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## Perceptions of married persons on nkolola intiation ceremonies in southern Zambia

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### Abstract

The study sought to establish the perceptions of married women and their husbands towards initiation ceremonies among the Tonga speaking people of Mazabuka and Monze Districts in Zambia. The objective of the study was to find out what initiated women and their husbands think are the positive and negative influences of *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. A descriptive survey approach was used to conduct the research as it was best suited in describing the perceptions of married men and women of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony. The study made use of 200 participants comprising 100 initiated women and their husbands.

The study findings revealed that the ceremony was perceived through the initiates' behavioural change in a good way as it made women mature, and instilled virtues of respect, obedience and community life.

**Keywords:** Initiation, Novice

### 1. Introduction

Richards (1956) <sup>[15]</sup> defines initiation as a rite of passage, usually performed during puberty. It is a cultural tradition that is practiced in most communities in Africa. It marks the entrance or acceptance, into a group or society. It could also be a formal admission to adulthood in a community or one of its formal components. In an extended sense, it can also signify a transformation in which the initiate is 'reborn' into a new role.

In Zambia, most ethnic groups practice initiation rites for girls. The Tonga call the novice or girl 'mooye', the Bemba call her 'Nachisungu', the Chewa call her 'Namwali', while the Lozi call her 'Mwalanjo'. The basic principles like inculcating morals in girls are the same with only a few variations. During initiation, the girl is instructed by some elderly women who are well vested in the society's culture. Emphasis is placed on reproductive roles within marriage. These include domestic and agricultural duties, respect for elders and future husband, sexual and food taboos.

Among the Tonga in the Southern Province of Zambia, initiation is a rite that marks the passage from childhood to adulthood. This initiation ceremony is known as Nkolola. It takes place just after a girl has had her first menstruation. This initiation ceremony sets a basis for adult life by developing a new identity for the girl.

The concern in the study was on the perception of the Nkolola initiation ceremony by married men and women in Southern province of Zambia. Nkolola is a girls' initiation rite which involves confinement of a girl for a period ranging from three to six months or even a year in some cases.

### Statement of the Problem

Much research has been done on initiation ceremonies in Zambia. Some of the notable ones include studies done by Raising (1996) <sup>[13]</sup> on 'the passing on the rites of passage,' the case of Girls initiation in the context of an urban Roman Catholic community on the Zambian Copperbelt, and then in 2001 on the female initiation rites in Urban Zambia. Hansen (1997) <sup>[7]</sup>, based his study on keeping the House in Lusaka and Maambo (2008) <sup>[10]</sup> conducted a study on the effects of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony on women in southern province, the case for Monze district. However, these studies have all been concentrating on women without looking at what men feel about their initiated wives. To fully appreciate the perceptions of women traditional ceremonies in society, there was need to look at how initiated women and their husbands perceive this subject and hence this study. The author therefore, sought to build on from the previous research (Maambo, 2008 <sup>[10]</sup> Masters Thesis) by factoring in the perceptions of men married to women who have gone through the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony.

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### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to describe the perceptions of married men and women of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony in Mazabuka and Monze Districts of Southern Province of Zambia.

### **Significance of the Study**

Many women pass through initiation ceremonies. It is, thus vital to find out the perceptions of women and their husbands on the effects of these ceremonies. A study of this nature might further help in finding out how the ceremonies can be used as a platform in fighting against HIV and AIDS and gender imbalances that we see in our society today. Therefore, the study of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony is important for women and their husbands.

Educational planners as well as curriculum developers can use findings from this study to take into account the background of initiated girls during the planning stage. Additionally, it can be of benefit to the people of Southern Province in the sense that reproductive health educators, for instance, can take into account the background of initiated women when disseminating information on reproductive health.

### **Description of the Ritual**

As described earlier, initiation is conducted after the girl becomes of age, usually between the ages of eleven and fourteen. The procedures followed are similar in almost all cultures in Zambia. However, this study specifically dealt with initiation ceremony of the Tonga people of Monze and Mazabuka districts in Southern Province. Once the girl reaches puberty, detected by the first flow of blood from her vagina, she is secluded or isolated from others.

The seclusion period depended on the economic strength of the girl's parents. Those who were economically sound did not take too long to organise the graduation ceremony of their daughter. It was also dependent on how fast she was able to grasp the lessons she received both practically and theoretically (Mbikusita Lewanika, 1979).

### **Literature Review**

#### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on the socialisation theory, gender socialisation theory and the social identity theory. This framework, therefore, provides the analytical and interpretive lens for the analysis of the findings.

#### **Socialisation Theory**

The theory of socialisation is cardinal to this study because it is through socialisation that attitudes and perceptions are shaped. In the shadow of HIV and AIDS, the kind of socialisation the girls are exposed to can play a fundamental role in the way they regard HIV prevention messages that will ultimately guide their behaviour.

According to Giddens (2006: 163) <sup>[6]</sup> 'Socialisation is the process whereby, the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which he/she was born. Socialisation among the young allows for the more general phenomenon of social reproduction, the process whereby societies have structural continuity over time.'

However, for Feigelman (1980: 53) <sup>[4]</sup> cited in Munachonga (2009: 8) 'socialisation is the process by which we can learn to become members of society, both by internalising the norms and values of society and also by learning to perform our social roles'. Families socialise young ones in many ways.

For example, in the Zambian context, mothers and aunts socialise girls into what are considered feminine roles in the division of labour. The girls are also instructed on how to dress and sit properly. Feigelman (1980) <sup>[4]</sup> asserts that children learn the cultural norms of the society in which they were born. When secondary socialisation happens during initiation rites, the norms and values of proper dress and decorum for a girl-child are usually emphasised. For example, initiates are expected to either wear long dresses and skirts or wrap a chitenge (a wrapper) around themselves during the seclusion period, so as not to expose their nakedness.

#### **Gender Socialisation Theory**

From the moment of birth, the child's gender influences the opportunities she or he will experience. Within a few years of life, children begin to form their own new ideas about gender that subsequently guide the types of activities they practice, what they find interesting and the achievements they attain. As children develop their gender of self-concepts, beliefs and motives are informed and transmitted by families, peers, the media and schools. These social contexts both reflect and perpetuate gender roles inequalities in the larger society (Leaper, 2000; Wood and Eagly, 2002 cited in Grusec and Hastings, 2007: 561) <sup>[9]</sup>.

#### **Socialisation and Gender**

Social, cultural and contextual factors allow patterns of behaviour generally associated with girls or boys, women or men, to emerge. The term gender rather than non-sexism also provides a deeper understanding of how the initiation system treats females differently from males (Truscott, 1994; Okin, 1989). Gender is a socially acquired characteristic, and includes psychological, social and cultural characteristics, such as ideas about 'masculinity and femininity'. Seedat, *et al.* (2001) define gender as the characteristic practices that are regarded by society to be appropriate to women and men.

Due to the expectation of the adult role, the education of girls in early society is different to that of boys, although initially they both dwell in the same primary and secondary domestic educational milieu. Boys are socialised to be independent and to brave their future on the public sphere. However, girls are socialised and taught their main perspectives on life by older female participants in the primary educational milieu, which is also to be their future adult milieu (Sampsel, 1992).

#### **The Social Identity Theory**

The theory of social identity was also found useful for this study, which sought to find out why the *Nkolola* rite of passage continues to be practiced in the presence of abundant Western education and amidst accusations of encouraging early sexual debut among those who undergo it. Issues of sex as well as tradition, culture and modernity are also discussed in this section.

Social identity theory is concerned with placing people into categories. 'The categorisation process produces stereotypical perceptions that is the perception or judgement of all members of a social category or group as showing some characteristics which distinguish them from some other social groups' (Hogg, 1988: 20) <sup>[8]</sup>. The self is cardinal to the categorisation as classification can be on the basis of similarities and differences to self. It is also the self that can help one to have a sense of social identity to a certain category (Hogg, 1988) <sup>[8]</sup>. Lending strength to this assertion, Giddens (1991) <sup>[5]</sup> explains that an individual can understand the self when he/she relates to a social network.

Some people in Southern province view initiation as a culture and an initiation school as a place of socialisation. It is perceived as a safe place for women to learn about their cultural beliefs and to admire and understand their respective roles, learn to develop a sense of self, receptive, responsive and initiated girls learn to gain power and position through their personal relationships within their communities and during the initiation ceremonies.

### Review of Literature

Some scholars have recommended initiation ceremonies particularly for women, Bennetta (1980) states that the importance of women's ceremonies is associated with the division of labour within a community. The emphasises that while some aspects of women's work change radically in the transition from an agrarian to an urban or semi urban existence, the responsibilities of child rearing and care of the household remain remarkably similar. A group may value these responsibilities in the same way that it did previously. According to Bennetta's case-study on a Lusaka shanty town, residents wished to retain as many of the organisational aspects of their villages as possible.

Colson (1962)<sup>[3]</sup> argues that, the young girl learns the art of cooking and household management (a skill she has been performing beside her own mother since she could walk), music and beautification. The girl is encouraged to leave behind her jaunty, carefree childhood ways and adopt the stature of a woman full of dignity and grace.

Similarly, Snelson (1970)<sup>[16]</sup> also states that the education provided at the initiation ceremony is thorough and well balanced in the preparation of the girl for life. He points out that initiation ceremonies are a kind of traditional education that is regarded as one preserving the cultural heritage of the community. It also fosters obedience, unselfishness and endurance of hardship, encourages honesty and self-restraint and respect for the rights of others. All these attributes are inculcated in the young women that undergo initiation. The novice is taught some difficult tasks that will help shape her into becoming a hardworking woman.

The area of morality is yet another relevant avenue through which traditional Africans try to form people and reinforce in them the important idea and value of harmonious community-living. Every social group evolves its distinct ethical code. Every society has its norms of acceptable behaviour, taboos and prohibitions. Many traditional African groups have, in addition, motivational features and incentives through which compliance to the norms of approved behaviour and social ideals are encouraged. There are equally rituals of purification, as well as punitive measures that try to deter and curb the tendency to deviate (Schapera, 1946)<sup>[17]</sup>.

Malewezi (2000) also adds on to this argument, in a study he conducted in Malawi revealed that social practices are emerging among the youths that can adversely influence the spread of HIV and AIDS. He points out that those girls who previously went through practices like initiation ceremonies were well behaved. Because in most of these ceremonies girls were taught not to engage in sex before marriage, they came to know about sex and practiced it at the time they were getting married as virginity was highly emphasised during the teachings. It is, therefore, argued that if cultural practices like initiation ceremonies are encouraged, they could play an important complementary role in preventing the spread of HIV

Snelson (1970)<sup>[16]</sup> brings out the economic benefits of the ceremony to the initiates as well as to the society. The novice

is taught how to make household utensils and equipment. These are the ones the lady would use in her home when she is married. Crafts made included things like mats, baskets, brooms, pots and many others.

On the other hand however, other studies seem to have different observations, they point out that other values taught to women have adverse effects on their lives. For example, research conducted by Mbozi (1998)<sup>[12]</sup> raised concerns about the values inculcated into a woman with regard to sex and sexuality during the sex ritual. It is believed that the emphasis on submissiveness of women to men and sexual satisfaction partly accounts for the disempowerment of women. In this way, a woman is educated to see herself as a sex object. The later fail to negotiate for safe sex in order to please the husband. Men also control use of protection and are not likely to agree to wives using condoms. This means it is difficult, or impossible for women to protect themselves from the risk of HIV infection.

Chief Nzamane also opposed the initiation of girls at a younger age. He argued that 'girls are reaching puberty earlier than they used to. Years ago, a girl would begin menstruating at sixteen and it was normal for her to marry around that age, hence the initiation ceremony was appropriate. But nowadays, it can happen as early as twelve or thirteen years. This is too young to learn about sex and marriage. 'We want the girls to finish their education before they get married or get pregnant' ([www.irishtimes.com](http://www.irishtimes.com) 2010/09/28/).

Brown (1963)<sup>[2]</sup> states that ritual mother will also school the young girl in the art of seduction during the initiation ceremony. The ability to please a man in every way is an art taken seriously by the initiating women. A special string of beads may be worn loosely about her hips as a visual gift to her husband. This focus on seduction, however, can lead to a high-rate of promiscuity. The girls after being initiated can start practicing the skills they learnt and even start involving themselves in sex before marriage to see if the lessons had changed their way of handling men in bed during sex. This can be a recipe for increase in the levels of sexually transmitted diseases and even early marriages and the number of school dropouts. All these have an adverse impact on the development process of the individual and the society as a whole.

Another study by UNFPA (2005) on UNFPA and government decentralisation: a study of country experiences in Africa, also confirms that initiation rites reinforce gender stereotypes, encouraging young men to assume dominance and young women to accept their lower status. Therefore, after initiation it has been proved that most girls take less interest in school. All they think of is marriage or simply having sex with men so that they can practice the skills learnt. This results into early marriages, unwanted pregnancies and increases on the number of girls who drop out of school.

The literature has shown the developmental qualities that traditional initiation ceremonies have on a young man and more especially on a young woman in terms of readying her before she can finally take up her rightful societal role as a woman in every respect. The literature has also shown that sometimes some unintended outcomes of the traditional initiations can actually adversely affect the young woman especially where sexual reproductive health is concerned hence, the study is keen to establish the perceptions that the married Men and women hold behind the Nkolola initiation ceremony performed by the Tonga speaking people.

### **Methodology**

The study was descriptive in nature and it was carried out in the towns of Monze and Mazabuka where the Nkolola initiation ceremony is renowned.

### **Sample Size**

The Study used a sample size of 200 respondents comprising of 72 initiated women purposively selected and their respective 72 husbands as well as 28 uninitiated women randomly selected together with their respective 28 husbands. This sample size was chosen taking into account the aspect of feasibility which includes: making the analysis of data manageable, reduction of errors and taking into account non responses. The study opted for this technique because it sought to capture people with relevant information for the study.

### **Data Collection and Procedure**

The study made use of an interview schedule for data collection, interview schedule was preferred because it allowed respondents to express their views freely.

This was appropriate for the study because most of the participants, especially elderly ones, were illiterate; most of them had low education background. Therefore, a research assistant was engaged to help interpret the questions in Tonga, the local language. This method also helped to clarify questions in order to reduce ambiguity. The data collected was mainly qualitative but quantitative data was also collected to complement the qualitative data.

### **Data Analysis**

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse quantitative data from the interview schedules to generate frequencies and cross tabulations that were used in describing distributions of the variables which were presented in form of tables or figures.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study involved a lot of confidential data, therefore, the researcher was cleared by Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) from the University of Zambia. A researcher's written consent to the respondents was produced. Verbal permission was also sought from the respondents before conducting interviews. The purpose and benefits of the study were explained to the respondents in order to receive maximum cooperation. The respondents were assured that the information obtained would be treated with confidence.

### **Study Findings**

#### **Respondents' Responses to why Women get initiated**

Both the women and their husbands were of the view that it was mainly because the ceremony was a critical part of tradition and custom. Many however, held that women got initiated because the ceremony was meant to better their lives and instil good behaviour.

Both the women and their husbands in the sample still argued that the ceremony prepared the initiates for marriage and taught them to become responsible wives and mothers, respectful to their husbands, parents and community. Furthermore, it was revealed that initiates are taught income generating activities, sex roles and survival skills within the family framework.

#### **Respondents' Responses to whether the Ceremony Changes the Initiates' Behaviour**

89.4% of the respondents felt that the Nkolola initiation ceremony had an effect on the behaviour of initiates, while 10.6% of the respondents were opposed to this view. In fact 93.3% of the females and 94.4% of the males agreed with the notion that there was a difference in the behaviour of those initiated as opposed to those who were not.

#### **Respondents' Responses to how Nkolola Initiation Ceremony changes the Behaviour of Initiates**

Most respondents stated that initiates exhibited positive attributes such as respect for elders, husbands and in-laws, the ability to prepare well-cooked traditional meals and socially accepted norms and behaviour.

Other respondents indicated that there was abuse of good morals taught in the ceremony particularly the sexual lessons learnt from the ceremony prompted many young girls into promiscuity as they wanted to practice what they learnt.

Some respondents felt there was no relationship between an individuals' behaviour and their initiation status. They believed that all persons sought their own paths and standard of behaviour owing to their background and upbringing. They argued that the ceremony played no significant role in influencing the behaviour of the initiated positively.

#### **Relevance of Values taught during Nkolola Initiation Ceremony on the Community and the Individual**

93.8% respondents viewed the values taught during the initiation ceremony as being relevant to the community and the individual. Both the women and their husbands held the same view, thus 46.1% men and 47.7% women respectively. Only 6.2% of the respondents were opposed to the view that values taught during the ceremony were of any relevance to the community and the individual.

#### **Husbands' View towards Initiation Status of their Wives**

21.0% of the males indicated that they were very happy with their wives' initiation status. Their wives were loving and caring.

Furthermore, seventeen 17.0% of the respondents were of the view that their wives as well taught and hardworking whereas, twelve 12.0% stated that their wives were understanding, very respectful and God fearing.

#### **Respondents' Views on the Significance of the Nkolola Initiation Ceremony**

23.0% of the respondents were of the view that Nkolola was significant because it taught good morals to the women in society while 21.0% of the respondents were of the view that the initiation ceremony provided good grounds for bringing up good wives. Furthermore, 18.0% claimed that Nkolola was significant as it prepared a girl for adult life. 4 respondents viewed Nkolola as insignificant in as far as preparing a young woman for her responsibilities is concerned.

#### **Follies of Nkolola Initiation Ceremony**

33.0% of the respondents felt that the initiation ceremony disturbed school goers and encouraged early marriages whereas, 25.0% of the respondents were of the view that initiates start to practice what they are taught, hence the initiation ceremony encourages promiscuity. The rest felt that Nkolola had no follies.

**Strategies to Modify Values taught in Nkolola**

Some respondents claimed that Nkolola would be more relevant and useful if only individuals who are of a given age are initiated, while others felt that the ceremony should have a selective teaching style that addresses the needs of the initiates. Further, other respondents said that avoiding giving beer to the initiators would improve the quality of the teachings. On the other hand, some respondents stated that some books should be written to document the lessons and values of Nkolola. Some views held that Nkolola would be made more valuable by the incorporation of Christian norms and values as this would negate the negative effects of Nkolola and complement formal education appropriately. Others however called for the inclusion of Nkolola in the school curricular.

**Discussion of findings**

A study done by Malewezi (2000) in Malawi revealed that girls that attend the traditional initiation ceremonies are well behaved. Similarly, (Schapera, 1946) [17]. The area of morality is yet another relevant avenue through which traditional Africans try to form people and reinforce in them the important idea and value of harmonious community-living. Many traditional African groups have, in addition, motivational features and incentives through which compliance to the norms of approved behaviour and social ideals are encouraged. In the same vein, the study established that the Nkolola initiation ceremony does have an impact on a womans’ behavioural change as indicated by the 177 (89.4%) respondents who were in support of this view as opposed to the 21 (10.6%) who were not. The study further confirmed through 167 (83.5%) respondents who revealed that actually there is difference in the behaviour of those initiated as opposed to those who were not. As shown in the table below:

**Table 1.0:** Respondents' opinion on the effect of the *Nkolola* initiation ceremony on the behaviour of initiates

Gender of respondents	Whether <i>Nkolola</i> initiation ceremony affects behaviour of initiates		Total
	Yes	No	
Male	88 (44.4%)	11 (5.6%)	99 (50.0%)
Female	89 (44.9%)	10 (5.1%)	99 (50.0%)
Total	177 (89.4%)	21 (10.6%)	198 (100.0%)

Some studies done on female initiation ceremonies have yielded positive results, Raising (2001) [14], confirms that during the initiation, a girl is equipped with a vast body of knowledge that she is supposed to know throughout her life, Snelson (1970) [16] found that the education provided at the initiation ceremony is thorough and well balanced in the preparation of the girl for life and included attributes such as obedience, unselfishness and endurance of hardship, honesty and self-restraint and respect for the rights of others. Similarly, the respondents in this study confirmed that initiates exhibited positive attributes such as respect for elders, husbands and in-laws, the ability to prepare well-cooked traditional meals and socially accepted norms and behaviour. However, Mbozi (1998) [12] raised concerns about the values inculcated into a woman with regard to sex and sexuality during the sex ritual at a tender age, this view was also raised by Brown (1963) [2] and in confirmation, some respondents also stressed that these lessons would lead young girls to experimenting with sex and hence adversely affect their sexual reproductive health (SRH)

Colson (1962) [3], points out the significance of going through an initiation ceremony as an African woman. He argues that life in Africa revolves around the family and, therefore, African female initiation ceremonies tend to focus heavily on the preparation of young girls to be good wives and excellent mothers. In Similar fashion, 46 (23.0%) of the respondents were of the view that Nkolola was significant because it taught good morals to the women in society while 42 (21.0%) of the respondents were of the view that the initiation ceremony provided good grounds for bringing up good wives. Furthermore, 36 (18.0%) of the respondents, however, claimed that Nkolola was significant as it prepared a girl for adult life. Only four of the respondents viewed Nkolola as insignificant in as far as preparing a young woman for her responsibilities is concerned

In his view, Chief Nzamane (www.irishtimes.com 2010/09/28) argued against initiating girls at a tender age as this undermined the essence of the exercise. Similarly, the research findings showed that 66% of the respondents feel that Nkolola would be perceived as more relevant and useful if the initiates were only those of a particular age considered ready for marriage. And in addition 63% of the respondents feel the teachings should be tailored according to age specifications and be included in the teaching curricular as a way of embracing the cultural and traditional aspect of Nkolola and promoting wider coverage in society.

**Conclusions**

This study can thus be concluded that both the women and their husbands in Monze and Mazabuka districts perceived Nkolola initiation ceremony as imparting a positive influence on the initiates’ behaviour. They believe that such virtues as respect, communitarianism, cooking, modest dressing, home keeping and proper hygiene during menstruation are taught during the Nkolola initiation ceremony and, hence the positive influence on behaviour of the initiated women.

Initiated women and their husbands in Mazabuka and Monze districts of Southern province felt that the Nkolola initiation ceremony had both positive and negative effects. Among the positive effects is the fact that the initiated women were better prepared for marriage and, hence make women better mothers and members of society able to handle marital affairs with maturity and discretion. The Nkolola initiation ceremony also empowered women with skills to handle their husbands both in and outside the bedroom. The Nkolola initiation ceremony caused young girls to stay out of school as the initiation period, in many instances, was significantly long. This increased school dropout rates and further stood to disadvantage the girl child. Additionally, it was thought that the initiation ceremony taught values that perpetuated the oppression of women by men.

The study showed that though many women and their husbands in Mazabuka and Monze districts viewed Nkolola initiation ceremony as a significant contributor to a stable and well-functioning marriage, a small minority thought otherwise.

**Practice and Policy implication**

The Nkolola ceremony is a part of a cultural traditional heritage that gives pride to the indigenous people and Zambia as a cultured African Nation at large. Even when we embrace change and modernity as a people in a developing world we certainly hope to keep most of our values and traditions alive as a symbol of our roots. However, with growth of new Knowledge it is our duty to evaluate our norms and see how

best to improve some sections of our social wellbeing without making other sections worse off. The Study has acknowledged the value addition that the Nkolola ceremony installs in the life of a young woman that a go a long way in making her a better community member in as far as execution of her sex roles and responsibilities is concerned. This certainly is a good learning tool that could be harnessed and extended to all of Society within the Zambian context.

With respect to the findings of the study, the Nkolola should continue however with inclusion of the recommended views that the study has brought out. In the village setting, the Nkolola should only take place during the holidays when schools have closed and for a shortened period of time of almost 4 weeks (1 Month). Lessons could be split in three (3) sessions taking place at particular times of the year when schools are in recess, in order to allow for school going young girls. As a widely held view in the study, certain practices and lessons such as sexual and marriage lessons should be restricted only to particular ages considered ready for marriage, this will help curb the unintended adverse outcomes of the initiation ceremony such as promotion of promiscuity that threatens the Sexual reproductive health of young girls.

However, it is understood that not all people grow up in the village setting and or has roots in the village where such practices are held. The study therefore recommends the incorporation of such vital lessons in the general teaching curriculum as a way of embracing our culture and traditions to all the citizenry. This could be executed by bringing on board the ministry of Chiefs and cultural affairs to render assistance to the ministry of education in imparting cultural and traditional Knowledge in teachers training institutions who would in turn upon graduation implement this in various schools. The curriculum would be formulated and implemented in the same way other subjects like home economics and management are taught. This cultural affairs and tradition could be taught side by side with the various main local languages that already exist in the school programme.

This will ensure that cultural values and traditions are inculcated and developed along with other professional developments in the lives of not only young women but young men as well and as a result, the Zambian society will be able to hold on to its culture and tradition in a more modernised and balanced set up. Various cultural books may be prepared and translated into the various main local languages focusing on not only the Nkolola but other renowned traditional initiation ceremonies that take place within the country. This way, important aspects of young people's lives that parents feel embarrassed to teach will be learnt under a specifically guided cultural and affairs programme in school with respect to their age and gender. It could widely be used as a tool for behavioural change and awareness programme among pupils.

### Recommendations

Since the Nkolola initiation ceremony is perceived to have a positive influence on the behaviour and conduct of its initiates, it is recommended that initiation ceremony be encouraged to continue. There should be an integration of other important lessons during the initiation ceremony such as HIV and AIDS prevention and sexual reproductive health. This is so as to improve the content and quality of the lessons taught during Nkolola.

In order to mitigate some of the negative effects, the ceremony should adopt an age specific selection criteria for the initiates. This will stop teaching young girls' marriage

lessons which they are clearly not ready for. Furthermore, the lessons taught during Nkolola need to bring out the importance of a woman attaining economic independence before venturing into marriage. This will empower women and reduce the prevalence of early marriages.

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