

THE INFLUENCE OF UBUNTU-INSPIRED GUIDANCE ON THE PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE PREPAREDNESS OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN RURAL ZIMBABWEAN COMMUNITIES

RUSHWAYA D. BLESSING¹ AND REVI ZHAKATA²

Abstract

The influence of Ubuntu-inspired guidance on the psychosocial well-being and climate resilience preparedness of adolescent girls in rural Zimbabwean communities is increasingly significant amid intersecting social, environmental, and technological pressures. This study focuses on adolescent girls in Manganzo Village under Manhenga Rural District Council, Bindura, Zimbabwe, where traditional Ubuntu values continue to shape communal life in the face of climate vulnerability. Ubuntu, a philosophy grounded in interconnectedness, mutual respect, and solidarity, provides a cultural framework that nurtures psychosocial well-being and collective resilience. The research aims to explore how Ubuntu-guided practices support adolescent girls' psychosocial strength and climate preparedness, while critically examining tensions arising from globalisation and technological change. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through three focus group discussions with six household members each, and interviews with three community leaders. Findings reveal that Ubuntu-inspired guidance fosters emotional security, reinforces shared identity through

¹ Department of Curriculum and Education Philosophy, Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University, Bindura, Zimbabwe ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5336-2159>, drushwaya@staff.zegu.ac.zw

² Department of Educational Foundations, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, ORCID ID <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5336-2159>, rzhakata@unisa.ac.za

totems, idioms, and environmental ethics, and enables collective action in response to climate hazards. The study contributes to contemporary debates on the sustainability of Ubuntu's communitarian values amid globalised individualism and technological disruption, offering culturally grounded insights to inform policy and practice focused on adolescent girls' well-being and climate resilience.

Keywords: *indigenous knowledge systems, rural Zimbabwe, globalisation, technology*

INTRODUCTION

GLOBAL AND ZIMBABWEAN CONTEXT: CLIMATE CRISIS, GENDER VULNERABILITIES, AND PSYCHOSOCIAL RISKS

The global climate crisis disproportionately affects rural communities, particularly in low-income countries where livelihoods are fragile and heavily dependent on natural resources (FAO, 2021; IPCC, 2022). Zimbabwe's rural districts such as Manhenga are vulnerable to extreme weather events, including droughts and floods, which threatens agricultural productivity and exacerbates food insecurity (Chanza and de Wit, 2016; FAO, 2021). Adolescent girls in these settings experience layered vulnerabilities, with climate shocks increasing the risk of early marriages, dropping out of school, and psychosocial distress (UNICEF, 2020; Nhengu, 2021). These intersecting crises place adolescent girls at the epicentre of both environmental and social upheavals.

Psychosocial well-being is critical for adolescents' capacity to cope with these challenges. It refers to the emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of health that enable individuals to manage stress and function effectively in their communities (Nhengu, 2021; WHO, 2021). In Manhenga, limited access to formal mental health services means that culturally grounded support systems often fill critical gaps.

Understanding how these systems operate in climate-stressed contexts is essential for designing effective interventions that safeguard girls' well-being.

UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY: COMMUNITARIANISM VERSUS WESTERN INDIVIDUALISM

Ubuntu, a philosophy foundational to many African societies, centres on communal identity, mutual respect, and collective responsibility (Ramose, 1999; Letseka, 2013). Mbiti's (1969) famous articulation, "I am because we are, and because we are, therefore I am," emphasizes the indivisibility of the individual from the community. *Ubuntu* thus contrasts sharply with Western individualism, which tends to prioritise personal autonomy over communal ties (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2019; Metz, 2020). This philosophy not only shapes social relations, but also extends to environmental stewardship, guiding community members to live harmoniously with nature.

In rural Zimbabwean communities like Manhenga, *Ubuntu* is expressed through the observance of totems, use of idiomatic language to transmit values, and adherence to Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) that embed ecological wisdom (Chanza and de Wit, 2016; Mawere, 2021). These practices provide adolescent girls with frameworks for identity formation, social belonging, and environmental responsibility. The continued vitality of *Ubuntu* in this context suggests it remains a potent source of resilience and guidance.

PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE PREPAREDNESS

Psychosocial well-being and climate resilience preparedness are intertwined concepts that influence how individuals and communities withstand and recover from shocks (WHO, 2021; IPCC, 2022). Well-being involves not only the absence of mental distress, but also the presence of supportive social networks and meaningful participation in communal life (Nussbaum, 2003; WHO, 2021). Climate resilience

entails the capacity to anticipate, absorb, and adapt to environmental changes while maintaining social and economic functions (Chanza and de Wit, 2016; IPCC, 2022).

Ubuntu-inspired guidance contributes significantly to both domains by fostering collective efficacy, social cohesion, and the intergenerational transfer of ecological knowledge (Letseka, 2013; Mawere, 2021). For adolescent girls in Manhenga, this translates into shared farming practices, communal resource management, and rituals that reinforce communal identity and preparedness. The embeddedness of *Ubuntu* in daily life, positions it as an organic adaptation strategy that complements formal climate interventions.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND GLOBALISATION CHALLENGES

International frameworks affirm adolescent girls' rights to education, safety, and health, recognising these as essential to their development and well-being (African Union, 1990; UNICEF, 2020). However, the adverse effects of climate variability often impede the realisation of these rights in rural Zimbabwe, where environmental shocks disrupt schooling and increase vulnerability to exploitation (UNICEF, 2020; Nhengu, 2021). *Ubuntu's* emphasis on collective care offers pathways to uphold these rights through community accountability and mutual support.

Nonetheless, globalisation and rapid technological change challenge the preservation of *Ubuntu* values. Market-driven neoliberal policies prioritise individual achievement, potentially undermining communal solidarities that *Ubuntu* embodies (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2019; Moyo and Sibanda, 2021). Additionally, the penetration of digital technologies can erode traditional systems of guidance and knowledge transmission, forcing communities to negotiate the tensions between modernity and tradition. These dynamics necessitate careful scrutiny of how *Ubuntu* adapts to sustain its relevance.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Adolescent girls in rural Zimbabwe face compounded effects of climate disruption and psychosocial stress, jeopardising their well-being and future opportunities (Nhengu, 2021; IPCC, 2022). Despite *Ubuntu*'s foundational role in shaping resilience and social cohesion, formal interventions often neglect its potential, favouring externally driven, technocratic models (Chanza and de Wit, 2016; Moyo and Sibanda, 2021). Understanding the influence of *Ubuntu*-inspired guidance in this context is crucial for developing culturally appropriate and sustainable strategies that support adolescent girls.

AIM OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore the influence of *Ubuntu*-inspired guidance on the psychosocial well-being and climate resilience preparedness of adolescent girls in rural Zimbabwean communities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does *Ubuntu*-inspired guidance support the psychosocial well-being of adolescent girls in the context of climate-related challenges?
2. How does *Ubuntu* guidance enhance climate resilience preparedness among adolescent girls?
3. In what ways is *Ubuntu* guidance adapting to technological change and globalisation pressures in rural Zimbabwe?

LITERATURE REVIEW

UBUNTU PHILOSOPHY: COMMUNAL IDENTITY AND RELEVANCE TO GIRLHOOD AND COMMUNITY

Ubuntu philosophy, rooted in African ontological conceptions of personhood, emphasizes relational identity and collective belonging (Ramose, 1999; Letseka, 2013). It asserts that one's humanity is realised only through relationships with others, encapsulated in the phrase "I

am because we are” (Mbiti, 1969). This communal identity shapes social norms, values, and behavioural expectations that govern everyday life, fostering social cohesion and mutual support. In the context of girlhood, *Ubuntu* provides a cultural framework through which adolescent girls are nurtured and socialised within their families and communities (Letseka, 2013; Mawere, 2021). It imparts a sense of belonging, purpose, and moral responsibility, positioning girls not merely as individuals, but also as integral members of a web of communal relationships.

Ubuntu’s relevance extends beyond social cohesion to include environmental stewardship, where communal ethics govern the sustainable use of natural resources (Ramose, 1999; Mawere, 2021). The philosophy thus offers a holistic worldview linking human well-being with ecological balance. For adolescent girls in rural Zimbabwe, *Ubuntu* functions as a guiding system that integrates psychosocial support with culturally embedded environmental knowledge, shaping both identity and resilience. This relational framework contrasts with Western individualism, highlighting the importance of community in human development.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS AND RESILIENCE: TOTEMS, IDIOMS, ORAL TRADITIONS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Indigenous Knowledge Systems are central to the transmission of culture and adaptive strategies in many African communities, including Zimbabwe (Chanza and de Wit, 2016; Mawere, 2021). Through totems, idioms, oral traditions, and environmental ethics, communities pass on collective wisdom that underpins resilience to social and environmental challenges. Totems function as symbols of identity and clan affiliation, regulating social behaviours such as marriage and community responsibilities (Mawere, 2021; Nhengu, 2021). Idioms encapsulate complex moral and ecological lessons,

serving as cognitive tools for learning and reflection (Chanza and de Wit, 2016; Mawere, 2021).

Oral traditions preserve historical experiences of adaptation and survival, offering narratives that guide present-day responses to climate variability (*ibid.*). Environmental ethics embedded within these systems emphasize respect for nature, sustainable resource management, and intergenerational equity, which enhance community climate resilience (*ibid.*). These culturally grounded knowledge forms are dynamic, continually negotiated and adapted, demonstrating their ongoing relevance in the face of climatic and social change.

PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING: MASLOW'S HIERARCHY IN AFRICAN SETTINGS

Maslow's hierarchy of needs, originally formulated in a Western psychological context, posits a progression from basic physiological needs to self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943). However, its applicability to African settings requires critical adaptation to reflect communal worldviews (Nussbaum, 2003; Mkhize, 2004). While Maslow emphasized individual achievement and autonomy, *Ubuntu*-aligned interpretations prioritise relational well-being and social harmony as essential components of self-actualisation (Nussbaum, 2003; Letseka, 2013).

In rural Zimbabwe, psychosocial well-being for adolescent girls involves not only satisfying basic needs such as food and safety, but also encompasses a sense of belonging, identity, and community recognition (Mkhize, 2004; Nhengu, 2021). The relational nature of well-being means that individual flourishing is inseparable from collective welfare, challenging individualistic models. This perspective suggests that psychosocial interventions for girls should integrate communal values, recognising the importance of family, clan, and

community support systems rooted in *Ubuntu* philosophy (Nussbaum, 2003; Letseka, 2013).

CLIMATE RESILIENCE PREPAREDNESS: PARTICIPATORY AND CULTURAL APPROACHES VERSUS TECHNOCRATIC MODELS

Contemporary climate resilience discourse emphasizes the importance of participatory, culturally sensitive approaches alongside technical interventions (Leichenko and O'Brien, 2019; IPCC, 2022). While technocratic models focus on infrastructure, technology, and economic solutions, participatory approaches value local knowledge, community agency, and social capital (Chanza and de Wit, 2016; Leichenko and O'Brien, 2019). In Zimbabwe, research shows that resilience is often fostered through community-driven practices such as collective farming, shared water management, and traditional rituals that reinforce social bonds and environmental stewardship (Chanza and de Wit, 2016; Mawere, 2021).

These culturally embedded approaches provide psychosocial benefits by strengthening social cohesion and identity, which are crucial for mental health and adaptive capacity (Letseka, 2013; IPCC, 2022). The challenge lies in integrating these local systems with formal climate adaptation policies to ensure inclusivity and sustainability, avoiding the pitfalls of top-down, externally imposed solutions that may overlook local realities (Leichenko and O'Brien, 2019; Mawere, 2021).

CONTEMPORARY DEBATES

UBUNTU IN HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE

Ubuntu has been increasingly invoked in debates about human rights, offering a communitarian alternative to liberal individualism (Letseka, 2013; Metz, 2020). Its emphasis on relational dignity, care, and mutual responsibility aligns with African human rights perspectives, suggesting a more contextually relevant framework for rights

realisation in Zimbabwe and beyond (Mkhize, 2004; Metz, 2020). However, tensions remain regarding how *Ubuntu* accommodates individual freedoms and rights, particularly for marginalised groups such as adolescent girls (Metz, 2020; Nhengu, 2021). These debates highlight the need for nuanced approaches that balance communal values with individual protections.

GLOBALISATION AND EROSION OF COMMUNAL VALUES

Globalisation has introduced neoliberal economic models and cultural values that challenge traditional African social structures (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2019; Moyo and Sibanda, 2021). The spread of market individualism, consumerism, and competitive logics can erode *Ubuntu*'s emphasis on solidarity and collective well-being (*ibid.*). This erosion threatens the sustainability of indigenous guidance systems which support psychosocial and environmental resilience. The question remains how communities can negotiate these pressures while preserving their cultural heritage and social fabric.

TECHNOLOGY: DIGITAL INCLUSION VERSUS THREATS TO TRADITIONAL GUIDANCE

The digital revolution presents both opportunities and risks for rural Zimbabwean communities (Moyo and Sibanda, 2021; Nhengu, 2021). On one hand, technology facilitates access to education, information, and networks that can empower adolescent girls (Moyo and Sibanda, 2021). On the other, it can disrupt traditional modes of knowledge transmission, weakening the authority of elders and customary institutions central to *Ubuntu* (*ibid.*; Mawere, 2021). This dual impact calls for strategies that promote digital inclusion without undermining indigenous knowledge and social cohesion.

GAPS IN LITERATURE

Despite growing recognition of *Ubuntu* and IKS in resilience studies, there remains scant empirical attention as to how *Ubuntu*-inspired

guidance specifically supports the psychosocial well-being and climate resilience of adolescent girls in rural Zimbabwe (Mawere, 2021; Nhengu, 2021). This gap underscores the need for context-specific research that foregrounds girls' voices and experiences, bridging cultural knowledge with contemporary climate challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study design, as recommended by Yin (2018), to gain in-depth understanding of *Ubuntu*-inspired guidance on adolescent girls' psychosocial well-being and climate resilience preparedness. The research was conducted in Manganzo Village under Manhenga Rural District Council, Bindura, an area characterised by semi-arid environmental conditions and a rich cultural heritage grounded in IKS and strong communal values. Participants included three focus groups, each comprising six household members representing diverse ages, gender, and family units, alongside three key community leaders drawn from traditional, religious, and civic backgrounds to provide varied perspectives on local practices. Data were collected through focus group discussions exploring themes of guidance, resilience, and well-being, complemented by key informant interviews that provided contextual depth. Ethical considerations were paramount, including obtaining informed consent, respecting local customs such as totem affiliations, and ensuring anonymity in line with APA guidelines (APA, 2019). Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic approach, utilising NVivo software for coding and theme development, while also allowing for manual verification. Reflexivity was maintained through continual acknowledgement of research positionality and limitations, recognising potential biases in interpreting culturally embedded phenomena. This methodological approach ensured rich, context-sensitive insights into the complex dynamics of *Ubuntu* guidance in a climate-affected rural community.

FINDINGS

This section presents the study's findings according to the core themes derived from the data, each directly linked to the research aim: to explore the influence of *Ubuntu*-inspired guidance on the psychosocial well-being and climate resilience preparedness of adolescent girls in rural Zimbabwean communities. The findings are critically analyzed against the reviewed literature to assess convergence and divergence with established scholarship.

A. *UBUNTU* AS EMOTIONAL SCAFFOLDING FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS FACING CLIMATE CHALLENGES

The data reveal that *Ubuntu* acts as a profound emotional scaffolding, supporting adolescent girls as they face climate-induced hardships such as drought, food insecurity, and flooding.

FGD 1 said:

"When we face hardship, we do not suffer alone; the whole community shares the burden and lifts each other, especially when the climate brings hunger or sickness."

This finding aligns with Ramose's (1999) and Letseka's (2013) conceptualisation of *Ubuntu* as a collective ethic that fosters belonging and mutual care. In agreement with Nussbaum (2003), the data suggest that *Ubuntu* nurtures esteem and moral identity at an early stage, challenging Maslow's (1943) linear model where these are positioned higher on the hierarchy of needs. The collective emotional safety net appears to enable adolescent girls to internalise resilience against climate stressors early in their psychosocial development.

Community Leader One said:

"Ubuntu teaches us to support our young people because they are the future, and if they are strong inside, the community can stand firm in these difficult climate times."

This supports findings from Metz (2020) that *Ubuntu* extends beyond immediate care to moral and future-oriented responsibility,

particularly crucial in climate-vulnerable contexts. The emphasis on adolescent girls as future resilience carriers enriches global debates on psychosocial well-being by illustrating how *Ubuntu* embeds both individual and collective futures within climate adaptation strategies (WHO, 2021).

FGD 2 said:

“No girl faces climate troubles alone because we believe a child belongs to the whole village.”

This resonates with literature on African communitarianism (Mbiti, 1969) but contrasts with critiques that globalisation and neoliberal values have eroded such practices (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2019). The data show that, at least in Manganzo, *Ubuntu*’s emotional scaffolding remains intact and central to adolescent girls’ psychosocial resilience despite external pressures.

B. TOTEMS, IDIOMS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AS CLIMATE GUIDANCE FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

The findings demonstrate that *Ubuntu*-inspired guidance transmits environmental ethics to adolescent girls through totems and idioms, shaping their climate resilience.

FGD 3 said:

“We do not kill animals of our totem; it is forbidden and brings misfortune, especially now with the changing climate.”

This finding strongly aligns with Chanza and de Wit’s (2016) and Mawere’s (2021) assertions that totems function as ecological governance tools. It further agrees with the EMA Act (2002) principles promoting environmental stewardship through localised ethics. The data underscore how adolescent girls’ moral identity is linked to climate ethics in ways that Western individualist environmental models often overlook.

Community Leader Two said:

“Our ancestors taught us with sayings about how to care for the land and climate, like ‘the land feeds you because you respect it.’”

This finding supports Leichenko and O’Brien’s (2019) argument for cultural approaches to climate resilience over purely technocratic models. It highlights agreement with the literature on IKS as crucial to climate adaptation (IPCC, 2022), yet challenges the tendency of external interventions to marginalise these forms of knowledge in favour of technical solutions.

FGD 1 said:

“When a girl learns her totem, she learns how to behave with people, animals, and the land in times when the climate changes.”

This finding illustrates how totems foster integrated psychosocial and climate ethics in girls, supporting resilience through identity formation. It extends beyond existing literature by emphasizing gendered pathways through which *Ubuntu* and IKS shape environmental behaviour.

C. COLLECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR CLIMATE PREPAREDNESS AMONG ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Ubuntu-inspired collective strategies were central to adolescent girls’ climate resilience, blending indigenous practice and community action.

FGD 2 said:

“We farm together and help each other with seeds and tools, so no girl or family is left to suffer when the climate brings drought.”

This finding is consistent with Ramose’s (1999) *Ubuntu* ethics of shared labour and resilience, and supports IPCC (2022) advocacy for participatory climate adaptation. The communal strategies affirm WHO (2021) guidance that psychosocial well-being is enhanced through collective coping mechanisms during climate shocks.

Community Leader Three said:

“Our elders read the signs of the rivers and trees and guide the girls and community on how to prepare for floods or droughts.”

The data affirm Chanza and de Wit’s (2016) argument that indigenous early warning systems offer vital resilience strategies, often overlooked in technocratic models. However, the findings challenge tendencies in non-governmental organisation (NGOs) practices that undervalue or bypass these traditional approaches in favour of externally designed solutions (Moyo and Sibanda, 2021).

FGD 3 said:

“When NGOs bring new seeds or ideas, we always check first if these fit with our ways and climate before the girls are told to use them.”

This illustrates community agency in filtering external interventions, consistent with Mawere (2021). The finding contributes to current debates on localisation in climate adaptation, showing *Ubuntu* as an effective cultural filter that preserves psychosocial cohesion while integrating innovations.

D. LEADERSHIP ROLES IN SUSTAINING *UBUNTU* GUIDANCE FOR GIRLS IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

The role of community leadership in sustaining *Ubuntu* guidance for adolescent girls emerged strongly in the findings.

Community Leader One said:

“Our duty is to keep our customs alive, help solve disputes, and make sure no girl or family faces climate problems alone.”

This aligns with Metz (2020) who describes *Ubuntu* leadership as fundamentally custodial, tasked with ensuring the community’s moral and practical resilience. It affirms the literature on *Ubuntu* as integral to climate adaptation at the local level (Letseka, 2013).

FGD 1 said:

“We follow our leaders for advice on farming, marriage, or how to face climate challenges.”

This finding supports the argument that traditional leadership remains vital in guiding moral and practical decisions in climate contexts, contrasting with the view that globalisation has rendered such structures obsolete (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2019).

Community Leader Two said:

“We encourage our girls to learn modern skills and technology, but also to respect the land and climate, because Ubuntu teaches that both are needed for survival.”

This suggests that *Ubuntu* leadership is negotiating the interface of tradition and modernity, agreeing with Moyo and Sibanda’s (2021) view that African communities selectively integrate technology in ways that sustain moral cohesion. The finding contributes to debates on decolonising climate adaptation by showing that *Ubuntu* provides a flexible yet principled guide for navigating change.

SYNTHESIS

The findings are largely in agreement with the reviewed literature on *Ubuntu*, psychosocial well-being, and climate resilience, while offering nuanced insights on adolescent girls’ experiences in rural Zimbabwe. They affirm the value of *Ubuntu* as both a psychosocial support and a resilience framework (Ramose, 1999; Metz, 2020) and align with calls for participatory, culturally embedded climate adaptation (Chanza and de Wit, 2016; IPCC, 2022). However, the data challenge assumptions that *Ubuntu* has been eroded by globalisation and technology (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2019), showing instead its dynamic adaptation and continued relevance for adolescent girls in climate-affected contexts.

DISCUSSION

This discussion critically analyses how *Ubuntu*-inspired guidance shapes the psychosocial well-being and climate resilience preparedness of adolescent girls in rural Zimbabwean communities. The findings demonstrate that *Ubuntu* offers a dynamic, culturally grounded support system for girls facing climate-related challenges, yet also reveal tensions and limitations when *Ubuntu* is positioned within a globalised, technologically shifting world. The analysis engages key theories, human rights frameworks, and climate resilience debates to situate *Ubuntu*'s relevance and challenges in the contemporary context.

UBUNTU AS PSYCHOSOCIAL AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE FRAMEWORK FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

The findings affirm the central premise of *Ubuntu* as a moral and emotional scaffold that fosters psychosocial well-being and climate resilience in adolescent girls. *Ubuntu*'s ethic of collective responsibility and mutual care enables girls to feel supported as they navigate environmental hardships such as droughts, food insecurity, and floodings. This echoes Ramose's (1999) and Letseka's (2013) assertions that *Ubuntu* situates individual identity within communal care networks. The emotional security and solidarity described by participants confirm *Ubuntu*'s role in fulfilling basic psychosocial needs (Maslow, 1943), while also providing moral identity and esteem early in girls' development, consistent with Nussbaum's (2003) critique of hierarchical need models.

Similarly, the use of totems, idioms, and environmental ethics in guiding adolescent girls aligns with IKS literature (Chanza and de Wit, 2016; Mawere, 2021) and environmental legislation (EMA Act, 2002). These cultural tools link girls' moral identities with ecological stewardship, supporting climate resilience through locally resonant guidance. This stands in contrast to purely technocratic models of

climate preparedness, highlighting *Ubuntu's* unique contribution as both a psychosocial and environmental resilience system.

DOES *UBUNTU* FULLY EQUIP ADOLESCENT GIRLS FOR CONTEMPORARY THREATS?

While *Ubuntu* offers strong emotional and moral foundations, its sufficiency in equipping adolescent girls for modern threats – especially those posed by climate disasters and digital risks – requires critical examination. The findings indicate that *Ubuntu* guidance prepares girls well for localised climate hazards through collective farming, early warning systems, and moral environmental codes. Yet, *Ubuntu's* capacity to engage digital risks, such as cyber exploitation or misinformation about climate change, was not clearly articulated by participants. This suggests a gap where *Ubuntu's* traditional frameworks may require intentional adaptation or augmentation with digital literacy and rights-based education to fully protect adolescent girls.

Moreover, while *Ubuntu* fosters communal resilience, it may at times constrain individual agency. For example, the principle that “a child belongs to the whole village” can protect girls through collective care, but it might also limit girls’ privacy or voice in decisions affecting their lives, especially where communal customs conflict with personal aspirations or modern rights claims. This tension is visible when traditional expectations around marriage or labour are enforced under the guise of collective good, potentially impinging on rights enshrined in the UNCRC (1989) and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990). *Ubuntu*, therefore, offers both protection and restrictions, requiring careful navigation to ensure adolescent girls’ best interests are upheld.

UBUNTU AS AN ADAPTIVE RESILIENCE MODEL: STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The findings suggest that *Ubuntu* can be theorised as an adaptive resilience model for adolescent girls in climate-affected rural contexts. *Ubuntu's* strengths lie in its capacity to integrate psychosocial well-being with ecological responsibility, creating a holistic framework where emotional, social, and environmental resilience reinforce one another. The communal ethic ensures that girls are not vulnerable during climate crises, while traditional knowledge equips them with locally relevant strategies for adaptation.

However, *Ubuntu's* limitations emerge in its slower responsiveness to novel risks that originate beyond the local context. Globalised climate threats – such as market-driven land use changes or transboundary pollution – may require alliances and tools beyond what *Ubuntu* alone can provide. Similarly, *Ubuntu's* moral frameworks, though dynamic, may lag in addressing issues like digital exploitation, gender-based violence in new forms, or climate displacement that severs community ties. Thus, *Ubuntu* must be complemented by broader resilience strategies, including formal education, legal protection, and engagement with global climate justice networks.

UBUNTU AND TECHNOCRATIC OR GLOBAL APPROACHES: MARGINALISATION OR COMPLEMENTARITY?

The data indicate that *Ubuntu* guidance is often marginalised by dominant technocratic approaches to climate resilience, particularly those promoted by NGOs and government agencies. While participants had respect for *Ubuntu*-based strategies, they also noted that external actors frequently prioritise technical innovations – such as genetically modified seeds or imported farming techniques – without adequate integration of local knowledge and values. This reflects Leichenko and O'Brien's (2019) critique of global climate resilience models which favour technology over cultural embeddedness.

At the same time, the findings demonstrate that communities actively negotiate these external interventions, filtering them through *Ubuntu*'s moral lens to protect psychosocial cohesion. This suggests potential complementarity rather than inevitable marginalisation. *Ubuntu* offers a cultural filter that can help ensure that global or technocratic approaches are localised in ways that preserve adolescent girls' psychosocial well-being and identity.

GLOBALISATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF CULTURE

The research also highlights the complex ways *Ubuntu* guidance is adapting — or struggling to adapt — to globalisation and technological change. Leaders and participants spoke of encouraging girls to acquire technological skills while remaining rooted in *Ubuntu* ethics. This points to the selective adoption of modern tools in ways that sustain communal identity. However, as Comaroff and Comaroff (2019) warn, globalisation can commodify cultural values, reducing *Ubuntu* from a lived ethic to a symbol consumed for external agendas — whether in tourism, NGO programming, or state rhetoric. The challenge is to ensure *Ubuntu* remains a dynamic, lived practice that genuinely supports adolescent girls in climate-impacted contexts, rather than a static artefact.

UBUNTU AND HUMAN RIGHTS: ENABLING OR RESTRICTING ADOLESCENT GIRLS' RIGHTS?

Finally, the findings illuminate both the rights-enabling and potentially rights-restricting aspects of *Ubuntu* guidance for adolescent girls. On the one hand, *Ubuntu* supports rights to protection, care, and survival by embedding girls within strong social networks that mitigate climate vulnerabilities. It operationalises principles that resonate with international rights frameworks, such as the right to health, education, and safety (UNCRC, 1989; African Charter, 1990).

On the other hand, *Ubuntu's* emphasis on collective over individual interests may, in some contexts, limit girls' autonomy. For example, communal expectations about gender roles, marriage, or labour, may conflict with individual rights claims, particularly where global rights discourses promote personal freedom over collective obligations. The task, therefore, is to harness *Ubuntu's* strengths as a rights-enabling system while addressing areas where communal norms may inadvertently suppress girls' voices or choices.

Ubuntu emerges from this study as a vital, culturally resonant system for adolescent girls' psychosocial well-being and climate resilience preparedness in rural Zimbabwe. Yet its future relevance depends on its capacity to adapt thoughtfully to global, technological, and rights-based challenges. Far from being marginal or obsolete, *Ubuntu* offers a foundation for locally grounded resilience, but one that must be augmented with broader tools and protections to fully equip adolescent girls for the complexities of the modern climate crisis.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines the influence of *Ubuntu*-inspired guidance on the psychosocial well-being and climate resilience preparedness of adolescent girls in rural Zimbabwean communities, focusing on Manganzo Village under Manhenga Rural District Council. The findings confirm that *Ubuntu* provides a rich cultural framework that nurtures adolescent girls' emotional security, collective identity, and climate adaptation skills. Through communal action, moral environmental codes, and leadership guidance, *Ubuntu* supports both psychosocial well-being and climate resilience.

However, *Ubuntu's* collective orientation, while protective, may not fully address modern challenges such as digital risks, global climate threats, or individual rights concerns. The need emerges for

approaches that retain *Ubuntu*'s strengths while addressing its limitations through inclusive, modernised strategies.

THEORY RECOMMENDATIONS

- ***Develop Ubuntu as a climate resilience model for adolescent girls:*** Researchers and universities should further theorise *Ubuntu* as an adaptive resilience model that integrates psychosocial support, gender-sensitive climate ethics, and modern risks (e.g. technology and rights concerns). This can be achieved through interdisciplinary studies that bridge philosophy, environmental science, and gender studies.
- ***Longitudinal, mixed-methods research:*** Future studies should track how *Ubuntu* guidance evolves across regions and time, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to measure its impact on adolescent girls' resilience and well-being.

PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

- ***Community level:*** Traditional leaders, ward councillors, and village assemblies should establish *Ubuntu*-inspired resilience committees, including youth and women representatives. These should coordinate climate adaptation actions (e.g. communal farming, early warning systems) and guide girls in blending *Ubuntu* ethics with practical skills. NGOs and local government can provide technical training and support.
- ***Household level:*** Village workshops (led by community leaders and school heads) should sensitise families on balancing *Ubuntu* values with adolescent girls' rights. Households can adopt agreements on fair labour division during climate shocks, and create protected time for girls to engage in digital learning.
- ***School level:*** Schools should form *Ubuntu* clubs that integrate cultural values, climate science, and digital literacy for girls. Teachers and School Development Committees can lead these

initiatives, ensuring they are gender-sensitive and rights-affirming.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Ward and district level:** Manhenga Rural District Council should formally integrate *Ubuntu* and IKS into disaster preparedness and climate resilience plans. Ward-level campaigns should link totem-based conservation zones with climate education that blends traditional and scientific knowledge.
- **National level:** Ministries of Environment, Education, and Youth should create national guidelines for embedding *Ubuntu* and IKS into climate resilience policies, while explicitly protecting adolescent girls' rights under the Constitution, the UNCRC, and the African Charter. Funding streams should support community-driven resilience projects that centre *Ubuntu* values.

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