache Gofara	Anka Damot	Dendo Ofa	Abaya Gurucho	Fango Lome	Fajena	Zabato
Landslide	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Scarcity/Loss of resources	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2
Livestock Disease	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	1	4
Flooding	1	-	1	2	1	1	1	4	2	1
Drought	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Wildfire	2	-	-	-	2	-	3	3	-	-
Strong Storm/Wind	2	2	2	2	2	3	4	3	3	2
Conflicts/dispute	-	-	3	2	3	2	4	4	3	4
Mass Displacement	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
Human Disease	2	4	2	2	2	2	3	1	1	3
Food Price inflation/Starvation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Crop Pests/Diseases	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Weather/Climatic risks	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Uncertain Market for Producers	2	1	-	2	-	-	2	1	-	-
Uncertain Agricultural inputs	-	-	1	-	4	-	3	2	-	-
Lack of/poor infrastructure	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3	1
Migration	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	-	1
Land Degradation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Unemployment	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Population Growth	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Others	1	1	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	1

Key: 1= highly severe (occurring more frequently than once in 3 years); 2= moderately severe (occur from once in 3 to 5 years); 3=less severe (occur once in 5 years); 4= very less severe (occur once in 10 years)

According to key informant interviews with zonal disaster and risk management officers, the number of people affected by drought in the present fiscal year is estimated to be 78,210 in the Wolaita zone. The crops attacked by disease and pests included enset, coffee, ginger, mango, haricot bean, banana, avocado, and false banana. Most diseases and pests have not yet been identified. According to the zonal crop protection office, most ginger farms have been affected by disease or pests in the Wolaita zone, which is estimated to be 6,222.35 ha. The zonal job creation officer also disclosed that out of 35,966 youth registered, 4,303 were given loans, and 12,907 were organised in savings to engage them in the agriculture sector, including dairy farming, one-day-old chicken rearing, and small-irrigated crop farming. The others are looking for jobs, and unemployment has resulted in numerous challenges. As shown in Table 1, there have been severe and common problems in nearly half of the studied districts. Thus, the risks identified further help to illuminate their official status and their significance.

Several regions in Ethiopia are found to be drought-prone recurrently (Funk et al., 2012). Ethiopia had the lowest annual rainfall in thirty years in 2015 (OECD/FAO, 2016). In 2015, the occurrence of a strong El Niño episode has been accompanied by exceptionally dry conditions across Eastern and Southern Africa. Tadesse (2014) also reported that the most important limitations to cattle production were widespread endemic diseases and parasitic infestation and poor veterinary service, among others. A combination of intensive farming practices and demographic burden has led to considerable land degradation and growing numbers of rural households with poor landholdings. Moreover, the long-standing practice of households cutting and burning trees, either to meet their own immediate energy needs or to earn some income, as a coping mechanism, can lead to ruinous effects on the environment and the natural resource base for current and future generations (World Bank, 2005).

Comparable disasters to those examined here have been reported in different parts of the world. Floods and landslides were rated as extreme rated hazards in Nepal in terms of destruction of human lives and properties (Practical Action, 2016). According to Baidya et.al. (2008), the number of days with intensive rainfall has also been found to be increasing in Nepal, which signifies potential increase in flood and land slide events in the years to come. Landslide happens every year in the hilly areas of Chittagong, a south-eastern part of Bangladesh (Ahmed et al., 2014). The Lesser Himalaya, a mountainous region of India, has been very prone to different types of slope failure, namely land sliding (Punyatoya and Roshani, 2015). Cesar et al. (2018) have shown that many researchers have been working worldwide on the subject of the rainfall-induced landslides, especially in countries like Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Taiwan, Singapore, and China. In Pakistan, drought is one of the major natural threats (Nagarajan, 2003). Inhabitants of rural areas representing 84% of the global population use unimproved sources of drinking water, such as surface water, unprotected spring water, unprotected well water, and water from tanker trucks. The problem is worse in many parts of the developing nations, particularly in rural areas, where many people lack enough water to stay healthy (WHO and UNICEF, 2000). In Africa that lack of sustainability of the water supply is one of the constraints of development efforts in the continent (African Development Fund, 2005; Harvey and Reed, 2007).

Human diseases including malaria, atet (intestinal disease), podoconiosis and bone disease related to fluorinated water were reported in the study area. According to FDRE (2012), malaria epidemics are severe public health disasters that have impeded socioeconomic development in Ethiopia. Malaria is a leading cause of death and disease in many countries, and young children and pregnant women are the groups most affected (CDC, 2019).

Adaptation and mitigation strategies to reduce the disasters in the studied areas

The following table (2) summarizes the different strategies of risk management adopted by the communities and the further support needed by stakeholders to address the identified humanitarian risks.

Table 2. Summary of information on disasters, adaptation and mitigation strategies

Type of disasters	Adaptation strategies	Mitigation strategies
Seasonal abnormality/weather related	Use of drought resistant crop varieties like cassava, sorghum, cotton	Maintaining environmental protection strategies and planting diverse crop varieties (early maturating)
Drought	Safety net program; Food aid; taking credit from '*Iddir*' and buying grains/cereals from merchants; Selling grass, goats and trees	Placing ways of compensating for debt of inputs (Improved seeds and fertilizers) as victims/crop loss cannot afford paying it; Organizing cooperative and maintaining initial capital so that members can benefit
Erosion and snow	Displacement	Planting vegetation; terracing; and Contouring to control water erosion
Erratic rainfall	Use of drought-resistant crop varieties	Environmental protection and planting crop varieties which require low moisture; small irrigation/watershed schemes.
Deforestation at high land area	Planting of trees at deforested area	Protection of uncultivable area like marginal land and steep slope as well as maintaining afforestation program at deforested area
Wildfire at lowland area		Awareness creation on natural vegetation protection
Water shortage for human and animals	Using of bore-hole water and fetch water from interrupting	Government and NGOs need to build public pipe water source at least in each sub clusters of kebele to address water shortage and controlling planting of eucalyptus

	streams for human consumption and animals. People drink water from digging sandy areas, rainwater from roof, fetching water from far distance (> 1 hour)	trees near streams; canals/ponds construction to harvest water during rainy season for gardening/cultivating vegetables
Disease and pests of Crops (ginger, maize, mango, coffee, banana, *enset*, avocado, and bean)	Use or attempt to fight crop diseases via Indigenous knowledge such as uprooting the damaged ones and replacing with other crops, for instance, *enset*	Involvement of University and research centers to conduct further studies to identify type of diseases and to find the way out; disease and pest resistant crop variety seeds should be provided for the farmers. Integrated Pest Management
Animal disease and feed shortage	Cattle are kept at home to protect from vectors and using crop residues	Investigating type of animal disease through laboratory intensive research work; Vaccine and treatment provision; planting of appropriate forage crops
Flood occurrence at lowland area	Sale of animals, evacuation/ migration and selling firewood.	Making check dams to control runoff
Soil erosion at high land area	Bench terraces are used to control soil erosion	Strengthening soil conservation practices like terracing, planting trees to minimize the magnitude of soil erosion

Landslide at high land area	Displaced from landslide-susceptible area to other better area	Prohibiting marginal land cultivation; agro-forestry type of cultivation and strengthening water-shed management
Absence of market	Selling items in local area for low prices	Government should construct all weather roads which connect rural area /market access and agricultural cooperative/value chain management system should be adopted
Student dropout		School should be built at near distance and pipe water must constructed within school campus
Rapid population growth	Some people attempt to use contraceptive methods	Awareness creation; adopting stringent population policies and supervision on contraceptive method practices / family planning practices
Unemployment	Migration to other regions though problems happening recently; works at an investor/private farm as daily laborer; some NGOs organize women through cooperative to provide credit for petty trade (butter, haricot bean and coffee)	Setting up labor-intensive industries at Wolaita zone; strengthening both off-farm activities (designing of stone for construction purpose, enhancing barberry, metal work, machinery, etc using solar energy in rural areas) and supporting goat and poultry production; small scale irrigation, and fishery (training and resources)
Poverty	Contracting farmland; borrowing money from friends/relatives; migrating to other area and	Various NGOs need to be involved and work on different socio-economic problems of the community; Strengthening all physical and human-induced

	selling of assets like domestic animals	poverty reduction strategies to minimize the magnitude of poverty; Diversifying income sources for rural households
Food insecurity	Food aid; working on Safety Net Program; minimizing daily frequency of meals; eating of wild fruits, and using drought - resistant crop types like cassava	Adopting and planting crop types which could reach maturity within short period of time (60-90 days) and requiring low moisture. Implementing small scheme irrigation as alternative to rain-fall dependent agricultural practice
High pricing of fertilizer & selected seeds	Using compost and animal manure and sometimes cultivating crops without fertilizer	Government should provide fertilizer and selected seeds to farmers in subsidized price until they are manufactured in the country
Absence of medicine at health center	Moving to far distance health centers and purchase medicine from private vendors by high price; using of traditional medication	Provision of medicine at health center timely
Lack of milking cows & oxen	Living without animals and getting animal products from markets	Arranging provision of at least one milking cow and one ox for poor households initially by NGO/Government
Road and bridge problems	Using existing foot paths	Government should construct all weather roads to connect villages with *kebele* and *woreda* center.

		Constructing roads and bridges and finishing those started that help in marketing (stone, etc) and to go to school and health station
Delayed startup seed money for organized unemployed youths		Government should timely distribute initial money for unemployed youths and/or connect them with bank systems

Source: Researchers' field work 2019

Our findings indicate that the various rural households' adaptation strategies included use of drought-resistant crop varieties, a safety net program, food aid, taking credit and buying from crop merchants, selling grass, goats, and firewood/trees, planting trees on degraded land, digging bench terraces, fetching water from a distance, migrating and working as daily laborers or as displaced persons, using marginal and uncultivable lands, contracting out farm land, borrowing money from friends and relatives, minimising the frequency of meals, eating wild fruits, using compost and animal manure in place of costly chemical fertiliser, moving to far-distant health centers, purchasing medicine from private vendors costly and using traditional medication.

The mitigation options proposed were: soil and water conservation; use of drought resistant and early growing crop varieties; small irrigation schemes; protection of uncultivable areas like marginal land and steep slopes; drinking water development; pond construction/water harvesting; identifying diseases and pests and their control; integrated pest management; animal disease prevention/ vaccination and laboratory diagnosis and treatment; making check dams to control runoff; off-farm income generating schemes for landless households; construction of all-weather roads and bridges for market access; family planning practices; setting up labor intensive industries; subsidizing the cost of fertilizer and selected seeds; supplying medicine timely at health centers; providing milking cows and ox for poor households; and financing unemployed youth for job creation (Table 2). The survey results show that the efforts of communities to employ various indigenous adaptation strategies toward adjusting the effects of disasters were innovative. However, further mitigation interventions are needed to build the capacity of communities so that they can sustainably prevent the

vulnerability and causes of the risks and make the impacts of the disaster less severe.

In this connection, the population that has been exposed to different disaster risks is highly vulnerable and has limited capacity to cope with it. According to the zonal disaster prevention and risk management office, at the present time around 199,782 people have been beneficiaries of the Productive Safety Net program (a social protection program) targeted towards the poor and vulnerable households in the studied area. Various organisations, including the government (risk management and early warning; food security) and NGOs (Concern Worldwide, the Red Cross, and the Ethiopian Catholic Church), participated in the aid and relief efforts.

To this end, the involvement of NGOs (Ethiopian Catholic Church and Concern Worldwide) in the locality with some livelihood development (water supply, irrigation, seed provision, livestock, agriculture and nutrition linkage, environmental rehabilitation, women's petty trade/savings and credit, and youth job creation) and emergency food aid (drought, landslide, and flood) for a limited number of households in the project sites are positive experiences to build on, but not adequate. Therefore, large-scale and sustainable rural development projects need to be implemented by the government and donors to mitigate the major disaster risks in the study area in particular and in the zone at large. This should include the aforementioned proposed areas of interventions, namely: soil and water conservation; drought- and pest-resistant and early-growing crop varieties; small irrigation schemes; water development; integrated pest management; animal disease prevention and laboratory diagnosis and treatment; construction of all-weather roads and bridges; and family planning practices. Investments by the private sector and government can stimulate labour-intensive industries; the provision of fertilizers and improved seeds, and adaptable

livestock breeds; the supply of medicine and equipment for health centers; and the financing of unemployed youth for job creation, including solar energy development. All these need partnerships/collaboration among stakeholders (public, private, NGOs, and community leaders) from planning (priority and role setting) to the stage of implementation at the target household level.

Vulnerable members of the community in many cases rely upon animals in one form or another to support their livelihoods, and livestock-related interventions (veterinary support, provision of feed and water, destocking, livestock shelter) are commonly included as part of emergency responses (FAO, 2016). There have been many ways of fighting against livestock diseases, with vaccinations (against Anthrax and blackleg for example) and treatments as the major ones. For instance, in 2016, 171,652 and 142,347 cattle were vaccinated against anthrax and blackleg respectively in the Wolaita zone (CSA, 2016). The percentages used by type of livestock feed resources include 67.68 % green fodder, 21.29 % crop residue, 1.18 % improved feed, and 4.45 % hay (Ibid.). Therefore, interventions are needed in responding to the feed shortage in an integrated way, including forage-based soil and water conservation.

Previous intervention and risk mitigation strategies in Ethiopia indicated a number of strategies that can be adopted for the present context. For instance, the practices of NGOs/Mercy Corps Ethiopia have shown that successful disaster risk reduction strategies could be designed in livestock husbandry. It is possible to mitigate and prevent disasters related to this subsector through interventions like vaccination, treatment, and the development of household-level indigenous fodder plants and water. Combining these with awareness-creation and capacity building interventions is also identified as resulting in more effective and sustainable strategies.

Considerable actions have also been implemented by non-governmental organizations (Catholic Relief Services and CARE Ethiopia) in terms of prevention, mitigation, preparedness, and response in livestock and crop husbandry, through an integrated development approach, infrastructure and social service development, income generation and behavioral change, rehabilitation and conservation of natural resources, early warning works, access roads and food stores, and direct relief (Save the Children, 2006). However, there is limited documentation by NGOs in Ethiopia about the best practices of transitioning emergency response and development to wider audiences, and this needs work with knowledgeable institutions, like the current efforts of Ayuda en Accion Ethiopia.

There have been various experiences with disaster mitigation strategies elsewhere. One way of managing pests and diseases is to use pesticides. This procedure may prove efficient if the choice of the pesticide, its dosage, the timing of the application, and the application mode are correct. Integrated pest management also relies on the proper application of multiple preventive measures to minimise the necessity for direct control (FiBL, 2011). The mitigation of the impacts of drought has been a key area of focus in India since the 1950s, as evident through programs such as the Drought Prone Areas Program, National Disaster Response Fund, National Watershed Management Program for Rain-Fed Areas and the National Agricultural Crop Insurance Scheme (IBRD/World Bank, 2006). Flood mitigation has included both structural flood control measures (e.g. construction of dams or river dikes) and non-structural measures such as flood hazard and risk management, flood forecasting and warning, and public participation through institutional arrangements (Tingsanchali, 2011). There is also a good experience of community participation after incidents. Community and neighborhoods

contributed with their traditional mutual assistance system whereby labour and materials are freely shared for sediment removal from the farm fields and the reconstruction of shelter for those households affected by the flooding (Save the Children, 2006).

To prevent landslides in Bangladesh, it is necessary to stop hill cutting, and the collection of sand and other activities causing landslide (Sultana, 2013). Planting trees and vegetation in landslide-prone hills is part of a sustainable solution (Rubel and Ahmed, 2013). In another study of landslide disaster in Kenya by Rop and Anyona (2016), mitigation measures such as geo-hazard mapping and zoning, constructing soil conservation structures, and discouraging settlement and cultivation on steep slopes rather than reforestation (agro-forestry and beekeeping) have been recommended. In general, a community-based approach to a reduction of landslide risk may well be applicable to vulnerable communities in the developing world, including surface water management (Anderson, 2011).

Managed migration could be a risk mitigation and coping strategy, particularly in addressing socio-economic problems when livelihoods are at risk from food insecurity, land scarcity and lack of farming resources, environmental degradation, drought, and poverty. Urgent actions are required to address youth unemployment in both farm and non-farm sectors, as there is no doubt that unemployment has severe negative consequences (Jasmine et al. (2010)). In youth programs (in Uganda for example), innovative methods of funding youth enterprises have been developed, including ways for youth to access finance and reduce risk through revolving agricultural funds, low interest agricultural loans, collateral-free agricultural loans, agricultural input vouchers, agricultural equipment cost sharing, and leasing, hire purchase and guarantee schemes (FAO, 2017). To improve employment, the

uncertain markets for producers and other social risks such as inadequate rural infrastructure (roads and electricity) have to be addressed. Government, the private sector, and donors must intervene through infrastructure developments that support markets, such as roads, solar-generated electrification, and water supply.

Local communities need to evolve their own, indigenous activities to cope or live with disasters and have done so in some places. Many rural communities in Africa are vulnerable to food shortages because of drought, for example, but they are able to prevent full blown famine by employing coping mechanisms that allow them to ride out the hungry season until the next harvest. In Ghana, hundreds of young men travel in the dry season to look for work in the cocoa-producing areas. In the Zambesia province of Mozambique, the main coping strategy to deal with food shortage and drought is to change the diet and reduce food intake, moving from staple crops to fruits, wild fruits, and locally grown vegetables (ProVention Consortium 2022).

According to Uma (2008), disasters are no longer perceived as sudden eruptions that can be handled by emergency response and rescue services, but as those incidents that can be prevented, or the impact of which can be significantly reduced, through appropriate risk reduction strategies. The approach gives significance to building the capacities, skills, and knowledge of the people who are likely to face disasters. The concept of resilience or sustainability of communities occupies centre stage in the debate on management of disasters. There is a shift from the traditional relief and disaster preparedness toward a developmental approach that is multidimensional, incorporating a combination of strategies aiming at the institutional and community levels. There is a need for people-centered, 'bottom-up' approaches that empower local communities and augment their resources

to evolve local-specific risk reduction strategies. Efforts in India to reduce the vulnerability of communities through supporting the employment and livelihood strategies is an example; micro-finance is increasingly being used to create safety nets and enable families manage disaster risks. It helps communities to mobilise money and invest in preventive activities like drainage system, dykes and dams. The assistance is given to enhance community risk-coping strategies, in the form of operating grain or fodder banks and other disaster preparedness activities (Uma, 2008).

The key technical areas to address disaster response and rehabilitation should include local capacity building for communities and development agents, information analysis and communication, infrastructure development, natural resource management, and policy advocacy. Basing these interventions on Indigenous knowledge and local practice and ensuring that communities decide on and manage these interventions themselves will provide an opportunity for community-managed disaster preparedness in the future.

Conclusions

This study examined types, adaptation and mitigation strategies of disaster risks in the Wolaita area. The studied districts have been vulnerable to diverse disasters, which call for integrated engagements by the government, civil society and humanitarian organisations reduce vulnerability and exposure to hazards, and to enhance the resilience of communities. Requirements include institutionalising and strengthening national systems and capacities, improving governance mechanisms at the local level, addressing and reducing the vulnerabilities of the communities at risk, as well as identifying and building the capacities of people. The complex socioeconomic problems call for need investment and

sustainable/integrated rural development solutions through multi-stakeholder partnerships that address recurring disasters.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented:

- Disaster Response and Rehabilitation Projects need to focus on timely response, community-based drought preparedness, promoting local resilience, and strengthening community based early-warning systems.
- Effective coordination and joint work among ministries, donors, and local actors in development and humanitarian assistance agencies can reduce disaster vulnerability of the affected and high-risk communities.
- Environmental education and disaster risk management among local schools and communities should be initiated and supported.
- Providing agro-metrological services to farming communities helps them adjust to impacts of prolonged dry spells, greater flooding, and erratic rainfall.
- Enhance existing traditional and introduced good land management practices. Soil and water conservation for land rehabilitation (both physical and biological measures), including band structures planted with dasho and elephant grasses.
- Prevention and control program on livestock disease (trypanosomiasis) and crop (ginger, enset, coffee, maize) pests and diseases need to be in place, including tsetse fly trap and IPM (Integrated Pest Management).
- Crop diversification offers protection from disease and pest damage. It can also reduce erosion risks by providing enhanced soil cover and crop residues for use as green manure and mulch. These would reduce risk in the food supply system and contribute to food security.

• The high cost of agricultural inputs and extension services needs attention to enhance food and feed security.
• Freedom to live and work across regions for every human race and citizen is needed in this globalised world; anti-racism and displacement need to be backed up by laws.
• Engaging rural youth in intensive agricultural practices and businesses as self-employment options (livestock fattening, apiculture, mountain farming, fish production, trade). Solar panels as a climate-smart technology need to be introduced to facilitate income-generating schemes. Sustainable use of potential lands in the lowlands and pastoral areas in the form of ranching and irrigated crop farming could be an alternative means of absorbing large amounts of labor.
• Smallholders are faced with land insecurity, mainly due to urbanisation, which can cause severe losses in the availability of productive agricultural land unless institutions become capable of implementing the appropriate urban policies on land tenure.

Declarations

No competing interests. Authors' contributions - Authors gathered information, analysed and wrote up the manuscript

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Narcotics and broadcast censorship in Nigerian popular culture

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Abstract
Cultural producers are ahead of broadcast censors in Nigeria with respect to promoting narcotics, due to the proliferation of digital technologies. Popular culture has been shown to be an auditory cue for emotions and cravings in people with substance use disorders. Similarly, popular culture consoles in the face of stress and other social maladies. In Nigeria, several astute cultural producers have devised means to provide audiences with art that encourages the use of narcotics, while consciously outwitting the mandated broadcast censors. Whereas literature on censorship in Nigerian popular culture exists, the reverse is the case with literature on substance abuse within texts of Nigerian popular culture. This paper engages with the intersections of these variables. Using an audio-visual critique of selected popular cultural material, the paper also draws from conversations with industry watchers of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB).

Keywords: broadcast censorship, internet censorship, narcotics, popular culture, Afrobeats, digitization, Olamide, Tiwa Savage, Nigeria

Introduction

What are the implications of broadcast censorship without internet censorship for popular music and the corresponding videos in Nigeria? The subject of censorship with respect to the audio-visual dynamics in broadcasting popular art is salient because "what constitutes censorship…is a more complex matter than might immediately be thought" (Cloonan 2004: 3). This article considers the attempts to censor art in Nigeria in the internet age. Through Nigeria's postcolonial history, a vast collection of popular music videos and audio has been prohibited from airing on television and radio by the relevant regulatory authorities. So brazen was the censorship of popular music during military rule that the wounds incurred by the inimitable Fela Anikulapo-Kuti, in particular, for the extremely ridiculing 'Zombie' (1976), remain fresh in the consciousness of music followers in the country. The military found 'Zombie' too much of an affront to its authority to the point where the infamous raid on Fela's home resulted in the eventual death of his mother, Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti (Olaniyan 2004).

Fela's open use and endorsement of marijuana encouraged the authorities in the ways they wielded force on Fela and his kith. Beyond Fela, another notable censoring (ban) of the work of a Nigerian popular musician by a regulatory agency was that of his son, Femi Kuti's 'Beng Beng Beng' (1998). Although 'Beng Beng Beng' had no anti-government provocation as part of its make-up, it was banned for the lewdness of its lyrics and video. It is striking, however beside the point, to observe that both 'Zombie' and 'Beng Beng Beng' remain hits across the African continent and beyond, to this day. The point to note is that except within somewhat sociological and psychological contexts, where the framing is predominantly something of '*for-a-better-society-don't-corrupt-the-young-ones*' mantra, research on censorship with regards to non-confrontational music material, as is 'Beng Beng Beng', is pretty lean.

Presently in Nigeria, bans have been unconsciously internalized as being either of no consequence or simply the making of an overenthusiastic censors' management unable to keep pace with the times. Censorship has moved from governmental self-preservation during military rule to societal ethics in the democratic age. The fundamental point is that what is often referred to as a 'ban' by the censor, the audience, and the censored in Nigeria is usually only a restriction. It is impossible to 'ban' from broadcast houses while internet censorship policy is ineffectual. For it is worth pondering what the role of national censors are in an age where the artist has a global audience with whom various degrees of interaction are sustained on online and social media platforms.

To a large extent, the mandates of the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and associated censors' boards have been overtaken by the digitization of media spaces. It is common knowledge that Internet-powered devices far outnumber radio and television sets in many a country, Nigeria inclusive. The wisdom of a regulatory framework that prevents a listener from accessing 'banned' music on television and/or radio while the same access in the very same location is a YouTube click away makes for a bona fide existential challenge to administrators and scholars alike. The territorial charter which censors are wont to proclaim is problematic in the context. After all, of what moral standing is it to insist on the 'sanity' of one's local airwaves while disenfranchised artists are encouraged to pitch their music on the airwaves of other nations? Since the same citizens, being netizens, would maintain their musical tastes at home and abroad, the position of national broadcast censors become increasingly untenable.

Engagements on the enactment of Internet censorship in Nigeria are ongoing (Akana 2016; Kafoi 2016; Nigeria Internet Registration Association 2016; Adesina, 2018), but it is unclear what changes are possible. In spite of a number of studies of popular music censorship in Nigeria, it is something of an anomaly that none has yet queried the resultant effect of the bigger

successes recorded by banned music works. In fact, it is arguable that popular musicians in Nigeria harbor a craving to have their works 'banned' in order to magnify (and/or maximize) their success. The inertia associated with the reaction to such bans on non-anti-government works is to be understood also within the framework of globalisation and the technological realities of the present millennium.

The central research question thus: what are the implications of broadcast censorship without internet censorship for popular music and the corresponding videos in Nigeria? Having engaged stakeholders on the subject matter, the paper assesses the ways in which popular musicians enhance their creative talents, particularly through the visual components of their works, in order to outsmart censors while maintaining relevance in the mainstream pop scene.

The paper is constituted by three subsequent sections. The next focuses on broadcast censorship in Nigeria coupled with an overview of the extant literature. It is followed by a section on data analysis wherein a scenario of pro-narcotics' audio and anti-narcotics' visuals in contemporary Nigerian popular culture is unpacked.

Three interviews with officials in two of the relevant censorial/regulatory institutions in Lagos, Nigeria were conducted between November 2020 and January 2021. This followed a process of obtaining ethical oversight and travel permit from the Rhodes African Studies Centre and the International Library of African Music, Rhodes University, Makhanda, South Africa where I am cross-appointed on a research fellowship. An interviewee at the NBC sought to invoke the Chatham House Rule such that information provided could be analysed and quoted but the personal identity of the source not named. The two interviewees at the National Film and Video Censors Board (NFVCB) agreed to be named, although 'official protocol' meant that select questions were asked exclusively of the superior official. The final section proffers recommendations and concludes the paper.

Broadcast censorship in Nigerian popular culture

The NBC website <nbc.gov.ng> states its mission thus: "The NBC shall evolve defined standards in all aspects of broadcasting to effectively license, monitor and regulate an environment that encourages investment and development of quality programming and technology for a viable industry, which competes favorably in the global information society" (NBC 2020). However, democratic expediency ensures that the military/Decree origins of the Commission has been subtly expunged such that it defines itself further as "a parastatal of the Federal Government of Nigeria established by Section 1 of the NBC Act…laws of the Federation, 2004 and vested with the responsibilities of, amongst other things, regulating and controlling the broadcasting Industry in Nigeria" (NBC 2020). The NBC is mandated to ensure the development and the accreditation of the mass communication curricula in all the tertiary and other broadcast-related institutions in Nigeria. The NBC prohibits broadcast that could trigger "public disorder [or] be repugnant to pubic feeling". Through its enforcement of the "consumer protection law", the NBC ensures that "viewers and listeners are protected from offensive and harmful material" (NBC 2020).

It is observed that none of the functions of the NBC explicitly transits from that of a watchdog for the broadcaster as an organisation to that of a check for the broadcaster as an individual or content producer. The censorship which the Commission has grown famous for represents one of its more favored enforcement approaches. In the age of the internet, individuals who command enormous clout have sizable following on the blogosphere and are a click away from 'broadcasting' whatever pleases them whenever they deem necessary. How, then, is the NBC supposed to effectively perform its functions in this age? Beyond television and radio, which constitute media with progressively leaner users and audiences, can the NBC be said to be relevant to the contemporary space? Indeed, where lays the 'broadcasting code' in the midst of the predominance of internet access? Since it is well known that one of the most popular punitive measures deployed by the NBC and its affiliates in Nigeria is to effect

censorship through various degrees of ban on creative contents, how is one to make sense of these degrees of ban independent of the highly subscribed blogosphere?

Censorship is a multi-faceted practice and music often gets caught up in censorship that has been designed for other media (Cloonan 2004). The "Aesopian strategies" (Drewett 2004: 183) adopted by popular musicians in Apartheid South Africa in order to beat censorship and receive the South African Broadcasting Corporation's airplay were from the same playbook that has constituted the complexity of navigating the peculiar regulatory terrain in Africa. Skjerdal (2010), focusing on the Ethiopian state-owned media landscape, observes how journalists engage in self-censoring practices in order to fall in line, keep their jobs and avert the risk of incurring the government's wrath on themselves or their organizations. More striking is the author's deduction that most of the journalists do not approve of self-censorship yet continue to engage in it as their contribution, among others, to social responsibility. Also conspicuous is Skjerdal's finding that the official editorial policy of Ethiopia's state media is at sharp variance with the practice.

Skjerdal's exposé offers a useful guide in navigating through the practice of cultural producers in Nigeria who do not exactly self-censor but rather deploy 'social responsibility' gimmicks towards securing the approval of censoring authorities. In Nigeria, scholarship on music censorship has been preoccupied with illicit content in hip-hop (Endong, 2016) and the suppression of anti-government works (Akpan 2006; Eribo and Tanjong 2010). Military rule ended in 1999 and the democratic successors have not been exemplary, but they cannot be accused of flagrantly suppressing dissenting voices as the military did. Yet, censorship has continued. In fact, the hypothesis is that there is more censorship of popular music material in re-democratised Nigeria than the censorship of popular music in the entirety of Nigeria before re-democratisation. The reason for this is not in question. Democratisation (and globalisation) has brought with it a certain agency in the citizen such that self-expression has been emboldened. This has in turn resulted in enhanced checks on the

morality and social suitability of the audio and video created by emboldened musicians.

In his overview to the volume *Popular Music Censorship in Africa*, Martin Cloonan observes that none of the constituent chapters deals with the Internet, adding that the revolution in communications technology in the West gave rise to a decline in the role of the state as censor and a corresponding rise of the market as censor. Times have changed, and the western revolution referred to has since made it to Africa, but scholarly inquiry stalled. Still, as helpless as state censorial agents are with the Internet in Nigeria so are they with satellite television which is steadily growing more and more popular. But despite its seeming helplessness in the face of extant media beyond its jurisdiction, the NBC and others in Nigeria have refused to retreat; instead, they churn out bans as though consistently to remind the public of their existence. A key issue is the reality that music presently 'banned' from the broadcast media is arguably the most resonant with the people due to the proliferation of the Internet in Nigeria. An official of the NBC preferred anonymity when his thought was sought, although he offered that:

> Internet censorship would be tedious. It's a lot easier to censor TV and radio because you can just hold the TV and radio companies accountable. The way the Internet is set up removes barriers and restrictions to opinion airing. And this is why it should remain uncensored if they can find a way to do so. There must be a platform for people to air their feelings without restrictions. More so, we need the Internet more in places like Nigeria. (NBC official 2020)

I proffered a retort by mentioning countries where there are Internet controls like China, but the official insisted that "Nigeria is not China". As has become custom, inquiry from Nigerian state officials is seldom satisfactory. It is noteworthy that over the years, Nigeria has featured regularly as a location of concern in the Freemuse Reports on the State of Artistic Freedom. In its 2022 Report, Freemuse ranked Nigeria top in the African continent with

respect to acts of violations (Freemuse 2022: 15). It also listed Nigeria among countries where artists had been detained, imprisoned, and prosecuted during the preceding year when its report explicitly assessed Nigeria as a "country of concern" (Freemuse 2021: 115-118; Freemuse 2022).

Hitherto, censorship studies in Nigeria have been specifically located rather than national in scope; that is, the literature focuses on specific regions and sections of the country and on particular forms of expression: e.g., journalism, film, and music. However, Eyre and LeVine, in their July 2017 post on Freemuse.org captioned 'Censorship in Nigeria: Musical free expression in the shadow of Fela', report the findings from their extensive ethnographic study of censorship cases between 2013 and 2017. The authors note that censorship in Nigeria is a complicated web that could have economic and social undertones as much as it could politics. They also find that in some instances political censorship is garbed as moral censorship. Indeed, when it comes to explicit censorship in Nigeria, it is more likely to take the form of moral, rather than political, sanction (Eyre and LeVine 2017). The duo avers that due to state and local government areas of jurisdiction, censored material in one locality is not necessarily censored material in another. They single out "hip-hop star Olamide [who] has faced routine censorship from the country-wide Nigerian Broadcasting Commission for 'obscenity, being indecent, and having vulgar languages, lewd and profane expressions'" (Eyre and LeVine 2017: np). Rather worryingly, the post by Eyre and LeVine includes a number of images, one of which is the picture of Ice Prince Zamani labeled as Olamide! Such colossal oversight highlights the importance of local expertise in conducting ethnographic research. Olamide, meanwhile, is responsible for one of two videos assessed here.

Pro-narcotics audio and anti-narcotics visuals in Nigerian popular culture

In his 2019 album *A Good Time*, Nigerian singer-songwriter, David Adeleke, better known as Davido, featured American R&B singer Summer Walker on a track titled 'D&G'. Although a love-

and fashion- themed track, 'D&G' has a hook that reads:

Pass me the kpo, pass me the cho ***Pass me the marijuana, pass me the hemp***
Pass me the thing wey dey make me go ***Pass me the thing that gets me going***
Pass me the codeine, make me slow
Pass me the kpokpo di kpo

In the video to 'D&G' (2020), Davido is depicted smoking marijuana as has been the norm in several of his previous videos. He has never been one to insinuate one thing and convey another. He has remained quite explicit on matters such as these. Some of his contemporaries, however, have not been as clear and forthcoming in the correlation between their music lyrics and their music videos. This dichotomous relationship between the spoken word and the conveyed action in music art is central to this section.

The literature on alcohol and drug use by artists makes for a rich terrain. In 2016, the journal *Popular Music* dedicated an entire special issue to the theme 'Music and Alcohol'. Nonetheless, studies have been reticent on the relationship between music and its drug influences on audiences. Audience research in the broad sphere of global popular culture remains relatively new. Hardcastle, Hughes, Sharples and Bellis (2015) conducted a systematic survey of the inscription of alcohol references in popular music texts in the United Kingdom between 1981 and 2011. They found that the first decade of the 2000s recorded a sharp increase in alcohol references in the works of popular musicians. Although Hardcastle *et al* observed the presence of brand placement in instances, there is a discomforting choice in mincing words over the relationship between alcohol references in music texts and the drinking tendencies of young people. As it is with alcohol, so it is with other substances, particularly for the already initiated. This section appraises narcotics focused Nigerian popular audio-visual texts.

Whether or not popular musicians who delight in narcotic lyrics are themselves narcotic patrons is immaterial to the present study. As commerce is the name of the game, the average artist is charged with offering what the audience wants to hear. Therefore, if this audience is populated by a mass of narcotics-driven-

partying-faithful, it becomes the responsibility of the commercially loyal artist to so create. It is the case therefore that since the early 2000s, there has been a number of narcotic celebratory hits in Nigeria, e.g. the marijuana anthems 'Sensimilla' (2005) by the duo Danfo Drivers (Mad Melon and Mountain Black) and 'Ganja Man' (2007) by 9ice featuring Jahbless. The Danfo Drivers later released the hugely successful Kpolongo (2007) which paid tribute to alcohol's capacity to extract local herbs for a range of benefits and effects. More recently, the subtle song 'El Chapo' (2017) by D'banj featuring Gucci Mane and Wande Coal had Mane and Coal perform verses as Pablo Escobar and Don Vito Corleone respectively, while D'banj starred as Joacquín 'El Chapo' Guzmán. Fictional or real, none of these characters make for a morally proficient role model, but their adoption by popular music did not prevent the song's commercial success in Nigeria. Similar examples are abounding. Censorship of some media is not of much concern to artists when they can access an uncensored Internet. Indeed, "an alternative form of distributing music and of overcoming all forms of censorship lies in the Internet" (Cloonan 2004: 4).

The focus here is on the analysis of two music videos that featured on several Top Ten Countdowns across Nigeria in 2018. These videos are the promotional visuals to singles that constitute hits. The first is 'Science Student' (2018) by Olamide (directed by Unlimited LA) and the other is 'Diet' (2018) by DJ Enimoney featuring Reminisce, Tiwa Savage and Slimcase (directed by Clarence Peters). To satisfactorily dissect Olamide's 'Science Student', it is imperative to possess a grasp of the history of some of his well-known works with the censorial agents in Nigeria. The ban pedigree of Olamide, the prolific artist, stems from works like 'Bobo' (2015), 'Don't Stop' (2015), 'Wavy level' (2017) and most notably 'Wo' (2017). Eyre and LeVine (2017) convey the censor's explanation for banning the latter two, although the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Health did tweet that the video to Olamide's 'Wo' violated the country's Tobacco Control Act (ThisDay 2017). It is striking that the health ministry shared a clip wherein smoking took place from the video through Twitter (Premium Times 2017).

The contradiction that the singular tweet signifies is twofold: For one, the attempt to justify how/why the video contravenes the law by sharing the portion comes across bizarrely. Second, how exactly does the ministry of health propose to check tobacco smoking by re-transmitting particular videos where individuals are smoking tobacco while dancing to/listening to/enjoying a banned song? Yet, these concerns are not the prerogative of the present analysis which is to discern why and how Olamide chose to evade the ban subsequently with his more anti-health hit single 'Science Student' (2018).

'Science Student' is a parody of the laboratory engagements of the typical science student in high school or in higher education. The mixture of substances in the course of practical sessions with chemical reactions is craftily equated to certain practices in the society wherein individuals, particularly among the younger bloc, engage in a mixture of all or some of codeine, marijuana, and tramadol. The resulting solution (compound) is then ingested towards varying degrees of hallucinatory outcomes. This is the process that the rapper describes quite explicitly through a very danceable and locally decipherable tune - the song was effectively responsible for the trend called the 'Shaku Shaku' dance/sound (Salihu 2018). In the final verse, meanwhile, Olamide extols several locally made beverage mixtures which are highly alcoholic and serving various purposes among the general population, the elderly inclusive. Indeed, through the song, there can be no pretense about the rapper's successful description of real-life drug-influenced scenes with the effects of comical relief. It is easy to grasp the audio of the piece as a promotional for the culture of drug abuse among the young population in the society. Consequently, following the audio release, a number of public commentators insisted that such a song itemising and glorifying drug use be banned from the airwaves (Adekunle 2018, Oladipo 2018). The resultant video to 'Science Student' is thus a reaction to the controversy that had been generated by its audio/lyrics.

Rather than risk the death of his priced creation, Olamide thought instead to spearhead an anti-drug abuse campaign using the same

song (three-minute-long) accompanied by an elaborate seven-minute-long video.

It is instructive that Olamide holds a diploma in mass communication. His industry is to be understood against this backdrop particularly on his crisis management and/or spin capacity between the audio release in January 2018 and video shoot/release of 'Science Student' in February 2018. A vibrant 'say-no-to-drugs' campaign with statements across his social media handles between the periods meant that he had already substantially watered down the 'ban-ability' of a video to a song that reeked of ban right from its conception. What is more, by the time Olamide released the video, it was clear that he had, in cahoots with Director Unlimited LA, managed to depict an entirely alternate narrative wherein his campaign against drug abuse had been reinforced: "The 7-minute long clip shows the rapper walking through a building filled with drug addicts before finally breaking out signifying a win in the war against drug abuse. Drug abusers are seen in different stages of mental instability with 'No to drug abuse' inscriptions flashing on the walls" (Oladipo 2018: np).

The discord between the various impressionable censorial agents in Nigeria unravels. Following the release of the audio, the NBC had announced that its licensees have received notification of the song's not-to-be-broadcast (NTBB) adding that the NBC does not ban music or musicals but only advise stations to ensure editorial responsibility by editing and making all lyrics fit for broadcast (Igboanugo 2018). What this means is that 'Science Student' could be aired on radio stations so long as certain portions deemed offensive to the censor are censored.

The NFVCB on its part announced that 'Science Student' was not banned because it was done to discourage crimes. These were the words of the NFVCB's Director General during the Safer

Internet Day[1] 2018 in Abuja, Nigeria (Adaramola 2018). The Director General offered that "…we are in the internet age where a lot of things fly. What we need to do is to encourage our children to take only the good side of the internet and leave the bad side" (Adaramola 2018: np). He continued that "the very week Olamide released that record, he released a press statement saying the song is a caution for people not to mix things together and take it as intoxication. So you don't expect us to ban it just like that when he had explained why he sang the song" (Adaramola 2018). It is observed that contrasting positions on censorship exist between two regulatory organizations of the Nigerian government, namely the NBC and the NFVCB. This twist in the song being neither banned nor fully-fit-to-be-aired comes within the purview of the work of Kirkegaard and Otterbeck (2017). The duo's introduction to an issue of *Popular Music and Society* dedicated to 'Music Censorship' inform on how the complexity of the institutions behind the restrictions on music limits the freedom of expression in popular music, even if inadvertently. An Islamic art scholar sheds light on his suspicion that Olamide's inclusion of a comical line begging 'science students' not to do drugs because of "God" may have offended religious sensibilities at the hierarchy of the NBC. For example, he points to the NBC's Head of Public Affairs, Hajia Maimuna Jimada, who is a Moslem. The academic believes that the inclusion[2] fetched Olamide a restriction in spite of his creatively worked efforts out of total censorship. This could explain the NBC's heightened rigidity on the subject in

[1] Safer Internet Day (SID) is a globally held event organized annually in February to promote the safe and more responsible use of the internet especially among children and young people.

[2] Understandably, owing to the personalized nature of religion, there is starkly no means to verify this. Indeed, Eyre and LeVine (2017) have written of the moral cover of political censorship and the political cover of moral censorship in Nigeria's predominantly Muslim North.

comparison to the NFVCB that practically held forth for Olamide through the episode.

Yet, the question arises if indeed the NFVCB held forth for Olamide or if the Board possesses express fiat over music videos and their distribution or restriction in Nigeria. My interest took me to the Southwest regional headquarters of the NFVCB at Alagbon Close in Ikoyi, Lagos. First to grant me audience was the Assistant Director of Verification from whom I initially found that all the submissions received by the NFVCB for 'verification', 'classification' and 'approval' were movies in the categories of public exhibition (cinema) or home video. Both categories have separate parameters towards undergoing verification, classification and approval. In the event that a particular movie was to be distributed for both cinema and home consumption, the processes involved had to be undertaken twice (Assistant Director of Verification, NFVCB, 2021). The Southwest Coordinator of the NFVCB is the overall head of the Board in the southwest geo-political zone of Nigeria (with six geo-political zones in total, there are five other zonal coordinators in the country excluding the administrative structure in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja). The southwest zonal coordinator was happy to speak with me through my queries which lasted just under an hour:

> Anyone who tells you that the NFVCB regulates videos of musicals is lying to you. It is true that our charter covers cinematographic creative productions which include music videos, but we are yet to take it on in practice. Enforcement of the statutes has been a challenge. I have enumerated all that we do here. The only certificates we issue are for films which we do after we classify them. With regards to the online component, I can tell you that we once used to grant communal licenses. However, presently, the only licenses we grant are to regional and national distributors. Note that only national distributors have the authorisation to upload videos online. Anyone who uploads videos without ownership of a national distribution license is violating the law. But of course, many violate the law and there are stipulated penalties within our regulations (Southwest Zonal Coordinator, NFVCB,

2021).

From the submissions of the Southwest Zonal Coordinator, some understanding of the terrain is gained. Light is shed on the Director General's choice to play safe with words over Olamide's 'Science Student'. The coordinator's frankness also revealed the grasp of the key issues by certain officials in parastatals across Nigeria while emphasizing the relevance of the NFVCB even in the age of digitisation.

Olamide's 'Science Student' and the accompanying corrective campaigns using the Internet may have led to some disagreement and befuddlement between separate censor organizations. However, DJ Enimoney's 'Diet', blatant as it is, got the censors scandalously apathetic. DJ Enimoney is the younger brother of Olamide and is signed as the official DJ of the record label YBNL Nation, although he is somewhat new on the popular scene and not on the superstar frequency of Olamide. As such, following the trending narcotic disposition of the dance floors, he keyed in to exploit some of the commercial incentives accruing. He brought an upcoming star of the trending 'Shaku Shaku' movement, Slimcase, together with established household names Tiwa Savage and Reminisce to record the song 'Diet'. 'Diet' is essentially a praise of the use of codeine, an opiate administered in the treatment of cough and pain. Over the past decade-plus, because of the drug's relatively less regulated status (it is sold without prescription), there has been an addiction to it by young people who find it useful in deriving euphoria and relaxation. More than this, towards maximized effects, codeine gets to be mixed with alcohol and other substances including marijuana and tramadol. YBNL Nation's grasp of the terrain, thus, motivated the creation of 'Science Student' and 'Diet' to hit-making outcomes. In order to appreciate the audacity of the label, here is a transcript of the chorus to 'Diet' by Slimcase:

…On a codeine diet
Slow down! On a codeine diet
Shaje! On a codeine diet
Tewo gbope! On a codeine diet

Shanawole! On a codeine diet
Kada wash ya! On a codeine diet
Kawon boys yen! On a codeine diet
Kon ma cast ya! On a codeine diet
On a codeine diet
DJ Enimoney! On a codeine diet
Alaga Ibile! On a codeine diet
Tiwa Savage! On a codeine diet
Mr Sarz nko! On a codeine diet
Oshozondi! On a codeine diet
IBD Dende! On a codeine diet
Shina Peller! On a codeine diet[3]

The chorus is constituted by sixteen bars, each of which closes with "on a codeine diet". There is blatantly no attempt at pretense or self-censorship through the material. The song is done mainly in Yoruba and enhanced using contemporary street lingo. 'Shanawole' implies to 'come in with lighters up'; 'Kawon boys yen/Kon man cast ya' means 'these guys shouldn't snitch'. Subsequently each of the acts DJ Enimoney, Reminisce (Alaga Ibile), and Tiwa Savage are called with the chorus response 'on a codeine diet'. Mr Sarz is the song producer while Shina Peller is a well-known socialite (as is IBD Dende) who owned and ran the popular Lagos club Quilox before being elected as a federal lawmaker in 2019. Being on a codeine diet is therefore represented in 'Diet' as the cool, trending, or successful position to be. The last line on the song 'Diet', released like 'Science Student' in January 2018, reads "DJ Enimoney shana si loud yii, mo n bo. No, no, no, pana eh, pana eh, Tiwa Savage ti wa online" [DJ Enimoney light up this loud (an unnatural elite variation of marijuana) I am

[3] The Copyright Society of Nigeria (COSON) has granted this author permission to quote Nigerian popular music texts for research and learning purposes including online and in print.

coming. No, pause and extinguish its flame, Tiwa Savage is online]. There is loaded meaning to the foregoing in that Tiwa Savage's image cannot be associated with narcotics.

The remainder of the section will focus on the visual component wherein the actual bamboozling of the government's regulatory bodies took place. In the video to 'Diet' released in March 2018, Director Clarence Peters borrows from Director Jerome D's work in the video to Kendrick Lamar's 'Swimming Pools (Drank)' (2012). On the one hand, it appears like a straight fit as both songs reference intoxicating substances and their effects. On the other, it betrays the lack of originality and laziness of an oversubscribed copycat. Whereas Lamar defied gravity by himself in Jerome D's work, Clarence Peters' illustration in 'Diet' showed a population (perhaps depicting the popularity of codeine abuse) floating in the air. In places, Slimcase is part of the labeling on a codeine-filled bottle that bears the inscription "DIET: say no to drugs" and occupies the bottle while immersed in the constituent codeine syrup in others. As the song owner, DJ Enimoney holds the bottle before the camera. Yet, the section this piece on censorship finds most striking is Tiwa Savage's. Tiwa Savage is about the most sought-after female musician in Nigeria. As such, it is understandable why DJ Enimoney would have wanted her on the song to raise its market credentials. However, Tiwa Savage occupies a certain space and has a certain reputation to protect as a mother. In fact, among others, she is or has been brand ambassador for MTN, Pepsi and the baby use product Pampers. During a recent marital crisis, she had publicly accused her husband of going beyond the use of marijuana, which she could tolerate, and engaging regularly in cocaine use funded by her earnings. The point being made is that Tiwa Savage's position is not to be equated with a song eulogizing drug use, and not only is she very aware of this, so is Clarence Peters. The outcome was a hypocritical deflection wherein Savage drinks from a glass of milk just before and during her verse in the video. Her verse, in fact, opens with the line 'I'm on a protein diet'. The imagery is obviously intended to portray the artist as a responsible consumer of healthy and legal milk even if the chorus in the background of

a song she was paid for and performed on goes: 'Tiwa Savage! on a codeine diet'. The gimmick worked as 'Diet' continued to play across all broadcast media in Nigeria and nothing has been heard from the regulators to date.

Conclusion

"When one hears about a case of musical censorship, it is important to consider whether it is actually a case of censorship and, if so, what sort of censorship it is. Consideration should also be given to what the agency of censorship is…Until we know what we are fighting against, we may not know what we are fighting for" (Cloonan 2004: 5). By making videos bearing compliant and hackneyed texts like "Say No to Drugs" while the lyrical components say precisely otherwise, popular musicians in Nigeria have managed to play a fast one on the regulating authorities who delude themselves into believing that such works actually advertise abstinence from drugs. These popular musicians are all too aware of the power of the auditory cue of their lyrics on the already initiated user, while the imagery of visuals massages bureaucratic egos. Music, after all, is an auditory cue for emotions and cravings in people with substance use disorders (Short and Dingle 2016). This capacity of music remains, irrespective of the manner through which music is presented to audiences be it by mere audio listening or through videos bearing contradictory visuals. Further, as theorized by Bogt, Vieno, Doornwaard, Pastore and Ejinden (2017), music is a key agent of consolation against sorrow and stress for many people. They add that many people derive a measure of comfort by associating with artists be it through social media interactions, visibility or proximity at shows and concerts, or by simply playing the music of artists whose lyrics hold personal meanings.

It is instructive that Nigeria is home to a deadly codeine cough syrup epidemic as a BBC documentary showed (BBC News Africa 2018). The documentary perhaps informed the government's decision to ban codeine importation in its entirety, opting instead to recommend an alternative for pharmaceutical companies operating in the country. This ban has nevertheless

been received as cosmetic by analysts who hold the view that such a ban only heightens the craving for the product which would in turn open up channels for smuggling while inflation is encouraged.

Further evidence of the existence of a ready audience for music like Olamide's 'Science Student' is the startling disclosure by the Director General of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) that six billion tablets of Tramadol - one of the substances specifically referenced by Olamide in 'Science Student' - worth 193 billion Naira (some 550 million US dollars) was intercepted in a single year alone (The Eagle Online 2018). It is little wonder, therefore, that Omobowale, Busari, Omobowale and Falase (2017) report that in spite of censorship, Olamide's songs are widely played and feature on shows locally and internationally, with the lyrics enjoying overwhelming support from fans.

The audio-visual strategy of the YBNL Nation label is to be understood as a masterstroke and conceptualized as such. This way, the censorial administrators could be encouraged to devise relevant approaches for the age, rather than the penchant to control what they simply cannot. The porous borders of the Internet age make censorship at any level impossible.

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African women's experience of domestic violence and help-seeking behaviour in Melbourne, Australia

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Abstract

This study explored African refugee background women's experience of domestic violence and help-seeking behaviour. The women were part of a domestic violence prevention and intervention project run by a local community organisation. Underpinned by help-seeking frameworks such as Theory of Planned Behaviour, data were gathered via two focus group interviews with seventeen women in Melbourne, Australia. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The results showed that participants experienced different forms of violence. Many did not seek help early, and help-seeking was constrained by cultural considerations and children in the relationship. Implications are discussed in relation to formal and informal support or interventions.

Key Words: Domestic Violence, Experiences, Help-seeking, African Women, Refugees, Australia

Introduction

Domestic violence in families is a universal problem, occurs in all cultures and societies, and is precipitated by structural, personal, relational, and environmental factors (Rees & Pease, 2007). The negative impact of domestic violence is broad, far reaching and affects all members of a family, including children, in diverse ways (Lacey, McPherson, Samuel, Powell et al.,2013; Satyen, et al., 2018). In Australia, the causal factors, how they manifest in new, emerging communities or recently arrived refuge/migrant groups, and how people seek help, depart slightly from what is known about the phenomenon in mainstream society (Satyen, Rogic & Supol, 2019), and therefore worthy of investigation. Indeed, compared to non-immigrant women in Australia, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) women experience relatively more violence, because theirs is one of "multi-perpetrator family violence, exacerbated by immigration policy, visa status and the stressors of the migration experience" (Vaughan, et al., 2015,p. 2).

Issue of study

The African community in Australia is relatively new, expanding and faces enormous post-settlement and integration challenges. As a result, a substantial percentage of African women in Australia have a refugee experience and face post-resettlement challenges resulting in poor living arrangements, financial difficulties, and marriage problems (Community Abundance, 2017). These challenges create fertile environments for domestic violence in families (Sullivan, Senturia, Negash, et al. 2005). However, there is limited research about the unique issues contributing to the domestic violence, community members' experiences of domestic violence and how they seek help. Furthermore, despite the availability of domestic violence services in Australia, evidence suggests utilisation of such services is not optimal or many victims do not seek professional help for various reasons (Dagistanli, et al., 2020). In the last few years, the Victorian government stepped up funding to community

organisations through the Multicultural Affairs and Social Cohesion Division to raise awareness of domestic violence and support victims and their families (Government of Victoria, 2021). Some African community organisations have been involved in this state-wide initiative and their experiences have revealed that cultural issues, lack of awareness of the law, support sources and how to seek help contribute to negative outcomes (Community Abundance, 2019). Based on these reports, there was a need for an exploration of the domestic violence experiences of African women (who participated in these project activities), their sources of support and approaches to help seeking.

Aim of Study

This study aimed to explore African women's experience of domestic violence, sources of help and help-seeking behaviours. As an exploratory study, its significance lies in the fact that the data emerges from a community-led participatory project that contributes to better understanding of the factors that contribute to domestic violence, and the enablers and constraints of help-seeking, as a foundation for developing better preventive and support programs.

Research Questions

- What are the refugee women's experiences of domestic violence?
- What are the help seeking behaviours of women victims of domestic violence?

Literature Review

Nature and Causes of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence involves an individual experience of abuse from an immediate family member or social environment through enforcing power and control over the victim (Flury, Nyberg & Riecher-Rossler, 2010). Domestic violence can take

many forms including physical (wherein victims suffer physical harm which could result in injuries and other health risks), psychological and emotional (wherein victims endure verbal harassment, defamation, threats or coercion), and neglect and financial abuse (Flury, et al, 2010, Hamby, 2017).

Past research shows that many factors are implicated in domestic violence, including partner incompatibility, financial stress, alcohol and drugs, cultural/ ethnic specific issues, among others (Al Ajlan, 2022; Vaughan, et al. 2015). Within refugee background families in Australia, Reese and Pease (2007) reported that history, social and economic context, structurally based inequalities, culturally emerged challenges, psychological stress and patriarchal foundations contributed to domestic violence. On their part, Fisher (2013) and Muchoki (2013) confirmed that disruption of traditional gender, family roles and expectations contributed to domestic violence among African refugee and migrant-background families. Fisher's (2013) study showed that in a post-settlement environment, cultural transitional factors related to "male loss of the breadwinner role and status," "financial independence," and "mismatch between formal response and (cultural) expectations" of the families played a major role in domestic violence. This finding is particularly useful in helping frame our understanding how victims of domestic violence might perceive and respond to abuse, protect themselves from abuse and seek help for abuse.

Impact of Domestic Violence

The impacts of domestic violence range from psychological, emotional distress, physical injuries, and poor general health to economic and social incapacitation (Lacey, et al.,2013; Sharps et al., 2021; Satyen et al., 2019). Women and children constitute the most vulnerable groups in domestic violence situations (Reese & Pease, 2007) and immigration increases the vulnerability of women to domestic violence (West, 2016). Female victims fear being attacked or killed by their male partners (Fisher, 2013; Zannettino, 2012), and are likely to face

many challenges such as trauma, physical harm, physical, financial, and housing insecurity or homelessness (Martin, et al. 2019). These varied impacts represent significant barriers to abused women leaving a domestic violence situation or unhealthy relationships (Sullivan & Goodman. 2019). In families with domestic violence, positive interactions are curtailed as violence deprives children of routine activities, recreation, play and education, resulting in reduced development opportunities and needs fulfillment. Repeated episodes of violence have considerable and enduring negative effects on children's mental health as they cause emotional/ psychological distress (Satyen et al., 2019; Sawrikar & Katz, 2017; Vaughan, et al. 2015).

Seeking Help for Domestic Violence

Social workers and families encourage victims of domestic violence to seek help early. While there is a generic approach to help-seeking, Di Fabio and Bernaud (2008) argue that there is also a distinct or problem-specific approach to help-seeking behaviour. Domestic violence poses a different risk to personal wellbeing and victims' reactions are based on several factors including the level of psychological distress, cultural factors, and motivation. Therefore, differences in help seeking are associated with individual differences including gender (Hines, 2016), cultural background (Fisher, 2013), level of psychological distress generated by the problem and motivation, power or capacity to seek help (Randell, Bledsoe, Shroff, et al., 2012). Landis et al. (2005) also found help-seeking to be influenced by individual thresholds for the seriousness of the violence, a perceived requirement to end the relationship, shame and criticism, service barriers such as counsellors, medical, police or supportive person in family/ community.

` Australian literature confirms that victims of domestic violence from migrant/ refugee backgrounds are reluctant to seek formal support due to language difficulties, limited access to interpreters, concerns about children, lack of knowledge of services, and legal rights and structural factors including finances

and unemployment (Ghafournia, 2011; James, 2010; Ogunsiji, et al., 2012; Satyen, et al., 2018; Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009). The lack of culturally suitable services is also reported by Fisher (2013) and West (2016), who note that mechanisms such as the police, the criminal justice system, and protective orders and restraining orders are barriers to help seeking as they are considered culturally inappropriate. It is possible that the help-seeking behaviours of African women in Australia will be affected by cultural differences and their perceptions of how to deal with domestic violence.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by theories of help-seeking such as the General Theory of Help-Seeking (Mechanic, 1978), the Cultural Determinants of Help Seeking (CDHS) Model (Arnault, 2009) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 2005).

One of the ten points outlined by Mechanic (1978) in the General Theory of Help-Seeking explains individual help-seeking behaviour towards illness or an adverse condition as a cost. While victims of domestic violence are not suffering illness as considered by Mechanic, the cost of seeking help is a useful point that relates to domestic violence. Mechanic observes that cost is not only about money people must pay to see a professional, but is also about the alternative cost to individual need: what repercussions will ensue if the victim seeks help is an important consideration that accounts for whether help is sought.

In the CDHS models, help-seeking relies on "cultural inputs as cognitive guides for perception, emotion and behaviour … [These inputs inform] the person to attend to certain aspects of his or her experience, what to ignore, what things mean and what should be done about them" (Arnualt, 2009, p.4). In the case of domestic violence, cultural norms are important in determining what the distress caused by violence means for the victim. As Arnault (2009) notes, when signs of wellness or distress are observed, people consider the meanings of their experiences and

symptoms based on cultural ideals, and when and where they seek help. This point is relevant to how the African women in our study perceived domestic violence help-seeking and where they sought help. The cultural considerations align with elements of help-seeking set out in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985).

This Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) has been utilised in numerous studies to understand behaviour and posits that behaviour can most accurately be determined by intentions, which can be predicted by three kinds of considerations - Attitudes Toward Behaviour, Perceived Behavioural Control, and Subjective Norm (Ajzen, 1985). In the TPB model, Attitudes, Perceived Behavioural Control and Subjective Norm combine to enable intention to enact a behaviour. According to TPB, these three considerations translate into beliefs about likely consequences or attributes of the behaviour (Attitudes towards behaviour), beliefs about factors that may further or hinder performance of behaviour (control beliefs or Perceived Behavioural Control) and beliefs about normative expectations (normative beliefs or Subjective Norn, which is the social expectations of significant others) (Rathbone, 2014). TPB indicates that people seek help differently for different issues (Rathbone, 2014) and in relation to domestic violence, women seeking help might consider the likely consequences of help-seeking, the normative expectations of others (especially their significant others) in their community (Fisher, 2013), and other factors (such as knowledge of the law). All three theoretical frames discussed above were considered in the interviews with participants and in the discussion of the study results.

Method

Design

Framed within the Interpretivists/Constructivists Paradigm (Creswell, 2018), this study used semi-structured focus group interviews to explore African women's experiences of domestic violence. The interpretivist paradigm holds that truth

about a phenomenon is socially constructed and therefore there is not one absolute truth, but rather multiple truths. In this study, the subjective experiences of domestic violence by African women in South-Eastern Melbourne, Australia which are varied, constituted differential constructions. Therefore, a qualitative approach to research was considered more suitable to investigate their experiences, allowing participants to co-construct and share their near similar and yet different experiences.

Participants

The participants were seventeen women of refugee and migrant backgrounds living in South-Eastern Melbourne, Victoria, who were already participating in a community-level ddomestic violence awareness, prevention and intervention workshops led by an African community organisation operating in Melbourne South-East. The participants, who all had children, ranged in age from 24- 56 years, and originally migrated from South Sudan (mainly), Kenyan, Sudan and Ethiopia. Eleven of the participants (65 %) were either separated, divorced or heading single-parent homes. Six were still married or in two parent homes.

Instruments, Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers employed an interview guide for data collection with the interview questions centred on experiences of domestic violence, when and how participants sought help and reasons for not seeking help early or not doing so at all. The use of focus group interviews was justified and recommended because domestic violence is a traumatic experience and the researchers believed that engaging with such difficult or traumatising experiences in groups could be therapeutic as group fellowship was likely to help participants cope better with the process. Consent (verbal or written) was sought from participants before interviews. The seventeen women were allocated randomly to two groups based on their availability on the scheduled interview

dates. The first focus group interview had nine participants while the second focus group interview had eight participants. Two members of the project team (one woman and one man) facilitated the focus group interviews using English, Dinka and Arabic languages to ensure full participation.

Guided by the notion of hermeneutic phenomenology, participants' responses were audio recorded, transcribed and shared with them for verification and corrections. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, along the lines recommended by Braun and Clark (2006), because it aligns with the epistemological and ontological positions of the Interpretivist / constructionist paradigm, which supports participants to construct and share their lived experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, domestic violence experiences are unique to each participant and thematic analysis helps to clarify their subjective human experiences (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach, the interview notes were read several times to gain a better understanding of the content. After listening to the recordings, transcribing/reading, the *initial codes* were generated by looking for key words and/or phrases that reflected experiences of domestic violence, impacts on individuals and family members, why and how they sought help or did not seek help and what might be done to support victims of domestic violence. The main themes that emerged were personal Experiences of the domestic violence situation, Help seeking, enablers and barriers, Sources of help, adequacy and reliability, and Motivation for seeking specific types of help.

Results

The main themes emerging from the focus group interview data were (personal) Experiences of domestic violence, Help seeking enablers and barriers (which had sub-themes such as Family pressures and cultural beliefs, Concerns about Children in the Marriage, Fear of Repercussions); Sources of help, adequacy

and reliability; and Motivation for seeking specific types of help. These themes and sub-themes are presented below.

Experiences of Domestic Violence

The participants reported difficult and emotional experiences of domestic violence that involved physical and non-physical forms of domestic violence including fights and verbal exchanges, threats, humiliating comments and restrictions to normal living. Casual factors related to changing family dynamics post-settlement, job and financial difficulties, as well as meeting or supporting children's needs. They also reported the difficulties and/or frustration with explaining their situation to their larger family and relatives due to cultural beliefs about domestic violence in marriage. In general, the participants felt that their parents and relatives held cultural beliefs that somewhat required them to tolerate domestic violence as part of the norm of marriage. The participants did not share such beliefs and wanted to break free of the violence perpetrated by husbands. Regarding this, Respondent #1, speaking through an interpreter, said:

> *My marriage was good at first…but I had bad experience with domestic violence. It good to tell it. (but) sometimes if I want to talk about it , it gives me bad feelings, sometimes I am crying. It is very hard. Because I went through it…(Pause…becomes emotional, recovers). I got married to the man I like him. We have three kids, but we have separated. He engaged in violence; it was not physical violence always. It hurt me a lot and I felt sad and cried a lot. I did not get help with tasks in the home or with the children. I was suffering. I tried to be strong and keep it to myself. We come from culture where our mothers and grandmothers tell us that things will be fine because they went through these things, for example beating and if a man abused you, they will take you back to the house (i.e., the marital home) because the man has paid dowry.*

Respondent #3:

> *My experience was very bad. We were always fighting because many things were difficult in the house. The man did not have job and the kids were not happy, not enough food and things for school but there was no help. It is not like home [in Africa], there you get help from parents, and grandparents. Many people have pain and when the mothers and fathers start to fight more, the children run away from home. When the Corona Virus pandemic came, it made things worse. No job for the father and he got more angry…and it was more dangerous for me. I talked to my friend and then we talked a social worker and the worker helped me to find a solution.*

Seeking Help for Domestic Violence: Enablers and Barriers

In responding to why some people don't seek help or take a long time to seek help, the participants' responses came under four key themes: Family pressures and cultural beliefs about Domestic Violence and how to approach it, Concerns about children in the marriage, Fear of Repercussions, and Reliable sources of help.

Family pressures and cultural beliefs

African societies have large/extended families. In such large families, collective expectations can create pressure on individuals, especially with marriage where high traditional bridal costs (dowry) and/or church vows constitute huge incentives for respecting the sanctity of marriage. The pressure to stay married has influence on how victims deal with domestic violence.

One of the participants (Respondent #9) said:

> *Our family is big family, and I was scared to tell the family. Also, we got married in the church and church things are difficult. When you give a vow, it is a very committed thing, especially for Christians. Not me alone, sometimes the women think that the person will change, but they don't change. And*

besides that, because of the community, they are scared that people will talk about them and say that the person is a bad person.

Adding to the role of family pressure, Respondent #10 said:

….in large families, we have fear of telling people what is going on. If they tell you to stay with the man sometimes it is because of dowry the man paid….they don't want the marriage to finish. Also, marriage vows in the church, it makes women take time and even if the situation is not good.

Concerns about children in the marriage

The participant responses touched on concerns about the effect of domestic violence on children. In this case, it was the anticipated negative effects on children of separation or leaving the domestic violence situation rather the traumatising effect of violence on children's development. In this regard, Respondent #6 said:

Another reason for the problem with domestic violence is about the children. When you get married and you get kids straight away and you have problem with the man, you have big thinking about separating. Because in our culture, when you divorce, the kids have to be with their father and not the mother. So, this one keeps the women in domestic violence, in abuse. And it is one big reason to keep the Sudanese women with the men.

Respondent # 4 corroborated the above saying:

Like my sister said, when you have kids straight away in marriage, and abuse comes from the man, you are thinking about the kids. Here in Australia, when you separate with the man and you have kids, the kids have no future too. They are going to come up with excuse, my dad, where is my dad. And

they go in the street because of the dad. This one keeps us in the violence too. Because when you think about separating from the man, even last year, I wanted to separate from my man, but I think about my kids. If I separate, they are going to be with no father. When they grow up, this is going to be a big issue for me. So, this keeps us with the men, with abusive.

Respondent # 10:

Back home (in Africa) the women take it like a culture, but now we educated. We know what abuse is, but we are still abused now because in Australia, the culture is different, the kids are different, so this is confusing us now. You stay in abuse or you leave your kids to go to the streets. This is making us very confused.

Fear of repercussions

The women reported that there is fear of repercussion from larger family or husbands who are already disillusioned by the changing gender roles and empowerment of women. This hinders help seeking. In relation to this, Respondent # 12 said:

Many of us women, sometimes we don't want to upset our husbands. They are already angry and they can become more angry. Also we worry about our mothers, fathers and family back home, what they will say about the marriage.

Adding, Respondent #14 said:

I agree…especially for women, they say that Australia is become like women's power. Because before (we came here), men were up (above women) and now we are all equal. Men don't want that, they don't want you to have a voice, or say 'no, I am not going to do this'. And ours is not (a) supporting culture. Even my mother will say sometimes, no this is not how

we do things, and I will say mum, 'no, this is not you. It is us; this is my generation, we need things to change.

Sources of Help, Adequacy and Reliability

The data indicated that the main sources of help for participants are close family members and close friends, especially women. The lack of formal and informal sources of help was highlighted in the responses. Regarding help sources, Participant #5 said:

I ask my family and ask women friends. I try to tell my family that I have problem. I don't feel shy to tell my mother….I am not afraid to tell my mother that I have problem with my husband and that I fight….I mean we fight with our tongue….Some of the women cannot get help from their families.

For most participants help sources were inadequate or unreliable. In lamenting this reality, the women's responses contemplated the "reliable" nature of informal help sources in Africa vis-à-vis the unreliable informal and formal sources in Australia, including lack of support from government services for domestic violence and even financial difficulties, which contribute to violence. Explaining their dilemma, Participant #9 said:

Back home we get help from parents, uncles and aunties. But here in Australia you cannot get help unless you go to police. If I go to others here and say I have problem, maybe my problem is better than the other person's problem; because we are in the same situation in Australia…. So, as we sit here, …, we need help from leaders and whole community and churches. Some of the people, they are sitting at home and cannot get any solution….nowhere to go to get help and we are terrified of all things a lot. So I say, can you help us (as a community)?

Elaborating on the issues raised above, Participant #15 focused on economic difficulties and family dynamics, and lack of government support saying:

> *Also, we have problem (with our) economy. A lot of things happen if you don't have a job, the man will be by himself shouldering the economic problems. Because the woman is not working, it creates more opportunities for violence. If everything is not enough in the house, the kids run away, and mother and father start violence because there is no help for anything like school, transport, sports...And we need help for this, and the government is not helping.*

Motivation for Seeking Specific Type of Help

Responding to the question of what the motivation is for seeking specific type of help, participants said that taking that next step depended on the nature of abuse and whether particular sources of help could fix the problem. Their responses suggested that many women are motivated to seek help from different sources but are hindered by the lack of suitable avenues and other factors - family, neighbours, police, community leaders, and fear of stigma or backbiting after telling your story to others. Formal services such as police is considered problematic and informal local community resources are inadequate or ill-equipped. In general, if a victim considered that the man (perpetrator) could change their behaviour upon consultations with close family and community elders, such support would be sought. On the other hand, if the violence was severe and the first option was unlikely to succeed, formal services were considered, with caution and hesitation for fear of repercussions. In this regard, the participants explained as follows.

> Respondent #12: *Asking for help…. depends on type of problem. if the problem can be fixed, you can think of calling people to fix it or maybe you want to involve police. When police get involved, men get angry more. Police cannot give a solution; they make it worse for the person….(especially) when*

> *he (the man) is given the separation paper or intervention order or something. When they give the intervention order and the period is finished and the man comes back, then it will be worse. It will not be like the first one, they will revenge. Someone can kill you for that. Some people can kill for that.*

Continuing, Respondent #7 said:

> *Yes some people can kill you for that. There was a case of a young woman. She was in a relationship; I think they have a fight she called the police in the first place,… and they have intervention order so the man cannot come home and see the kids., he killed the lady…*

Fear of stigma and gossip

Research suggests that the stigma of being associated with domestic violence contributes to victims not speaking about their own experiences and to their reluctance to seek help (Satyen, et al., 2018). This was apparent in this study where fear or stigma and people talking about victims, led Participant # 4 to say:

> *Sometimes for the community, it is hard for us. When we deal with the community, there is bullying. If I have a problem and tell people like we are sitting right now, what is happening in my family, and I leave, people will start talking. That is why people keep their problem, you keep it and hide in your heart. Many people have anxiety, but if you express yourself, it's better because emotionally you cry, and then you feel better.*

Corroborating, Participant #2 said:

> *Yes, yes….I think if people can keep whatever you say in open spaces, then it will be good. Because if you express yourself, people will bully you and the bullying is not good. Our children also experience bullying that is why they are on the*

streets… the parents have too much anger and that is why we keep everything in the family, like private. We need help….

Discussion

This study aimed to explore African women's experience of Domestic Violence, sources of help and help-seeking behaviours. As an exploratory study, its significance lies in the fact the data emerges from a participatory community led intervention effort that contributes to better understanding of domestic violence, the enablers and constraints of help-seeking, as foundation for developing better prevention and support programs. Studies of domestic violence within the (relatively) newly settled African communities in Australia is limited. Bent-Goodley (2021) suggests that uncovering culturally specific and indigenous approaches to dealing with domestic violence will help reduce or eliminate intimate partner violence in populations that are barely researched.

The study's findings showed that domestic violence was experienced differently by the participants. They suffered violence in various forms including physical and psychological, which mirrors but also differs from other findings in Australia (Ogunsiji, et al. 2012; West, 2016; Zannettino, 2012). In the State of Victoria, Australia, where this study was undertaken, it is clear that domestic violence is linked to unhappiness in marriage, economic stress, conflicts related to gender role changes, and responsibilities around raising children. The findings confirm the interrelatedness of gender power dynamics (James, 2010), and cultural, psychological, social and economic factors as recognised by Al-Ajlan (2022), Reese and Pease (2007) and Sawrikar and Katz (2017) who highlighted the intersections of gender oppression with other forms of traditional and culturally based gender inequality and women's empowerment. In this study, some cultural issues specific to African communities such as dowry systems and who takes custody of children after separation/divorce have also been confirmed or unearthed,

contributing to calls for cultural-specific support as reported earlier (Sullivan, et al. 2005) among Ethiopian women in USA.

Seeking Help

The study found that the women did not seek help or sought help late or were hesitant to seek help. While their key reasons (family and cultural barriers, concern for children, and fear of repercussion) mirror barriers identified in previous reports (Satyen, et al., 2018; Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009), the women's concerns about children includes something new or unique. Many expressed fears that leaving their marriage could lead their children to leave home and go onto the streets; an issue of increasing concern among African families in Australia, which has been attributed to large numbers of single parent homes following separation. This finding therefore departs from other studies of refugee background communities in Australia (Braaf & Meyering, 2011;Meyer, 2010; Ragusa, 2012; Satyen, et al., 2018; Ting & Panchanadeswaran, 2009), which showed that victims' concerns for their children were related to potential loss of custody to child protection or harm in the marital home, rather than leaving home and going onto the streets. The link between increasing presence on the streets, of youth from refugee background of African descent, is one that highlights how Australia's diverse communities with refugee backgrounds experience the effects of domestic violence differently. It also emphasises the need for differing approaches to preventive measures, including targeted services for victims' children to ensure they are not tempted to leave home as domestic violence issues are resolved between parents.

The key reasons about help seeking reported in this study are in alignment with aspects of the help-seeking theories and models used to guide the study. Specifically, they are aligned with the role of cultural norms as explained by the Cultural Determinants of Help Seeking (CDHS) Model (Arnault, 2009), the alternative cost of seeking help in the General Theory of Help

Seeking (Mechanic, 1978), and the Subjective Norm aspect of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985).

In the CDHS models of help-seeking, victims of domestic violence rely on cultural inputs as cognitive guides for perception, emotion and behaviour (Arnualt, 2009). For many domestic violence victims, cultural norms are important in determining what they are expected to do about on-going violence, what others might think about them, and when or where they can seek help. In our study, all these were apparent alongside family expectations that they should stay in the marriage. The differing family expectations are related to the role of the Subjective Norm aspect of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) in supporting or hindering help seeking. As explained earlier under theoretical framework, Subjective Norm is the social expectations of significant others in the TPB model, which combines with a person's attitudes and their perceived behaviour control to influence intention to engage in a behaviour. For the women in our study, subjective norm played a part in how they sought help because their significant others (parents/extended family) held slightly different expectations of how they were to act in the domestic violence situations. The conflicting expectations were confusing and frustrating to the women. This difference in expectations was in part attributable to the fact that the participants' families and cultural beliefs (in the interest of protecting marriage), did not enthusiastically support leaving the marriage or reporting to the police; a position that was at variance with the victims' beliefs and how they wanted to approach issues in the Australian context.

Finally, the constraints to help seeking as reported by the participants are also partly explained by the cost aspect of General Theory of Help Seeking (Mechanic, 1978). Specifically, they are related to Mechanic's (1978) idea of alternative cost to individual need, which for our participants, include repercussions or negative consequences such as increased violence or revenge from male partners, losing relationships with their family, and jeopardising the future of their children.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study have implications for practice with respect to how professionals engage with victims of domestic violence and communities such as the one investigated here. Victims of domestic violence have intersecting needs requiring integrated services (Breckenridge, Rees, Valentine & Murray, 2015). Therefore, it is recommended that any intervention for victims from this population group should consider appropriate supportive services for children simultaneously with mothers.

More importantly, participants indicated that police involvement was perceived as a trigger for more aggressive actions from perpetrators and many women were reluctant to get the police involved. Such a finding implies that routine law enforcement is inadequate and that alternative forms of support that are culturally appropriate (Fisher, 2013) are more likely keep victims safe and protected. Indeed, the failure of existing policies to capture the full spectrum of victims' needs, and the inadequacy of mainstream services (Federal Department of Social Services, 2015) have led to calls for more creative support approaches such as specialist outreach services and the involvement of community leaders (Vaughan, et al., 2016). This paper joins the call for establishing alternative sources of help other than the police, such as involving African community leaders to resolve initial domestic violence issues. This measure, our study participants contend, will support long-term family stability, and should be considered, because "*the community coming together to solve our problem, is like family*" (Participant # 3).

This proposed measure is consistent with traditional African systems whereby conflicts are resolved by a council of elders. And while some victims in this study have used this approach, there is no evidence the bulk of Victorian African communities have established such traditional councils in a manner that gives them broad recognition with families so that they are able to play an effective intervening role with domestic violence. As domestic violence awareness raising continues in the study communities, mediation skills training should be offered to

such elders' groups to augment their traditional African cultural knowledges and provide effective support to families. It is also recommended that police, social workers, psychologists, and other professionals consider strengthening community resources such as the elders' groups and faith-based committees and use them alongside formal services. Advocacy services should also work alongside these services (Sullivan & Goodman, 2019). Long-term preventive and intervention success regarding domestic violence may hinge on the flexible use of both formal and informal resources in the African communities.

Conclusion

This study was inspired by the opportunity offered to African women to be part of a participatory community led domestic violence awareness, prevention and intervention effort. And as part of the activities, they shared their experiences of domestic violence and how they sought help, including barriers to seeking help. The findings reveal some unique issues regarding domestic violence among African women and communities, contribute to diversity of knowledge regarding domestic violence experiences, and the supports that may be required. Family pressures, cultural beliefs, and lack of trust in the supportive resources available to victims contributed to limited help seeking behaviours. Such recognition by social workers, psychologists, and policy makers provides an opportunity for reform about how services are framed and delivered. We recommend that informal community resources, which are perceived by participants as culturally relevant, and likely to be used by victims should be explored. It will also be useful to explore modalities to enable the provision of support that mitigates fear of repercussion or cost of seeking help in terms direct threats, finance or alternative means of surviving.

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Research Notes, Viewpoints, Interviews

‘Sons of the Clouds’: Oral tradition and resistance in Africa’s last colony[1]

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Western Sahara, the territory situated in the North-West of Africa’s Maghreb, has been left behind by history. A victim of Moroccan ideas of national restoration and Spanish colonial objectives, the nation, which is home to almost 200,000 Indigenous Saharawi people, still struggles to decolonise. At the now notorious Berlin Conference of 1884-85, fourteen European nations sought to carve up, as King Leopold II put it, “This Magnificent African Cake”. During this ‘scramble for Africa’, convened by German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, each member state was endowed with territories whose borders were artificially drawn for the convenience of mineral, rubber, and timber extraction. Western Sahara would be one of these territories.

At this time, 80 per cent of the African continent was under autonomous African control. The conference, with its arbitrary geographic boundaries, overruled these power structures in favour of European colonial convenience. Western Sahara has a rich history that stretches back to Berber tribal rule, which maintained contact with the Roman Empire. Its Saharawi inhabitants, who eventually adopted Arab linguistic and religious traits, were no exception to conquest. They currently live in modern-day

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Mauritania, Morocco, and Algeria – a region they call Trab el-Bidham. Indeed, in 1884, Spain claimed a protectorate over the entire coastline from Cape Bojador to Cap Blanc (which now represents the northern and southernmost boundaries of modern Western Sahara). Upon interaction with Saharawi nomads, Spanish invaders deemed these pastoralists the 'Sons of the Clouds' due to their ceaseless search for rain and fertile pastures for livestock.

The Saharawi were by no means passive onlookers to the theft of their territories. For decades, militant resistance to occupation, largely led by Saharan Moor Ma al-Aynayn, carried out an endless series of raids and rebellions. Targeting both Spanish and French colonials across the North-Western Maghreb, Saharawi resistance kept colonists at bay until 1934, when al-Aynayn was defeated at the battle of Marrakesh and Samara. Since then, an armed guerilla movement led by indigenous Western Saharans known as the Polisario Front, has resisted Spanish colonisers. Lasting until 1975, the region remained a colony known as Spanish Sahara, which eventually became a key strategic occupied territory due to its rich fisheries and phosphate mines. By 1975, however, Moroccan irredentism had reached all-time highs, with King Hassan II insisting on Spanish Sahara's belonging to the greater Moroccan nation state.

Because of the state of the conflict with the Polisario front, pressures from neighbouring Morocco and Mauritania to cede its land, and UN calls for African decolonisation, Spain acquiesced to a series of treaties. As Spanish dictator Francisco Franco lay on his deathbed in 1975, the Madrid Agreement and the Western Sahara partition agreement were signed. The former officially ended Spanish colonial rule in the region and the latter partitioned Western Sahara into two: one-third of the country would belong to Mauritania and the remaining northern portion would be under Moroccan control. Neither of these accords involved consultation with Polisario or the wider Saharawi populace. Indeed, all parties believed that the region was 'terra nullius', or void of any human inhabitants. Polisario fiercely opposed these treaties, especially

given the accords also granted the Spanish unfettered access to Western Sahara's fisheries and 500,000 tonnes of its phosphate per year.

Soon thereafter, a 2700km sand wall known as a 'berm' was built, dividing the Moroccan-controlled western zone from the arid, Polisario-controlled eastern region. The berm was completed in 1987 with help from South African, South Korean, and Israeli advisors. Saharawis are not permitted to cross the boundary, an oppressive apartheid-like tactic which keeps the ethnic minority confined within the almost uninhabitable Sahara desert. Since then, eight more barriers have been built, the most recent of which was completed in December 2020. Reminiscent of the Apartheid 'homelands' system, demonstrations calling for the removal of these walls are regularly organised by human rights groups and Saharawi organisations.

This has been the condition of Western Sahara until the present day, resulting in mass migration of Saharawis to neighbouring countries. Indeed, the smallest manifestation of Saharawi identity in occupied Western Sahara warrants torture, imprisonment, and even death. The most notable ally of the Saharawi people has been Algeria, where refugee camps housing Saharawi immigrants operate as independent enclaves. It is the closest resemblance of independence the Saharawi have. Each camp has their own courts, schools, hospitals, museums, and electoral system. It is here, as well as in the Polisario-controlled East of Western Sahara, where Saharawi oral traditions, poetry, arts and culture flourishes in the most treacherous conditions. Poetry, for the Saharawi, is interlinked with struggle and their quest for independence, with many poets becoming political leaders within Polisario. Women tend to be the custodians of this tradition, encouraged to verbalise feminist expression as a part of the wider Saharawi matriarchy. It has become, as researcher Joanna Allen puts it, a "sword of resistance". These poems have been translated from Hassaniya Arabic, the language of the Saharawi diaspora.

No international media is permitted in the occupied territory, so most coverage of the dire situation in Western Sahara comes from refugee accounts in Algeria and elsewhere. In one particularly gruesome account, Moroccan security forces assaulted the president of the Saharawi organisation 'League for the Defence of Human Rights and against Plunder of Resources' in her own home in Boujdour, in occupied Western Sahara. In November 2020, Sultana Khaya was placed under house arrest for her human rights activities, and in May 2021, was assaulted by soldiers. Amnesty International reported that Moroccan forces later also sexually assaulted Khaya, her sisters, and her elderly mother. She is far from the only activist to experience assault and intimidation by Moroccan officials. Since fighting between Morocco and Polisario resumed in November 2020, Amnesty has recorded human rights violations in the form of torture or other ill treatment against against 22 Saharawi activists, journalists, human rights defenders, and minors. This targeted brutality strongly mimics the activities and tactics of the Apartheid regime's Security Branch or Israel's Mossad.

In another incident of state-sanctioned brutality, Moroccan military forces repeatedly beat and abused people they detained at the Gdeim Izik refugee camp on 8 November 2010, in the Western Sahara capital city of El-Ayoun. After burning down 6,500 tents and incarcerating hundreds of refugees, soldiers reportedly opened fire on Saharawi civilians resisting the dismantling of their homes. The ensuing protests of these cases of brutality are commonly referred to as the 'Third Saharawi Intifada', which roughly translates from Arabic to 'shaking off'. The protests are synonymous with civil unrest in the Palestinian context, and have been cited by linguist and philosopher Noam Chomsky as the genesis of the Arab Uprisings. Polisario contend that the Intifada claimed 36 Saharawi civilians' lives and injured 1200 Saharawi protestors.

One thing is blatantly apparent, however. The West upholds and maintains this occupation absolutely. The United Nations classifies the region as a non-decolonised territory, and

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the majority of African Union countries (except for those who embraced American instead of Sino-Soviet foreign aid during the Cold War) support Polisario in its attempt to establish a Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Countries recognising Morocco and its claim over the region include the United States, Israel, France and, of course, Spain. Australia is yet to recognise the SADR, despite a 2004 Senate motion to "positively consider extending diplomatic recognition to SADR at the appropriate time".

Australia's inability to recognise the plight of the Saharawi is grounded in its vested interests in the region. In fact, we benefit from Moroccan occupation. Western Sahara's phosphates are sold to Australian fertiliser companies by Moroccan-owned mining corporations. Used to produce superphosphate fertiliser essential in agriculture for improving pasture and many crops, the occupation of Western Sahara quite literally feeds millions of Australians. The purchase of these phosphates and production of superphosphate fertiliser is primarily bought by Impact Fertilisers Australia, a "leading supplier of fertilisers in Eastern Australia, including Tasmania". We, as a student body espousing beliefs of global justice and solidarity, must call on our leading officials to totally and unconditionally divest from the Moroccan phosphate industry.

The issue was brought much closer to home in 2019, when the University of Sydney Law School invited Saharawi human rights activist and advocate Tecber Ahmed Saleh to give a speech at an event. Controversy erupted when the school abruptly cancelled her event, which had sold out. Saleh was to speak on the "legal, political and human aspects" of the Western Sahara situation, and soon thereafter it was revealed that the law school had been issued a warning by the Moroccan embassy. Though the contents of the warning are so far unbeknownst to students, USyd produced an explanation for the cancellation, citing an avoidance of "an unfortunate perception that the university as a whole takes a particular position on relevant issues".

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The University rejected claims that Moroccan pressure was a factor in the decision, claiming that the event "was not cancelled due to any external pressure, but because it was considered a double-up of a similar event featuring the same main speaker that was successfully held on campus just two and a half weeks earlier." The events differed in that the speaker was set to discuss "legal, political and human aspects" of the Western Sahara situation, as opposed to decolonisation and human rights more broadly. This is one of many accusations of foreign meddling and interference in the University's operations.

The Saharawi struggle is a global struggle. There will be no liberation for this oppressed minority without global condemnation of Spanish, Moroccan, and Mauritanian occupation of the region, complete removal of business interests and boycotting of Moroccan fishing and phosphate exports. All UN nations must recognise the SADR, and students across Australia and the world must mobilise to encourage such an outcome. Without global condemnation, as seen in South Africa during Apartheid, history will leave the Saharawi in a state of paralysis.

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Cultivating Afro-Australian synergies

Interview between Dr Charlotte Mackay*, Lecturer at Monash University in Australia, and Professor Cécile Dolisane Ebosse*, Head of the Department of African Literature and Civilisations at the University of Yaoundé in Cameroon. The two researchers met on January 7, 2023, at the university to discuss the importance of creating, nurturing, and expanding cultural and academic links between Australia and Africa.

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Cécile Dolisane Ebosse (CDE): How did you learn about African literature? In a unilingual country like Australian where Australians are generally interested in and refer to the Anglo-Saxon world (Great Britain and the United States), what were your sources of motivation?

Charlotte Mackay (CM): I have not always been interested in Francophone Sub-Saharan Africa and, as it stands, the structures in Australia do not explicitly encourage this specific interest, which came to me relatively late. In the long journey to a PhD in Australia, as elsewhere, students gradually specialise in what will become their area of expertise. For me, this field of interest was, for several years, the French-speaking Pacific and in particular New Caledonia which is, of course, one of Australia's closest neighbours and above all a French-speaking country with which Australia has very strong links. I wrote my Honour's thesis on the thorny issue of a possible New Caledonian independence as represented in the fictional work of a renowned New Caledonian author, Nicolas Kurtovitch. I had initially thought of pursuing this work on the French-speaking Pacific, as the question of New Caledonian independence interested me greatly (and still does). However, I was very conscious of the inescapable place that Sub-Saharan Africa occupied (and still occupies) in the Francophone

landscape and I told myself that I would return to it one day. Then I met my partner, a Cameroonian, and I wanted to know more about his country, its history, its culture (its cultures in the plural in the case of Cameroon) of which I knew nothing and the most accessible means for me to do this, not being able to go there at the time, was through literature. I started with the writings of Cameroonian authors and then expanded outwards to authors from all over French-speaking Sub-Saharan Africa. I read (among others) Beti, Oyono, Beyala, Miano, Nganang before moving on to Monémembo, Mabanckou, Diome, Bugul and so on. I cannot tell you how surprised my two supervisors were when I told them that I wanted to pursue a doctorate not in Caledonian literature but in the literature of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Thus began a long process of familiarising myself with the literary production of this continent characterised above all by its fertility and diversity. In a country like Australia, which is demographically extremely diverse but where there is still a strong monolingual mentality, there is indeed a tendency to turn to the Anglo-Saxon world, a historical reference of sorts. This has the effect of depriving Australians of unique and different perspectives, of confining them to a world that some would say is in decline. We need to broaden our horizons and literature is a practical way to do this. In any case, it was partly through literature that I became interested in Sub-Saharan Africa. But literature alone is not enough. It is also necessary to go there, and I have the great privilege of being in Cameroon today, visiting your department, seeing the work that is being done here and meeting the students and the professors who oversee it all.

CDE: You completed a doctoral dissertation in postcolonial literature. What is the title of the dissertation and could you please tell us a little about it? What can it contribute to African Studies in our department?

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CM: My dissertation, which I defended in 2021, is entitled "From Afropea to Afro-Atlantic: A Study of Four Novels by Léonora Miano and Fatou Diome". It analyses the textual representation of the African continent and Africanity in the novels of two contemporary Sub-Saharan authors writing about Africa from Europe - your own Cameroonian writer Léonora Miano and the Senegalese writer Fatou Diome. This study aims to determine whether Miano and Diome present in their respective texts a devaluing image of Sub-Saharan Africa and Africanity in general or, conversely, whether there are elements in this fiction that demonstrate a commitment to a project of identity revaluation. I apply the theoretical concept of Afro-diasporic consciousness, a concept first named and developed by Nathalie Etoké, a Cameroonian-born researcher currently based in the United States, and which I develop by incorporating other elements from postcolonial, diasporic, and literary feminist studies. This study demonstrates a marked evolution in Miano and Diome's literary production consisting of an identarian re-writing and revalorisation as part of a movement that extends beyond the confines of Afropea as a binary and colonial space engaging, in an international and decidedly non-Euro-centric thrust, in the Afro-diasporic spaces of the Atlantic.

This study is relevant and innovative in the field of African literary studies because it is the first to compare in such detail the works of Miano and Diome and, in so doing, to highlight other ways of conceiving of their novelistic production that depart somewhat from the received discourses of postcolonial criticism such as cultural hybridity, often celebrated but reserved for a very minority elite, and because it relies more on Afrocentric theories and concepts. Within this study, I attempt to bring forth alternative perspectives that resist any hierarchical reading of the texts and, by extension, the European and Sub-Saharan spaces that comprise them.

This long-term work began in 2016, during my last trip to Cameroon, and ended in 2021 with the defence of my thesis at La

Sorbonne Paris-IV. The revised thesis will be published in book form in English by the publisher Peter Lang this year or next.

CDE: A few years ago, African Studies represented a small part of literary studies. What is its place today in the broader Australian literary world?

CM: As an English-speaking country, you can imagine that when we talk about African literature in Australia, we are mostly talking about the literary output of authors from countries formerly colonised by Great Britain. These include South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana, but also countries from which the most recent wave of African migration to Australia originates - in particular South Sudan and Somalia. There is still a tendency to impose an ethnological reading on this writing, a desire to find in it, at the risk of inserting it, a voice of authority on the peoples, cultures and events that are represented. It is a tendency, that I would identify as being quite Western, to read the African text - a tendency inherited and linked to the colonial project and to its primordial objective of differentiating and hierarchising in order to abase. African literary texts, whether written by a local or diasporic author, are almost always read in the West, and I quote Miano in her collection of essays, *Habiter la frontière* [Inhabiting the Border], "with the silent but extremely firm conviction of their non-universality" (43). In practical terms, this means that the value of the Sub-Saharan novel is very often limited to its capacity to inform the escapade-searching Western reader about cultures and societies about which he or she knows very little, and worse, upon which he or she cultivates a whole series of pre-established and never tested stereotypes. The literary qualities of the text tend to go by the wayside. This is unfortunate for both the African author and the Western reader.

This is how I would have described the status of African literature in Australia a few years ago, but fortunately, we are witnessing a general change of mentality. It is slow but undeniable

in a country that can no longer bury its head in the sand with regard to its own colonial history, which is leading, little by little, to a questioning of all the foundations of society and dominant cultural practices, including its treatment of literary texts from elsewhere. We are seeing, for example, the integration in school curricula of more and more texts by African authors chosen, not only for the societal issues that they address, but especially for their literary quality. The latest example I can cite is Nigerian author Chinua Achebe's acclaimed novel Things Fall Apart (1958), which has been integrated into the senior English curriculum, as well as Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's collection of short stories The Things Around Your Neck (2009). Admittedly, these are canonical authors of Sub-Saharan literature, among the best known and most commercially successful, but it is a promising start.

As far as French-language African literature is concerned, we still have a long way to go. French is taught in Australia as a foreign language from primary school onwards, but it is losing ground faced with stiff competition from Asian languages, which is rather logical in a country located in the Asia-Pacific region. When people in Australia talk about French language literature, the first thing they think of is metropolitan France. The lack of general knowledge about the global scope of French is at times troubling, even among university students. Very few are able to name, for example, the countries in which French is spoken outside of Francophone Europe and North America. Even fewer can name Francophone Sub-Saharan countries. In general, Senegal is identified and sometimes the Congo, but there is always surprise at learning that there are two Congos. Let's not talk about the Guineas! When we talk about French literature, students can easily cite Hugo, Molière or Duras yet very rarely are they familiar with Kourouma, Bâ or Dongala. The visibility of Sub-Saharan authors increases when the consecration of their work in the form of literary prizes comes from France. This is how Djaïli Amadou Amal and Mohamed Mbougar Sarr were able to penetrate the

Australian literary bubble. You will certainly agree with me when I stress that this situation is unsatisfactory. As an academic whose research focuses on the literature and cultures of the Sub-Saharan region, I am deeply concerned and want to see things change. To do this, we need engage with Australian secondary and even primary school students as early as possible in order to promote this literature that can play an important role in sharpening their critical perception of our changing world. I am currently working with a colleague in a secondary school in Melbourne to found a literary club for final-year high school teachers of French which will provide teachers with pedagogical material on authors from the French-speaking world, in particular African authors. Our aim is to make French language students aware as early as possible and in the most comprehensive way of the richness and diversity of French literature and encourage them to pursue this field of research at a higher level.

CDE: Are there specialised research groups in this sense? If so, what are the recurrent and priority themes and axes?

CM: Yes, there are specialised research groups, but they are few and far between and are concentrated in the major universities. I am not aware of any groups specialising in the continent's francophone literature, but I know of others that specialise in English-language literature (often grouped with other research clusters on postcolonial literature, comparative literature, etc.) and other areas of research such as fashion, immigration, food, history, languages and ecology/environmental management.

CDE: Academically and anthropologically-speaking, our department is particularly interested in African and Afrodescendant civilizations. As an Australian, your ancestors migrated to lands that were not theirs to begin with. What was their relationship with Australia's Indigenous peoples and has this changed in the contemporary era?

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CM: This is a very important issue that touches on many aspects of contemporary life in Australia. It should be noted that Australia is, originally, a black continent populated by Indigenous peoples who have been living there according to their customs for over 60,000 years. Their living culture is the oldest in the world. As you can see, I am of European descent. My existence in Australia is explained by this colonial history, which has had far-reaching consequences that can still be measured today. The arrival of the first Europeans, as was the case elsewhere, was characterised by brutality, by the total transformation of the first peoples' world, by the disappearance of their laws, traditions and languages and by their decimation, either at the hands of the invaders (some historians speak of genocides in the plural) or by the introduction of diseases against which Indigenous peoples had no natural protection. A program of racial cleansing was put in place in the 19th century that aimed to integrate children of mixed race, children born of black and white parents, into white society. The Australian director Phillip Noyce directed a beautiful film, adapted from a novel and based on a true story, about this practice and its disastrous consequences for the people involved. The title in French is *Le chemin de la liberté* [Rabbit-Proof Fence] (2002). The objective, 'scientifically' justified by the eugenics fashion of the time, was the elimination of the black race in Australia over several generations. For over 60 years, a series of government policies were adopted allowing for the institutionalised removal of Indigenous children. They were removed from their families and placed in foster homes or special institutions to be assimilated into the dominant European society.

We are talking about thousands of children separated from their parents, their communities and as many mothers and fathers. They are now called "the stolen generations". It was not until 2008 that the Federal Government made an official apology to the families concerned. It goes without saying that the aftermath of such decades of violence is felt in contemporary society. In addition to this attempt to annihilate the Indigenous population,

there was a policy introduced in 1901, elements of which were in force until 1970, that massively restricted all non-white immigration to Australia. This policy was mainly aimed at limiting the arrival of Asian populations and preserving the 'British' character of the colony. Today, the consequences of European colonisation are still present, although somewhat less visibly. There are huge gaps between populations in regard to health, education, material wealth, incarceration and representation. The statistics on incarceration and life expectancy are particularly shocking. Indigenous Australians make up about a quarter of the incarcerated population and only five percent of the general population. Many governments have promised to reverse this trend and improve the quality of life for our first peoples, but such injustices cannot be eliminated overnight. Australian society needs to go through a drastic societal rebalancing for a true long-term reconciliation to take place.

CDE: Did they experience the same history as Africa in terms of slavery, the elimination of peoples, cultures and languages?

CM: As I have mentioned, certain government policies deliberately targeted the disappearance of the Indigenous populations. In recent decades, there has been a great deal of historiographical work in Australia to bring to light other historical episodes that some scholars do not hesitate to define as genocidal. There was no slavery institution that could rival that of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in terms of its scale, duration and inter-continental devastation. What Africa and the country that we now call Cameroon suffered for centuries has no equivalent in this regard. That said, first nation Australian peoples experienced instances of bonded or indentured labour as did other peoples from the Pacific Islands. Blackbirding was the practice of recruiting Melanesians from Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Vanuatu, Fiji and so on, by force or deception, to work in the sugar cane fields of Queensland. The conditions in which these people were forced to

work, in which they lived and died, were simply abominable. They were slaves even though they did not bear the name. Some of them, or their descendants, are now fighting for reparations. The cultural and linguistic destruction was much more widespread as it was expressly targeted by the colonial assimilation project. The authorities that removed Indigenous children to place them in European families or institutions forbade them to practice their languages. It is estimated that there were between 400 and 600 Indigenous languages commonly spoken throughout the continent before the arrival of the English in 1788. That number has obviously plummeted, a tragedy in a region that is characterised, like Sub-Saharan Africa, by its linguistic diversity.

CDE: Are there any authors or writers from these groups who might be of interest to our academic sphere? What subjects do they deal with? Are there analogies to be made with the written literature of Africa? What is the state of their oral heritage?

CM: Yes, there are authors from these groups who might be of interest to your academic sphere. Before I mention some of them, I should point out that I am not a specialist in Indigenous Australian literature, but I can give you some names. Today, Indigenous written production includes all literary forms (novels, theatre, poetry, tales, short stories, comics, etc.), although, as you correctly point out, Indigenous Australian literature is historically oral, as is Sub-Saharan literature. Some of the best-known Indigenous authors include Kevin John Gilbert, Anita Heiss, Kerry Reed-Gilbert, Jackie Huggins, Bruce Pascoe, Jack Davis, Kim Scott and Jeanine Leane. Their respective works deal with a myriad of themes, although that of the meeting of civilisations is among the most recurrent. Despite the targeted destruction of their cultures and languages, the Indigenous literary scene is characterised by its dynamism and often confronts this ‘clash of cultures’ and the consequences that resulted and still result today.

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I have just read a text by an Indigenous author named Jared Thomas. His novel Calypso Summer (2014) tells the story of a young Indigenous man who grows up in a big city far from the culture and traditions of his mother's family. He returns to his mother's land and discovers Indigenous knowledge related to medicinal plants in particular, a non-negligible part of the intangible cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples in Australia just as it is here in Africa. The novel highlights this return to source, to origins, a kind of quest for identity, which we find in many Sub-Saharan and Afrodescendant works. It is a theme very dear to the writers of Négritude (notably Senghor) and in L'Enfant noir (1953) by Camara Laye. It is also a theme found in other more contemporary authors such as Ken Bugul and her trilogy ending with the novel Riwan ou le chemin de sable (1990). Another author I recommend is Alexis Wright, a well-known Indigenous writer in Australia. She published the novel Carpentaria in 2007 which won several literary awards. This novel is about tensions between white authorities and an Indigenous tribe in the north of the country following the installation of a mining operation on their traditional and sacred land. In a country like Cameroon, where mining and land dispossession is also a hot topic, this novel could provide many avenues for comparative work, provided, of course, that the specificities of each of the two contexts are taken into account in order to bring out, as robustly as possible, the common denominators that link them.

To return to the question concerning the state of first nation oral tradition, I must again point out that I am not an expert in this area. However, I work in a department where literary, cultural, linguistic and language studies are merged. As such, I am in contact daily with colleagues whose research is directly concerned by this question. My overall impression is that the Australian Federal Government has finally realised the importance of preserving all these Indigenous languages, whose written standardised forms are recent inventions, and that significant funding is now being devoted to these purposes. However, given

all that we have already lost in Australia, I am not convinced that we will be able to prevent the disappearance of other Indigenous languages which convey enormous cultural riches that are in danger of disappearing. As the elders, the living archives of thousands of years of knowledge, pass away, the task becomes more difficult. The famous adage attributed to Malian writer Amadou Hampâté Bâ who remarked that in Africa "when an old person dies, a library burns to the ground'" is equally applicable in Australia.

CDE: How do we create research groups, academic crossings and connections between, on the one hand, African and Indigenous Australian orality and, on the other hand, postcolonial writing and the cultural survival of these minorities? What can Africa draw from this Indigenous Australian heritage?

CM: In order to create links between African and Indigenous Australian orality, we must start by re-attributing value to orality in general. In Western cultures, which still dominate our academic institutions around the world, the written form remains more valued, more prestigious than the oral form. It also prevails over the drawn and staged forms. We see this hierarchy in the widespread Western tendency to preserve written documents in archives, museums, and so on, even though we have seen the collection of other documentary forms such as audio-video recordings for several decades. Recognising, then, that these oral forms are literary forms deserving of preservation, academic attention and reflection is an essential step. Of course, this must be done in a sustainable and responsible manner, which allows for the preservation of traces so that future generations can also discover and assert their rights to this fragile heritage. I think that it will also be necessary to envisage the inscription of the oral form in hybrid literary forms such as the comic strip and the audio book. Over the last decade in Australia, several works by Indigenous authors in written form accompanied by audiobook, which allows

for a more nuanced and complete discovery of the work and the world it reflects by captivating several senses at once, have been published. Last week, I was very pleased to see in a bookstore in downtown Yaoundé many publications that combined several forms of literature, including comics and audiobooks. Many of them drew directly from African orality to pass on traditional tales, folklore and myths to children. Many were the products of local authors and were available in bilingual or even trilingual editions. Being here in Cameroon, I always have the impression that you have preserved more or less well a certain respect towards orality. It is certainly from you that Australians could learn lessons about linguistic and cultural survival.

CDE: African literature is on the margins as is Indigenous Australian literature. Could this enhance the epistemologies of these two minorities to enrich intercultural dialogue?

CM: I think there is always a certain tendency for the marginalised to come together, to join forces in some way, to engage in a common struggle. I do not say this to relativise or minimise differences or to call for the birth of a superficial solidarity that cannot reflect the specificities and concerns of each context. That said, both African and Australian Indigenous literature are produced in postcolonial contexts in which they occupy a marginal position relative to dominant forces, which can lead to their mutual enhancement. There are points of convergence and crossover that have not yet, in my opinion, been exploited to their full potential. This is very fertile ground, already on its own but even more so if the two are put in intercultural dialogue. In this department, the Department of African Literature and Civilisations of the University of Yaoundé 1, there is already an emphasis on this work of discovery and valorisation not only of the epistemologies but also of the axiologies and the pedagogies of minority groups, in this case those of African and Afrodescendant peoples. It is absolutely necessary to continue in

this direction and I marvel at all that is being done here under your leadership, such as the colloquium you organised last year on new African thought. In Australia, Indigenous cultures, beliefs and languages have suffered the full brunt of colonial invasion and assimilation. Some have disappeared, others have resisted. It is imperative that we work to preserve, enhance and transmit what remains, not only of these cultures and languages, but also of the epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies that are so different from those that dominate in Australia today. I have my share of responsibility in this obviously as a teacher. I am aware that my way of teaching, my teaching 'practice' as we say in English, is inherently Eurocentric as it does not take into account Indigenous methodologies of learning and research. Yet, as a scholar of Sub-Saharan literature, the content of my courses is clearly aligned with the goal of increasing the visibility of other cultures and philosophies. I am making efforts to 'decolonise' this practice by incorporating other pedagogical approaches such as, for example, a certain emphasis on orality and a recognition of the existence and value of different knowledge systems. On this last point, there are many parallels between traditional Sub-Saharan and Indigenous Australian knowledge systems. I humbly set out to do this because I am well aware that I do not have all the answers and that this work must be done in a thoughtful and deliberate in order to be sustainable and thereby honour our first peoples and their knowledges. This is also how I try to approach my research in Sub-Saharan literature, with humility and respect because, although I have a foot here today in Cameroon, this is not my country, it is not my cultural reference, and I will never be able, no matter how many books I read and consult, to claim this cultural intimacy and understanding as a foreigner.

CDE: How do we increase the influence of African Studies in Australia? How do we create scientific and academic bridges for the mobility of students and the visibility of the two continents?

CM: Building bridges between Africa and Australia must be a priority because these bridges, although underdeveloped in their current state, have the potential to bring new perspectives and opportunities to the youth of both continents. Although our histories are not identical, there are commonalities that link us especially with regard to the long-term effects of European colonisation, preservation, deculturation and acculturation, etc. We also have a responsibility to propose new theories, methods, practices that draw on the knowledge of our peoples in order to conceive of the world in which we live differently. We must turn our gaze to other spheres of influence and inspiration outside the Western and Eurocentric world. Diversity is the strength of both Cameroon and Australia. We must take advantage of it and maximize what can be derived from it.

We need to promote exchanges between Australian and African students by facilitating movement between the continents on which the sharing and valorisation of ideas and the dismantling of entrenched stereotypes is dependent. Administratively, there is a need to establish agreements between African and Australian universities. At present, there is no exchange agreement between my university and a university on the African continent though there are agreements with universities in Europe, North America, South America, Asia and the Middle East. More African students need to come to Australia. We must facilitate the mechanisms of exchange by establishing agreements between institutions, granting the necessary visas for departure and improving student welcome in country. Financial aid must also be provided because coming to Australia is very expensive. Currently, it is only members of the African elite who are able to finance such a project. Australian universities should establish scholarships based on merit and be committed to accompanying the intended students through the administrative process.

Australian students should also be encouraged to undertake exchange in African countries. For language students in Australia, it is a sort of rite of passage after a few years of foreign language study to be able to travel to a country where the language is spoken in order to practise it and deepen their knowledge in an authentic linguistic and cultural situation. The relevance of Africa to Australia should be emphasised. It's sad to think that we actually have to go through such a self-centred process, but I'm afraid that it is the most effective one at this point. Sub-Saharan Africa will be the centre of the French-speaking world by 2050 as it will boast an estimated eighty to ninety percent of the world's French speakers today. This point needs to be emphasised especially to French-speaking students in Australia so that they will pay the necessary and due attention to the continent. To this end, we must continue to teach as much African content as possible in French language university courses, which is what I am trying to do in my particular case. The importance of Africa is, however, not only related to the presence of the French language on its soil. Engaging with Africa and African Studies has a myriad of inherent benefits.

The good news is that in Australia, Africa's cultural, societal, economic, political and environmental prominence is beginning to receive a more generous and long-neglected recognition. We are emerging from the Asian era and must prepare to enter the next one, which will definitely be African. Having long looked north towards its former metropolitan power, Australia is beginning to turn its gaze westwards, towards the African continent. The evidence is there - we have seen over the past decade the creation of specialised research centres in universities, committees for economic, political, environmental and other cooperation, and a revalorisation of general knowledge and skills, especially in environmental management, medical advances and artistic creation. All looks promising, but the momentum must not be lost.

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