



Vhavenda Traditional Children's Games as a form of Indigenous Knowledge: *Tshifasi* Genre

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Abstract

Local knowledge systems are culture-specific; they construct the source for a people's livelihood. Children's traditional songs and games such as *tshifasi* are one aspect of Indigenous knowledge systems. Through traditional games, children became aware of their environment and acquired life skills among other things. Therefore, this study describes and analyses the existence and performance of *tshifasi* as a form of indigenous knowledge for the Vhavenda children's game. The qualitative methods approach was adopted to come up with a precise result. The research then found out that traditional children's games are no longer as popular as they used to be. In other words, they are the least studied. In fact, it is possible that they are facing extinction. Given this position, the study analysed *tshifasi* to establish its inherent philosophies and structural patterns. The study used a combination of qualitative and African musicology approaches to gather information from prospective participants and to analyze data. Face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with key informants in order to gather the information that enabled the study to decode *tshifasi*. The knowledge from the study of games and the songs of *tshifasi* will benefit communities. In this way, *tshifasi game* would be seen as an inherent part of Vhavenda cultural expressions.

Keywords

Tshifasi, Children, Indigenous Music, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, Traditional, Songs and Games

INTRODUCTION

African music is functional in almost all aspects of life (Merriam, 1962). It also plays a significant in Vhavenda society. As Kronberg, Brooks, Crips, Elasmr, Millar, Battin, Southwick, Tierney, & Miller (2013) observe music plays an important role in almost everyone's life. Music is used for imparting knowledge to communities, it is similarly used as an educational instrument and as a treatment for tension and boredom on the other (Hallam, no date). Music is also a source of entertainment. It is a vital component of communities related.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, African people including Vhavenda, most of them are generally gifted enough to participate in the music-making process which the infant has a role to play. The audience brings to the performance their own perception of what qualifies as being music. It is expected that the audience *vhandelela*, clap whistle, and *mifhululu*, ululate during a performance (Emberly and Davhula, 2015). Such interjection builds the texture and the excitement of experiencing music. African people own their music if someone can say, since it is reflected in the creativity of constructing musical instruments (Mugovhani, 2009).

Furthermore, another African uniqueness is that the level of tolerance amongst group members is comparatively low. The tuning of instruments is not expected to be pure, nor do a few dance missteps constitute a bad performance. For example, one of the African performances, *malende* in Vhavenda society don't enquire about preparations as men and women perform when they were relaxing (Ramaite, 2015). As Mapaya (2014) observes, Africans in general ascribe to the notion that 'lešaedi a le tlokege košeng'. Every performance is expected to feature one or several less talented participants. Also, in Sepedi, it is believed that 'sa koša kke lerole' (for as long as there is dust- from dancing and jubilation, the performance would have achieved its purpose (Mapaya, 2014).

The authors noted that it is also important to give an explanation of IKS before the discussion of the entire paper. All about the Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), are culture specific. It is not only the knowledge systems that form the basis for a people's livelihood (Senanayake, (2006). Also, Quiggin, (2012) confirms that it refers to local knowledge. On the other hand, is unique to a given society or culture and contributes to the development and sustainability of cultures (Hoppers, 2001 quoted by Magni, 2016). For instance, children's traditional songs and music are one aspect of the IKS (Mutema, 2013). Through traditional games and music, children get to know their environment and acquire life skills, among other benefits (Daswa, 2018).

Africa's indigenous music

Indigenous music was used as a strategy by Africans including the Vhavenda people to emphasize issues. They appreciated it since it was used in their various occasions such as celebrations. When they had gatherings, indigenous music was used to address community members (Nyoike-Mugo, 2010). They preferred to use music in any gathering, such music was in the forefront. The same music was crucial during sad moments as well. Their children shared stories through indigenous music. Thus, Vhavenda never left out music in their everyday activities. They could not live without music. Quiggin (2012) and Janke (2010) believe that music is part of any ceremony. In other words, when one says, 'it is a part', it means someone or something is not complete without it.

Given the above, one would note that the Vhavenda cultural activities such as music, dances, games and instrument playing have been in existence since time immemorial (Ramaite-Mafadza, 2015:4). The more of the Vhavenda culture is reflected by the distinctive styles inherent in its traditional musical performances. It should be noted, therefore, that Blacking and Ralushai (1965) are qualified for pioneering the scientific study of the Tshivenda indigenous music. Thereafter, scholars such as Mugovhani (2009) and Kruger (2004), *inter alia*, have also conducted research on Vhavenda traditional music, an indication that considerable ground has been covered in this regard. Be that as it may, however, the *tshifasi* music genre and its functions have not been given much attention by scholars. As a unique genre in the general Vhavenda traditional music, the role of *tshifasi* deserves an in-depth study, hence this attempt.

In other words, scholars such as Kruger (2004) have done research on the Tshivenda indigenous music, an indication that considerable ground has been covered in this regard. Be that as it may, the role of traditional games and songs of *tshifasi* genre has not been given much attention by scholars in general. Its function is an important part of our life and customs. Luvhone (1994) points out that *tshifasi* is a unique aspect of the Vhavenda heritage, which is learnt and passed from one generation to another. Given its uniqueness and its inherent value to Vhavenda culture, norms, and customs, it is preposterous that not much has been investigated about *tshifasi*'s socialization aspect in the context of our children's proper upbringing. For all its worth, it is imperative to undertake a *tshifasi* musicology in order to grasp the philosophy behind its social performance and its constantly negotiated forms in order to preserve our community's social order. Emberly and Davhula (2015) argue that most of the Venda songs contain proverbs that require explanations. Investigating *tshifasi*, therefore, would go a long way in enriching the Venda cultural heritage, thereby empowering our indigenous knowledge developers and scholars.

Vhavenda games and song performances

This study looks at how *tshifasi* music culture helps us understand the values of the Vhavenda people. Blacking (1962) talked about some of their traditional music and dances, like *domba* and *malende* (also called beer songs). Ndou-Mammbona, Moyo, Tshivhase, and Mavhandu-Mudzusi (2023) studied how Vhavenda traditional entertainment, like Tshikanganga music performances, can help prevent HIV spread in rural South Africa. Tshikanganga music, which uses five notes, requires Vhavenda people to play it with pipes, and boys and girls blow whistles during its performance. Netshivhale (2017) explained that *tshifasi*, a courting dance, is also a game for children and is being studied to understand its origins. So, this research paper focuses on describing and analyzing *tshifasi*, one of the main traditional dances for children.

It is also important to trace the sociological role of music. Blacking (1971) revealed the deep and surface structures of the Venda music. To him, it is difficult to describe and analyze music since there is no system or musical theory that can be followed. He also mentioned two composers, Haydn and Mozart. For Blacking (1971), it is difficult to explain the differences between Haydn and Mozart's music compositions. From the notated music's perspective, music composition needs a deeper understanding in terms of its structural aspects. That is, music needs time to describe and analyse for a deeper understanding (Tagg, 2015). *Tshifasi* music performance is described and analysed herein to establish its inherent philosophies. Given the above, the problem of deeply understanding of music and its origin and function, as Blacking (1971) puts it, necessitates the analysis of the following children's musical song, *tshidula tsha mutsingade*. That is, its rhythmic patterns can confuse the players if not counted well. Thus, *tshifasi*'s group performance is musicologically analysed here.

Tshifasi

Tshifasi music traditionally played a key role in sustaining the Vhavenda culture. It is an essential part of the Vhavenda heritage. Its importance lies in molding children's good behavior through entertainment, and they also gain knowledge on how to behave when they are with others (Amlor, 2016). The authors who attempted to study *tshifasi* (such as Blacking (1971); Mugovhani (2016); Mashiakone (2013); Ramaite-Mafadza, 2015); among others), assert that *tshifasi* is for boys and girls who are not yet married. The reasons why *tshifasi* is specifically for boys and girls are discussed in this article. Through cultural dances such as *tshifasi*, children learn their African traditional practices, where some are grounded in songs.

The function of indigenous games in our society

Tshifasi music for children has an educative aspect. This helps promote the Vhavenda culture, and hence shape the children's social well-being (Emberly & Davhula, 2015). When a girl is chosen by a boy, their relationship sometimes leads to marriage. After one of the initiates called *khomba*. The boy's parents present *lobola*, the bride's wealth for that particular *tshifasi* girl. The collecting data was at Nzhelele, Tshavhalovhedzi. At that point, the participants invited the researcher to attend some of the indigenous, hence are anti-social in the future. Nefumbada (2017) concurred, pointing out that children were taught good manners through such indigenous practices. The young ones learned respect for one another and elders, in addition to socializing and having unity amongst themselves as young people. Most of the lyrics are love-related, and some teach respect and loyalty to a partner.

Tshifasi music is performed by children from the age of 11 to 16. Magaba (2017) said it is unfair to find teachers teaching children at crèche how to perform *tshifasi*. In other words, they are playing a game meant for mature teenagers who are about to be married. "Little kids know nothing about family issues, it is an abuse *vhathu vha Mudzimu*," decried an informant teacher. She continued, stating that one of those children cries when others laugh at her playing with the boy. They mock her, saying, "We saw you dancing with a boy". The learners at crèche are too young to understand what is happening around them. Their minds are still empty, they need to be filled with good morals. Children are innocent and delicate, they are not yet responsible.

Morals are also endorsed in this music genre. On *tshifasi* rules, Mmbi (2017) expressed his ignorance of them. He said its essence was in promoting good moral values among teenagers. It inculcated respect for each other, through statements such as 'do not beat one another'. Such general guidance made them keep order. In addition, they were forbidden from stealing as some of them would bring eats such as sweets as presents for their friends, *haka*, *lukunda* or bracelets. Children were not allowed to provoke others, vulgar language was discouraged. These were general rules among ourselves, especially young adults amongst us. Our leaders were older than us, and I remember some of those mature youth like Vho Waramu and Vho Mutshakwa, fake names during *tshifasi* performance. Besides providing good morals, *tshifasi* also impart children to become responsible in the society.

Another person talking about *tshifasi* mentioned that it helps shape children's behavior for the future. *Tshifasi* is aimed at teaching boys and girls how to act when they get married. Ramavhoya and Nesengani (2022) discuss traditional practices including *tshifasi*, related to health promotion and disease prevention. However, nowadays, *tshifasi* is not as popular because children are not following tradition anymore. They don't show respect or behave well, and they also don't take care of their bodies. Showing respect, or "wo vha una tshirunzi," is important. Generally, *tshifasi* is a well-known tradition for boys and girls in the Vhavenda community.

It was done in full moonlight for children's safety as a reason. The training for marriage started with *tshifasi* to *domba*, then marriage. Interestingly, the songs sung had the same melody and beat, but different lyrics. "It is a nocturnal indigenous game. I believe this dance should not be part of the school competition, to preserve its meaning and relevance in the community", commented a female participant. "It was so interesting and lovely to play this game. I cannot still remember the songs we used to sing when we wanted to start this performance. To maintain its beauty, *tshifasi* is best performed in the evening.

In the Vhavenda culture, girls were prohibited from playing with boys. Vhavenda people permit boys and girls or give a special period for boys and girls to meet in some of the musical games such as *tshifasi*. For example, some of the songs in their culture were meant to warn girls to be careful of danger when playing. A song *ndilindee ndilindee*,

nandi vhasidzana,
ee! Ee! Niri nitshi tamba,
ni sendele murahu,
huna buka livhi,
li sa do ni kanda,
gidi gidi zhoto!

is one of the songs that warn girls to be careful of boys during play time. In short, girls must be watchful of boys. Girls were imparted in this way to realise that boys could sometimes be unsafe to play with. Another intention was for boys to take girls as their sisters, while girls were to take boys as their brothers. Also, it was to train girls and boys for marriage. This performance could be brought back by introducing it in schools, through community and traditional leaders, and the Department of Arts and Culture (Nefumbada, 2017).

My parents' relocation to another area disadvantaged me from gaining knowledge about my culture (Magaba, 2017). During the performance, elderly youth sometimes chased young ones away so that they could not see what was

happening as they practised *tshifasi*. There were times where those young adult girls would go for *u toliwa*, virginity test, where elderly people, *vhakegulu* check whether the girls were still virgins or not. This was one of the activities to encourage girls to stay with good morals, for example, to avoid sex before marriage. Those years back, if a girl got pregnant, elderly people would send her to her in-laws to stay there with her supposed husband.

Children were taught how to respect each other, for example, a man is the head of the family. Irene (2017) said that boys and girls were trained to have a good relation (*udowelana*) amongst each other through traditional games. It should be noted that back then, Vhavenda boys and girls were not supposed to play together due to fears of immorality. *Tshifasi* was an entertainment performance, to make children relax after cooking, fetching water, and *u reda khuni*. Tshoteli (2017) added that *tshifasi* also educated kids about the future, it taught them about the responsibilities they should have when they begin their own families. In other words, *tshifasi* was the strategy used to prepare teenagers for family life. They were taught how to be selective when it came to a marriage partner. For example, how does one choose a hard working individual as opposed to someone lazy? Is he or she is disabled? These were issues children were taught to address.

Through such musical games, children learned to respect their bodies. Masango (2017) illustrated that because of *tshinombelo*, it was very rare to find a pregnant girl before marriage. Even though they used to walk in the evening, boys and girls were safe from any harm because they learned to respect one another. Boys were taught not to touch a girl's breasts for instance. If a girl was ready to be married, there were procedures that were followed. The parents were also involved as children were not allowed to do anything on their own. Boys were not allowed to marry a girl they saw during *Xinombelo* for this reason, the activity was just for entertainment. One hardly heard of children committing immoral deeds (*a swi chabisa*) (Masango, 2017).

Family preparation life needs skills and practice. Netshivhale (2017) from Dzwerani observed that *tshifasi* was used to educate the youth about life. This was in preparation for *mahundwane*, where children would go out to the fields and simulate family setups by building make-shift shelters. Cooking and feeding their families without any misdeeds, to be specific. It was used to teach children that one day, they would have their families and carry such responsibilities between them. The songs and dance tackled social aspects such as working hard and being a responsible parent. It also dealt with the concept of trading goods and services to sustain one's family. There were songs that addressed the issue of cultural morals and values as example given above.

Music is also an important as a means to teach people various spheres of life. Netshivhale (2017) added that *tshifasi* taught young boys that a woman is to be married and she is to be treated with respect. It also taught young girls that a man takes care of his wife by providing for the family. This is the reason why Vhavenda culture is rooted in the family institution. When a boy grows into a man, he is called before the elders to address the issue of him working and providing for his family. Again, he would be advised about the dangers of getting into adulterous affairs with married women. That is, not to engage in sexual activities with older women *mugwegwede*, a common term for a loose woman.

African children are more interested on playing as a way of life. Netshivhale (2017) continued, pointing out that *tshifasi* helped the community because it would keep children busy, while elders dealt with more pressing issues. Concurred by Mafela (2018) who research the functions of children's games and game songs. In some cases, children would be sent out to play so burials and births would occur without young eyes disturbing the proceedings. Separating children from such happenings preserved their innocence and kept them out of harm's way. When a mother passed away, her children would be informed that their mother had gone away on an important visit. Adults would then teach young children how to address someone else as their mother, and when the time comes, they would inform them of their mother's passing away. This prevents the need for counseling those children.

There was a *tshifasi* competition called *bepha*. This was done for social cohesion. It was very much effective when communities were mixed the Vatsonga and Vhavenda. This led to a good relationship between Vhavenda and the Vatsonga people. For instance, the violence of xenophobia in South Africa created a gap that also created bad relationships with other neighbouring countries (Ukwandu, 2017). Contrary to *tshifasi* which promoted the love and acceptance of each other's culture. People called each other '*nwana wa tinzhobo*' or '*Vhavenda vha a via*'. Generally, the main purpose of *tshifasi* was to entertain children, encouraging good relationships among them. This relationship would lead to marriage.

The role of *tshifasi* or *tshinzerere*, was to build a good relationship between males and females. In other words, a boy was expected to be connected with a girl, and the same applied to the girl. In Afrikaans, they use the word '*om vas te maak*', which means to tie up (Deumert, 2004). The word *tshifasi* refers to a time when a boy and a girl develop a love relationship with each other. This makes them want to know each other before marriage. In the Vhavenda culture, girls were prohibited from playing with boys and were treated like enemies towards girls. These experienced some challenges with others. Dima (2017) continued, stating that boys valued girls, and hence *tshifasi* was the only dance where boys showed full respect for girls. Another role of *tshifasi* music was to promote clean life amongst children, to help them stay away from criminal activities. One could not find a case of rape or unwanted pregnancies then. Even during the times of our forefathers, their engagement in love was secretive, one could not see it, until marriage.

Tshifasi music genre also aided children to learn other languages. It encouraged young people to visit each other. Parents were also involved in their children's friendships. In other words, parents were kept abreast of what was happening between two young people so that they could monitor and control unbecoming behavior. A girl was not allowed to just engage in love with a boy, parents were told for guidance. Children were told that if they fell in love or

slept together with a boy or a girl, they would die. Because they were scared to die, they never attempted to get involved in sexual or love matters.

These kinds of performances are informative and educative, and they contain entertainment elements. Dima (2017) gives clarification of the difference between children who participated in performance and those who did not. He admitted that some children were forced to play with others. Parents knew very well that their children needed to socialize with others. So, those who did not play with others learned nothing in life. Children who did not play such games were mostly from *Tshitasi*. Vhavenda people do. They even differ in how they talk. That is the reason why currently we have a high rate of crime among young people. Yes, that is because they do not know where to go. They watch a lot of television. The crime they see on television is then put into practice in real life. They play with what they should not be playing with.

Netshivhale (2017) highlighted that many activities in Tshivenda culture have their own songs. These songs aren't just for fun—they also teach, inspire, and motivate. For the Vhavenda people, music is a way of expressing themselves. Mugovhani and Tshishonge (2012) discuss how the Vhavenda communities in Limpopo, South Africa, express their identities through cultural practices like tshikona and tshigombela. Venda music has similarities to jazz and reggae, and when Vhavenda people sing, they have a special, pleasant sound. They're naturally talented at singing and have a knack for arranging music. When a Vhavenda person sings, it can deeply touch someone's heart and soul, even causing inner change.

Moreover, the essence of Tshivenda songs or music lies in their ability to inspire the performer or singer. For example, even when one is offering praise or worship, Vhavenda music has the power to evoke tears due to its emotional depth. It's not a negative reaction but rather a response to the poignant words being sung. These lyrics have the capacity to dissolve feelings of bitterness and hostility within a person. "Recently, I was in Diepkloof, and someone told me that my singing reminded him of Venda. He even shed tears because the emotions overwhelmed him," the informant concluded.

The researcher further give questions the participants, for children who perform to courtship music, is there a different? The participant respond that, the different is, in most cases, those who do not dance act as back up in singing. Children learn how to support each other, to carry one another's burn. Children who do not participate miss a lot the opportunity of learning responsibility on their own with the motivation of their parents. None dancers do not know where they come from, in other words they do not have the knowledge of where their culture comes from. They do not know their Venda culture. In fact, they do not have Tshivenda characteristics of respect and other aspects related to good morals. The only thing that they do is different from what other children who attended do. Those who participate not lack discipline which becomes a serious problem for their entire life. They also become a problem in the community and to other children.

Tshinombelo is performed when children are out for a *mahundwane* in the late afternoon *mathabama*. With *mahundwane*, children practice family issues (Daswa, 2018). They dramatize family matters, with a boy acting father's role, while a girl acts of a mother, and others act as kids. Also acting are *Vhomakhadzi*, *malume* and other relatives. The songs of *tshinombelo* performance were interesting we have enjoyed a lot when we were still young. That is, hearing other children singing, one would be forced to wake up and join them during that time. It was hard for parents to allow a little child to go there because of age.

The purpose *tshifasi* performed

The role of *tshifasi* music is an important part of our life and customs. Luvhone (1994) points out that *tshifasi* is a unique aspect of the Vhavenda heritage, in which its roles are learnt and passed from one generation to another. Given its uniqueness and its inherent value to Vhavenda culture, norms, and customs. It is preposterous that not much has been investigated about its role amongst children.

Further, *tshifasi* has a socialisation aspect in the context of our children's proper upbringing. For all its worth, it is imperative to undertake the function of *tshifasi* musicology to grasp the philosophy behind its social performance and its constantly negotiated forms to preserve Vhavenda community's social order. Emberly and Davhula (2015) argue that most of the Venda songs contain proverbs that require explanations. Investigating the role of *tshifasi*, therefore, would go a long way in enriching the Venda cultural heritage, thereby empowering our indigenous knowledge developers and scholars.

The Vhavenda community values mutual respect among its members and holds a deep appreciation for different cultures. Lumadi's research in 1998 shed light on how family dynamics and cultural influences shape the development of giftedness in Vhavenda children. Similarly, Mphaphuli's insights in 2013 emphasized the cultural significance of children playing apart from their parents as a gesture of respect rather than secrecy. According to Netsivhale's observations in 2017, this behavior isn't about hiding anything but rather about maintaining a respectful distance to avoid disrupting their parents. Traditional Vhavenda games, such as *tshifasi*, were traditionally played outdoors, away from the elders, to minimize disturbances caused by noise. These cultural practices reflect the deep-rooted values of respect and consideration within the Vhavenda community, fostering harmony and understanding among its members.

When children play together it improves social skills, especially without the interruption of the parents. Netshivhale (2017) asserted that the courting dance was performed anytime when people were free. Courting dance is another name for *tshifasi* (Netshivhale, 2017) where boys and girls get an opportunity to know each other. In other words, when children had nothing to do in the evening, they gathered and played the courting dance. The courting dance was also

a special time of socializing between a boy and a girl before marriage. For their relationship to last, they needed enough time to know each other. On the other hand, socialization is a practice where young people come to appreciate societal norms and culture through the sharing of different ideas and values that in turn help mold their behavior. Sharkar (2000) propagated the use of music to guide an individual through a transitional phase in life.

As stated above, the importance of socialization, *tshifasi* is one of Vhavenda activities which was specifically meant for boys and girls. For instance, it is also perceived when children come from their different homes to play together (Ramugondo, 2009, Emberly, & Mashianoke Children came out from their homes early to play night games). Tshikovhi (2017) illustrated that it was important for boys and girls to play together so that they get used to each other. Nowadays, however, boys and girls play separately. There is no longer any collaboration as it used to be. There are several reasons for this. Notable ones are sexual abuse and modern lifestyle. For fear of the former, girls are not allowed to be outdoors in the evening (Tshikovhi, 2017). This is compounded by a high crime rate in our society.

The study used a combination of qualitative and African musicology approaches to gather information from prospective participants and to analyse data. Face to face interviews and focus group discussions was conducted to gather the information that enabled the study to decode the role of indigenous games.

PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

A researcher starts by reviewing literature to find the best way to study a specific problem. This process helps establish the paradigmatic perspective, which involves choosing a philosophical framework for the study. The chosen interpretative paradigm focuses on understanding *Tshifasi* music among the Vhavenda people. The researcher looks at ontology (nature of existence) to guide the study's design and methodology and epistemology (philosophy of knowledge) to address research questions. Primary and secondary documents are reviewed to understand Vhavenda traditional music and its societal function. Data collection involves face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, and group performances in the Vhembe District. The interpretative paradigm allows for a systematic view of reality, emphasizing constructing and interpreting information from participants. Some participants volunteered for interviews, contributing to the depth of data gathered.

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, the choice of methodology is influenced by the researcher's paradigmatic assumptions, considering qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches. The decision to use a qualitative methodology is driven by the nature of the research, focusing on indigenous knowledge holders, traditional leaders, and traditional musicians in exploring *tshifasi* music among the Vhavenda people. The study adopts a musicological perspective, employing descriptive and explanatory analyses through qualitative means. Qualitative research, aligned with the social constructivist paradigm, emphasizes the researcher's interpretation without relying on numerical data. This approach enables indigenous musicians to interpretatively describe *tshifasi*, capturing details like performance actions, attire, instruments, and their significance. The qualitative methodology eschews statistics, relying on an interpretative and naturalistic strategy during visits to participants in the Vhembe District. Various techniques, including interviews, focus group discussions, and the study of primary and secondary sources, are employed to gather comprehensive data on *tshifasi*, exploring its originality and societal relevance. The qualitative approach, seeking new insights, allows for the exploration of participants' experiences with *tshifasi* during their teenage years, complemented by secondary information for analysis and verification.

Methodology

Methodology refers to the systematic approach or set of principles used in a research study. In this context, it involves the researcher's chosen method for collecting and analyzing data, with the qualitative methodology emphasizing interpretation without numerical measurements. The methodology chapter systematically outlined the research design and data collection techniques employed in the study, rooted in the philosophical underpinnings of the chosen paradigm. Emphasizing face-to-face semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the methods were tailored to the case study of Venda, specifically exploring the cultural significance of *tshifasi* music performance. These techniques were chosen to collect ample data, forming the basis for the forthcoming chapter's discussion. The study's overarching aim is to unveil the historical background and societal functions of *tshifasi*, with a particular focus on its role in fostering children's self-discipline and well-being. The methodological choices align with the study's comprehensive exploration of the chosen cultural context.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of this study employs a musicological approach, focusing on *tshifasi* as a music performance and subjecting it to analysis. Despite the limited literature on the musicological approach, this study aims to fill this gap by examining aspects of music that have been overlooked by previous scholars. Khosa (2017) and Rambau (2015) emphasize the importance of the musicological approach, which appreciates music for what it is and allows practitioners to express themselves. In this context, the researcher inquired about various aspects related to *tshifasi* and its performance, exploring elements such as melody, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, and texture. The study aimed to uncover structural patterns governing *tshifasi*, including relationships among notes, events, tones, and sounds, highlighting the genre's details and

social setting through a musicological research design. Qualitative research methodologies were employed to delve into subjective experiences and meanings associated with *tshifasi* actions.

A research design, defined as a plan for the collection and analysis of data to fulfill the research purpose, is crucial in guiding the research process. In this musicological study, the design serves as a specific system to obtain answers to research questions and address the research problem. The detailed description of *tshifasi's* setting aims to convey intimate feelings, aligning with the nature of a musicological approach. The design allows for the observation and analysis of music performances, making it the most appropriate choice for this study. While the analysis is musicological, the search for meaning remains qualitative, generating the necessary data to answer the posed research questions.

POPULATION

The population for this study refers to the group of individuals possessing characteristics relevant to the research. Goddard and Melville (2004) define population as any group of individuals or set of events, people, or objects subject to research interest. In this context, the study focused on 20 participants with experiences related to *tshifasi*, targeting elderly indigenous musicians, traditional leaders, children (*vhana*), and indigenous knowledge holders. Children were observed performing to ensure a comprehensive understanding of *tshifasi*, aiming for rich and in-depth information.

SAMPLING AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

The study utilized a non-probability sampling method, specifically purposive sampling, to overcome challenges in accessing the entire population. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) emphasize that this approach prioritizes in-depth understanding of meanings and behaviors rather than measuring externally defined variables. Twenty indigenous knowledgeholders were purposively selected based on their knowledge of *tshifasi*, utilizing judgment and characteristics of interest. The sample, spanning various age groups and municipalities in the Vhembe District, aimed to provide a diverse perspective. Data collection qualitative methods, including face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, and observations of performances, were tailored to capture nuanced information about *tshifasi* without the need for generalization across the Venda society. The researcher, acting as the instrument of observation, used audio and video recording devices during fieldwork to collect data, which was later transcribed for analysis.

Interviews played a central role in data collection, employing face-to-face and focus group discussions to gather rich narratives from indigenous musicians, traditional leaders, and knowledge holders about *tshifasi*. The semi-structured interview approach facilitated in-depth discussions, allowing participants to express themselves freely. Traditional leaders shared insights into the uniqueness of *tshifasi* within Vhavanḁa music traditions. Questions in Tshivenda encouraged participants to explore their ideas, beliefs, and views on *tshifasi*, fostering openness and trust. The qualitative interview method embraced flexibility, enabling participants to address relevant issues beyond the predefined schedule and provide comprehensive feedback on the social functions of *tshifasi*. Overall, this approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the cultural significance and societal role of *tshifasi* within the Vhavanḁa community.

Focus group discussions in the study involved 12 participants with similar ideas to facilitate effective conversations and maintain order. This small group size created an open atmosphere, preventing discussions from becoming unmanageable and allowing for collective insights into why *tshifasi* music is less popular than other Vhavanḁa traditions. The group dynamics enabled members to assist each other in recalling information, saving time and resources compared to individual interviews. Discussions were held in various locations, providing a comfortable space for participants to share their experiences. The flexibility in adjusting group sizes, based on the availability of knowledgeable individuals, ensured a tailored and informative exploration of the *tshifasi* music genre.

The data collection methods employed in this qualitative study, specifically interviews and focus group discussions, were well-suited for exploring the intricacies of *tshifasi*, a traditional Vhavanḁa music genre. Through one-on-one interviews and face-to-face discussions, the researcher was able to capture rich narratives and observe performances by indigenous musicians, traditional leaders, and knowledge holders. The use of the Venda language in formulating open-ended questions facilitated a deeper exploration of participants' experiences and beliefs, allowing for a nuanced understanding of *tshifasi's* cultural significance. The choice of a semi-structured interview approach provided a formal yet flexible framework, fostering an environment of openness and trust. This qualitative method allowed for the collection of detailed information without the need for generalization across the diverse Venda society, aligning with the study's aim to unravel the historical background and social functions of *tshifasi*.

Additionally, the study incorporated focus group discussions, bringing together individuals with common ideas to share their thoughts on *tshifasi*. The small group size, typically 12 participants, maintained order and facilitated open conversations, preventing discussions from becoming unwieldy. Focus group discussions proved beneficial in exploring why *tshifasi* music may not be as popular as other traditional Vhavanḁa music genres. They offered collective insights and allowed group members to assist each other in recalling relevant issues, ultimately saving time and resources compared to individual interviews. The researcher strategically organized focus group discussions in different locations, tailoring the group size to the availability of knowledgeable individuals about *tshifasi*, demonstrating a thoughtful and adaptive approach to data collection.

In this section, the methodology for studying Vhavanḁa traditional children's games as a form of indigenous knowledge, with a focus on *tshifasi*. It begins by recapping the relevant literature on traditional music and indigenous games. The study's objective is to describe and analyze *Tshifasi* music for preservation. The methodology includes a

qualitative approach with face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, and group performances in the Vhembe District. The chapter concludes by outlining the chosen paradigmatic perspective and ethical considerations for the research

FINDINGS

In this article the aspect of the role of *tshifasi* music is based on the findings of the research that was conducted in Vhembe District. Other related materials provided in this study for discussions was used to identify the gap. The researcher read other way to identify previous studies done by other researchers on the traditional music, specifically Vhavenda (ref). In other words, the function of the literature was to bring the text relating to the subject matter together in a summary form. To archive this study the discussion organised into themes and which were; to define *tshifasi* music genre, to trace the sociological role of *tshifasi*. To determine the roles that contribute on the changing the morals of children. To establish the strategies to be utilized in the modern life particularly the young generation.

The paper's thematic analysis delved into the Vhavenda traditional children's games, focusing on the *tshifasi* genre and its role as a repository of indigenous knowledge. Through individual interviews and group discussions with participants from diverse municipalities within the Vhembe District, the study revealed multifaceted aspects of *tshifasi*. Notably, the genre serves dual purposes: as a source of entertainment and as an educational medium imparting moral value to children. Interestingly, it was found that *tshifasi* goes by various names in the Vhembe District, with "tshifasi" being the most prevalent designation.

During face-to-face semi-structured interviews, the research uncovered unique characteristics of *tshifasi*, particularly its origin as a performance for boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 16 who are still virgins. The traditional music stands out for its inclusivity, involving both sexes, and is performed exclusively under the moonlight during the evenings. An intriguing shift in attire was noted, with contemporary performances featuring attire such as *minwenda*, *misisi*, *makunda*, *malungu*, *thavhula*, and *zwickhipha*, reflecting the evolving nature of this indigenous music.

Indigenous knowledge holders including traditional leaders and civic structures emerged as key agents for sustaining *tshifasi*, as discussed in focus group sessions. The study highlighted the potential impact of involving elderly individuals in inspiring children through language, songs, and proverb clarifications. Moreover, the engagement of the Department of Sport, Arts, and Culture, along with collaborative efforts between traditional leaders, and parents, was underscored for the revitalization of *tshifasi*. The paper strongly recommended government support, suggesting the importance of promoting the cultural and traditional significance of *tshifasi* through print and electronic media.

In conclusion, the findings portray *tshifasi* as more than a traditional game, revealing its vital role in cultural education, moral development, and entertainment among Vhavenda children. The evolving nature of the genre, coupled with the identified agents for sustainability, emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach involving both community stakeholders and governmental support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommends that Vhavenda traditional children's games should be included in the Department of Basic Education's programs as major subjects to promote South African indigenous music. If this is considered at the primary level, it would go a long way in making the current generation appreciate the Vhavenda heritage. Also, this would help children understand *tshifasi*. Thus, it is recommended that *tshifasi* game be taught from lower primary school upwards.

The researcher also recommends Vhavenda children's games should be part of historical studies at universities since it was very difficult to obtain historical data about *tshifasi*. In addition, this would help preserve the history of Tshivenda music as a Form of Indigenous Knowledge. In other words, children should learn their culture while still young. The history of Tshivenda music has disappeared due to its exclusion from the curriculum. It is hoped that these recommendations would go a long way in making *tshifasi* a vibrant music performance in Venda if they are acted on.

In this article, the authors clarified the role of indigenous games of *tshifasi* music where they utilized procedures in qualitative methods. All aspects discussed above reveal the function of *tshifasi* music. The discussion was informed by the participants' responses. These respondents are indigenous knowledge holders, indigenous musicians, and traditional leaders. Their responses here enabled this paper to attain its objective. Thus, this paper, through its explanatory endeavors of *tshifasi*, would go a long way in assisting the Venda society to rethink their indigenous music, with a view to re-establishing its worth in their lives. For preservation's sake, ordinary language as a framework for analysis contributed in gathering appropriate data as the participants openly and freely explained the role of *tshifasi* in their mother language. On the other hand, the researchers were able to collect data that helped address matters of concern to this paper. Thus, it has been realised that the role of *tshifasi* is different from other Vhavenda traditional music as it deals specifically with young boys and girls. It has been found that the role of *tshifasi* music genre has not been given much attention by scholars in general. In other words, scholars such as Kruger (2004) have done research on the Tshivenda indigenous music, an indication that a considerable ground has been covered in this regard. Be that as it may, the function of *tshifasi* music genre has not been given much attention by scholars in general.

Building upon the extensive findings of the study on Vhavenda traditional children's games and the *tshifasi* genre, the conclusion further accentuates the unique cultural significance and the apparent decline of this indigenous music within the Vhavenda community. The term "deceased" is used to describe the status of *tshifasi* as a traditional game, emphasizing that it is no longer actively practiced in the community. However, a notable aspect revealed through

interviews is the expressed desire of the participants to see the resurrection of *tshifasi*. Their sentiments suggest a recognition of the impact of neglecting indigenous games on the cultural awareness and behavior of the younger generation.

The study illuminates the crucial role that *tshifasi* once played in shaping the cultural fabric of Vhavenda society. Participants lament the perceived loss of cultural connection and tradition among the youth, attributing it to the waning practice of indigenous games like *tshifasi*. The conclusion underscores the participants' belief that reviving *tshifasi* could be instrumental in addressing the observed behavioral changes in children. It suggests that the traditional game serves as a medium through which boys and girls learn and internalize cultural values, fostering socialization, respect, and discipline.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion delves into the sociological function of Vhavenda children's games, with a specific focus on the role played by *tshifasi* music. It emphasizes how the performance of *tshifasi* contributes to the molding of responsible and respectful individuals. The cultural and moral education provided by *tshifasi* extends beyond mere entertainment, influencing the character development of the participants. This aligns with the earlier findings that highlighted the educative aspect of *tshifasi*, where children learn good manners and family values while engaging in traditional music performance.

In essence, the conclusion ties together the overarching narrative of the study, summarizing the cultural importance of *tshifasi*, acknowledging its current state of decline, and emphasizing the community's expressed desire for its revival to preserve and transmit vital aspects of Vhavenda culture to future generations.

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