



## Research Article

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## Post-Secondary Education Challenges of Students from Ethnic Minorities Groups Living on Commercial Farms in Peri-Urban Areas in Zimbabwe

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**Abstract:** *The increasingly globalising and competitive world makes it imperative for all students to pursue post-secondary education. However, some minority students remain excluded from post-secondary education for one reason or another. In Danckwerts Chewa Ethnic Community in peri-urban Harare of Zimbabwe, less than 3 students pursue post-secondary education annually. This problem was explored from bio-ecological and sociocultural perspectives. This qualitative study used a purposive homogenous sampling technique to select 12 participants who provided data required to answer the research question. Data were also generated through in situ observations. The results showed that the problem was rooted in the community's diasporic immigrant background which focused on working ahead of education. Thus, parents in the research site were not supporting their children to pursue post-secondary education. In recent times, the problem was amplified by soaring unemployment rate in Zimbabwe which rendered post-secondary education a zero return investment. Based on these findings, the study recommended that minority students should pursue post-secondary education for its long term social and economic benefits which promote social mobility.*

**Keywords:** Post-Secondary Education, Ethnic Minority Group; Social Mobility, Farm Employment, Unemployment.

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## INTRODUCTION

Equal access to post-secondary education by all students including those from diverse backgrounds is a priority issue worldwide (Bathmaker, 2017; Carpentier, 2010; Contini & Scagni, 2013; Naresh, 2009; Unterhalter & Carpentier, 2010). This stance on post-secondary education especially among students from marginalised communities is advanced by the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goal 4 target 3 which compels governments the world over to view post-secondary education as a developmental issue. The 2015 African Higher Education Summit held in Dakar, Senegal solidly endorsed this global stance on post-secondary education and made a declaration that “the hour of higher education is now”. Accordingly, the Zimbabwean government has taken this issue seriously and made the provision of higher and tertiary education for all her citizens regardless of ethnicity mandatory (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013). Despite having taken this noble decision, students from some ethnic minorities in Zimbabwe remain excluded from post-secondary education for reasons which have not been clearly understood.

## BACKGROUND

Post-secondary inequality is a prevalent phenomenon in multi-ethnic societies (TrustAfrica,

2015; Carnevale *et al.*, 2016; Meng, 2017). In these societies, factors which are thought to trigger and perpetuate educational inequalities between majority and minority ethnic groups include race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, parents' level of education, motivation, self-efficacy, self-regard and inspiration (Bathmaker, 2017; Carnevale *et al.*, 2016; Meng, 2017). However, it should be realised that the outlook and causes of inequalities manifesting in post-secondary education may not be universal. In order to come up with appropriate mitigatory strategies, researchers should continue to look for factors prevailing in specific ecological settings.

Generational failure by students from the Danckwerts Chewa ethnic community (DCEC) to transition into post-secondary education intrigued the presented researchers to want to explore the root causes. This ethnic group descended from the original Chewa ethnic group that migrated from Malawi in the 1890s for labour purposes and eventually settled permanently in Zimbabwe (Mudenge, 1988). The ethnic group is referred to as “Danckwerts Chewa Community” because it lives on Danckwerts commercial farm in settlements called “compounds”. This ethnic group is marginalised because of its exclusive location and the colonial labour laws which restricted the immigrants' free movement (Boeder, 1974; Daimon, 2015;

Mudenge, 1988). Except for isolated studies (Muchenje *et al.*, 2013; Daimon, 2015) focusing on the teaching and learning of ChiChewa language in primary school in line with Zimbabwe's Education Act, no specific study was conducted to explore post-secondary education inequalities affecting students with Chewa immigrant backgrounds.

### Research Question

Therefore, the present study's central aim is to explore and document the roots of educational inequality among ethnic minority groups living on commercial farms in per-urban areas of Zimbabwe. Specifically, the study addressed the following question: Which micro level factors hindered the pursuit of post-secondary education by students from Danckwerts Chewa ethnic community?

### Theoretical Framework

The microsystem factors which hinder the pursuit of EBHS by students are illuminated by Bronfenbrenner's Bio-ecological System Theory (BEST) and Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (SCT) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). Bronfenbrenner's theory is relevant because it defines the researched ethnic minority group's cultural and physical context as comprising five subsystems; micro, meso, exo, macro and chrono systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Neal & Neal, 2013). The focus on DCF as a microsystem helps the study to unfold context specific factors which fuelled the studied phenomenon.

On the other hand, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory posits that a person's immediate environment has profound influence on their life including the choices they make during the process of their development. This is because the meanings people ascribe to phenomena are negotiated through interaction with others in society. In Vygotsky's view, the mediation role of cultural tools facilitates the convergence of societal goals and individual goals. For example, a society which lives on game meat values hunting skills. Consequently, members of such a society are bound to pursue the development of hunting skills vigorously (Lantolf, Thorne & Poehner, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding and zone of proximal development (ZPD), two pivotal concepts in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory enabled the researchers not only to explore the level of support provided but also the direction of the support.

Evidently, to have an in-depth understanding of the development of patterned behaviour in society researchers needed to unpack and explain the contributions of culture and context. More so because, in DCEC, employment on the farm is prioritised ahead of pursuing post-secondary education. The lenses of the BEST and SCT helped the study to unravel the underlying factors behind this problem.

## RELATED LITERATURE

Research opinion is that pursuing post-secondary education is a necessary investment because it brings forth attractive returns (British Council, 2012; Hermansson, Lisenkova & Lecca, 2017; Ma, Pender & Welch, 2016; Ndaruhutse & Thompson, 2016; Rankin, Sandefur & Teal, 2010). For example, students from marginalised ethnic groups who pursue post-secondary education, cultivate within themselves attitudes and dispositions necessary for a progressive lifestyle. This change in lifestyle enables them to be part of the highly competitive knowledge driven society. Carnevale, Jayasundera and Gulish (2016) conclude that education bridges the gulf between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' implying that equipped with post-secondary education, students from marginalised ethnic groups are bound to climb up the social ladder.

However, studies have established that a variety of factors at the micro level may affect the smooth transition into post-secondary education by students from ethnic minority groups. For example, a study conducted in America revealed that high school completion rate for black ethnic students was 92% while college enrolment rate was 34% (NCES, 2016). The 58% difference clearly indicates the presence of underlying barriers which are faced by black ethnic students. Another study conducted by Ijaz and Abbas (2012) established that Pakistan ethnic groups living in Britain feared that Western education would erode their cultural values and were reluctant to send their children to British schools. The study concluded that, while these immigrant Pakistanis aspired their children to pursue higher education, their culture hindered them. This view was endorsed by Burke (2012) who established that ethnic cultural values, beliefs and practices prevented students from pursuing post-secondary education. In an effort to address post-secondary education inequality, China introduced a preferential college admission system which allowed students from ethnic minorities to enrol for post-secondary education with lower high school credentials compared to students from major groups (Wang, 2009). Despite the preferential treatment, Bahry (2011) found that only 2.7 % of students from ethnic minorities in China participated in post-secondary education during the period 1990-2000. However, Meng (2017) confirms that the preferential system has gone a long way in increasing ethnic minorities in higher education in China.

A preferential system is also used by universities in Zimbabwe to allow the enrolment of female law students with lower points than their male counterparts. This has gone a long way in increasing the number of females who successfully enrol for law degree programmes. In addition, Garwe and Thondhlana (2018) note that the establishment of vocational training colleges, teachers colleges, polytechnic colleges and universities in every province

is aimed at bringing post-secondary education within the reach of all ethnic groups. In addition to these measures, presidential scholarship programme and cadetship schemes in tertiary education are aimed at assisting students from vulnerable backgrounds with their post-secondary needs (Mutambanengwe, 2014). All these initiatives are designed to encourage all students, regardless of ethnicity, to access post-secondary education through a pathway of their choice. However, these initiatives have not eased the enduring post-secondary education inequality which has hounded students from DCEC for three generations, spanning more than half a century.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a phenomenological research philosophy, a perspective which has proved suitable for studying shared experiences by members of cultural groups (Creswell, 2014; Padilla-Diaz, 2015; Vagle, 2018). Using this research philosophy, the researchers provided a detailed description of the studied phenomenon from the perspective of participants (Howitt, 2010; Husserl, 1970; van Manen, 2014). The focus on one phenomenon helped the researchers to develop a deeper understanding of the studied problem. Building on the foundation of the phenomenology research philosophy, the study adopted a constructivist research paradigm. Through constructivism this study managed to build new knowledge from the interaction with participants who shared their lived experiences about the studied phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Maxwell, 2013). The views of participants were varied and the adoption of a constructivist research paradigm helped the study to accommodate the different views because this paradigm embraces subjective reality (Ashworth, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

A qualitative research approach was also used to tap into the participants' lived experiences about EBHS. Large body of scholarship (Hammersley, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Punch & Oancea, 2014) has shown that qualitative research approaches are suitable for exploring problems which are encountered in real life. Besides helping the researcher to unearth underlying issues, Corbin and Strauss (2015) observed that qualitative research approaches also empower participants. Qualitative methods engage research participants in active construction of knowledge about themselves. As participants share their personal life experiences they got to a better understanding of how EBHS stood for in human life. The study consolidated this approach by adopting an ethnographic research design which provided for the systematic study of participants without removing them from their natural setting (Fetterman, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2017). The researcher was immersed in the study site for a period of 8 months. Besides the trust and good rapport which was cultivated between the researcher and participants, the prolonged period in the research setting helped to

reveal camouflaged aspects of the researched ethnic group which would ordinarily remain hidden from outside view.

The studied Chewa ethnic community is located in DFC, in peri-urban Harare of Zimbabwe. The study used a purposive sampling technique to select 12 participants who had completed high school but had failed to pursue EBHS. All the 12 participants got employed in DCF within three months after they finished high school. These key informants were purposively selected based on the rich information they possessed in relation to the studied phenomenon (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Choy, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Etikan, Musa & Alkassin, 2016). Having failed to pursue EBHS, the chosen participants were best suited to answer the current research question. Data were generated from the 12 participants through focus group discussions. As the primary research instrument in this study, researcher moderated the focus group of 6 participants each. A FGD guide was used to initiate the discussions which lasted between an hour to an hour and half. The FGD data were complemented by data generated through in situ observations conducted by the researcher (Fetterman, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Creswell, 2014). The study also used a questionnaire to collect the participants' bio-data. Legal and ethical considerations including informed consent, data confidentiality, data anonymisation and security of information were observed in line with APA guidelines (APA, 2010).

A thematic data analysis procedure was used to make meaning out of the mass of observation and FGD datasets. The theming process involved sorting, coding, comparing and interpreting the data (Javadi & Zarea, 2016; Gibbs, 2018; Harding, 2019). Thick descriptions were made on each theme leading to the revelation of the hindering factors. Feedback was provided to participants for verification and validation of data interpretation in line with extant literature which emphasise the importance of communicating research results to participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Creswell, 2014).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The goal of pursuing post-secondary education is simple and straight forward. Studies have shown that post-secondary education confers individuals, families, communities and the nation at large with numerous benefits including economic and social benefits. For these benefits, the pursuit of post-secondary education has been universalised. Every student has an inalienable right to education including post-secondary education. However, factors within the DCEC micro level hindered the pursuit of post-secondary education by the majority of students from the research site. Twelve (12) participants took part in this study and are referred in this discussion as Participant1, Participant2 and so on up to Participant12. All the 12 participants had

completed their secondary education between 2015 and 2019. However, they all failed to enrol for post-secondary education. The results showed three underlying hindrances; historical legacy of not pursuing post-secondary education, inadequate transition support from disengaged parents and readily available employment in their host farm. The results are discussed in detail following the order in which they are listed above.

### **Historical legacy of exclusion**

Results showed that 91.5 % of students from the DCEC were not pursuing post-secondary education. The following excerpts demonstrate the resilience of this educational inequality in the research site.

*In this community about 35 boys and girls complete high school education every year. After that, we are employed in the farm (Participant-1).*

The above assertion by Participant 1 echoed the reality which obtained in DCEC in respect to the studied phenomenon. From the discussions that ensued, it was clear that getting employed in the farm after completion of high school education was the expected norm in this ethnic community. Parents expected their children to contribute towards bringing food in the family table. Children expected to earn income for their own requirements. The farm management expected a pool of labour to work in the various farm enterprises. During in situ observations, the researcher established that the majority of young adult employees in DCF had completed their secondary education. Some participants even indicated that they were still to collect their final high school results and certificates years after they had completed secondary education. They cited outstanding fees as the underlying reason despite the fact that they were in a position to pay off what they owed from their incomes. It was apparent that pursuing post-secondary education was not a primary goal by the majority in this ethnic community. This was summed up by a participant who asserted;

*I was born here and I am 20 years old now but I only know 3 people from this community who went to college. For the rest of us, it is better to work and support yourself (Participant-8).*

Similar sentiments were echoed by yet another participant who thought that their failure to pursue post-secondary education was more of a historical legacy, sustained by community norms rather than anything else.

*Everyone in this group completed high school but look at us. We are still young but we already have children and living in small rooms allocated to us in the farm. We just follow our parents and brothers blindly (Participant-5).*

Shedding more light on the expectations of parents from their community, another participant weighed in;

*Our parents do not want us to leave this community to look for better life. They want to work in the farm and stay here with them. They are happy if you join the Gule Wamkulu society (Participant-11).*

One of the participant was more adamant in her assessment of their parents' perception of post-secondary education.

*They think college and university is not for people who live and work in commercial farms. I think the government must force all parents to send their children to colleges (Participant-3).*

If ever there was any shed of doubt that the prevalence of the studied phenomenon in the research site was rooted in history, the following excerpt from a participant dispels any such doubt. She concluded;

*Our grandparents worked and died in this farm. Our parents worked in this farm, they are old now and they will die here. We were born here and now we are working here. This will go on and on if we do not change our culture and the way we think about our life (Participant-12).*

Based on the data obtained from the 12 participants and as reflected through the quoted excerpts, there was overwhelming evidence to suggest that post-secondary education inequality persisted throughout the immigrant history of the researched ethnic group. The first generation immigrants concerned themselves on employment, initially thinking they were just in Zimbabwe to work and return to Malawi, their home country. As such, pursuing education beyond literacy levels was not their migrant orientation or priority. However, as they settled and became citizens, the group remained focused on the short term gains which accrued from immediate farm employment at the expense of post-secondary education for its long term benefits. What obtained in the research site aligned with the sociocultural theory's idea that thinking develops from outside in. According to this theory, social and cultural interactions shape behaviour and influence the goals pursued by individuals in society (Vygotsky, 1978). For the students in the research site, it was apparent that from childhood through to young adulthood, they observed almost everyone in their community working in the farm. This was internalised and pursued as a group norm, setting the stage for a behaviour pattern which evolved over generations.

### **Readily available farm employment**

Participants concurred that the pursuit of post-secondary education provided people with many alternative opportunities besides formal employment.

Extra-income earned by teachers and motor mechanics through the provision of extra lessons and repairing cars outside their formal employment were cited as benefits accruing to those who had skills on demand. Participant-6 disclosed;

*You see, the farm mechanics make extra income to complement what they earned from the farm. They fix people's cars when they are not at work here.*

However, the participants indicated that readily available employment in their host farm enticed them from pursuing post-secondary education. Participants reflected;

*I started working while waiting for my results but when they came, I continued working. Once you start to earn your own money, your parents expect you to look after yourself and to also help them buy food and other things. You will never go back to school (Participant-7).*

When probed on how many students enrol for post-secondary education, participants were agreed that at most 3 students make successfully transitions. This was against an estimated average of 35 students who completed their secondary education annually. Based on these figures, post-secondary transition rate in DCEC stood at a low 8.5 %. The rest of the students from this ethnic community who constituted 91.5 % were employed in DCF soon after completing their secondary education. The study established that the farm engaged in various enterprises including crop, horticulture and livestock production. In addition the farm had a thriving tourism business unity within and outside the farm premises. Thus, employment was readily available in this farm. The following excerpts from participants confirms this reality.

*Before I even completed high school education, my father had already secured me a job in the farm (Participant-4).*

This was supported by another participant who revealed that as long as one was staying in DCEC, they were assured of getting employment in the farm when they completed high school education. He stated;

*Anyone who wants to work will get employed in this farm as long as you stay in Danckwerts farm (Participant-6).*

Further analysis of Participant-6's claim revealed that completion of high school coincided with the attainment of the age of majority which was 18 years according to the Constitution of Zimbabwe (Constitution of Zimbabwe, 2013). Thus, by employing students who had completed their high school education, DCF was simply complying with the country's labour laws. As indicated in another excerpt from another participant, parents in this ethnic community exposed their children to their farm occupations in preparation for later for employment at

the turn of 18 years. This practice provided the children with some pre-employment training while they are still very young. For example, a father who was employed in the livestock department would impart livestock skills to his sons and sometimes daughters as they grow up such that when they completed their high school education, they are easily absorbed in that department. A participant explained;

*My father taught me to drive tractors when I was in form 2 and by the time I was in form 3, I was already a good driver. When I completed high school, I got employed here as tractor driver but also drive other farm vehicles (Participant-5).*

During the in situ observations, the researcher established that besides Participant-5, many other parents worked side by side with their children in the same departments. While this was not in any way a prerequisite for securing employment in DCF, participants confirmed that this practice was common not only in DCF but also in their neighbour commercial farms.

Two important points emerge from the foregoing discussion. First, 91.5 % of students in the research site were not pursuing post-secondary education. Second, these students were employed in DCF immediately after they completed their high school education. This reality was amply described by a participant who summed;

*Let us be honest, it is difficult to return to school once you start working in the farm (Participant-7).*

Based on the overwhelming evidence from the data, there was no shed of doubt that availability of employment in DCF at a time when Zimbabwe's unemployment rate was soaring above 85 % (Rusvingo, 2014), immensely contributed to the prevalence of the studied phenomenon in the research site.

### **Inadequate transition support from disengaged parents**

Wide scholarship concur that parental support is pivotal to the promotion of positive educational outcomes (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014; Kim & Hill, 2015; Bell, Boyle & Sadler, 2016). This variable is wide in scope. For example, parental support includes such things as financial support, emotional support, engagement with the school where the child goes, helping with homework, partnering the child in making academic decisions and so on. In the case of DCEC, the following excerpts illustrate what obtained with regard to parental support.

#### **Participant-10**

*If my parents had assisted me to go to college, I would be a teacher by now. My life would be good but look, I am stuck in the farm.*

**Participant-1**

*We follow our parents' footsteps, we focus on working.*

**Participant-4**

*I do not want to lie to you. In this community, we are behind. Our parents are different from other parents out there. Before I even completed high school, my father had already talked to the farm owner and secured me a job. All parents in our community do the same for their children. No one talks about going to college.*

**Participant-2**

*I never discussed about going to college with my parents. I think they wanted me to work because they helped me to get employed here in the farm.*

The above excerpts indicate that parents in the research were not providing the support required for successful transition to post-secondary education. If anything, it is clear from the same excerpts that support was directed towards helping their children to get employed in the farm as soon as they completed their secondary education. Studies (Harris & Robinson, 2016; Bell *et al.*, 2016; Carnevale *et al.*, 2016) established that low socio-economic status of parents may negatively impact their ability to provide their children with the necessary educational support required for their success. However, parents in the research site were gainfully employed with a stable monthly income. In many cases, families in the research site had two or more adult members who were employed in the farm. While their incomes were low, it was within the national average. Therefore, the lack of support to help their children to pursue post-secondary education was not entirely determined by their socio-economic status. Moreover, it was overwhelmingly from the participants parents did not discuss with their children, anything to do with pursuing post-secondary education. Furthermore, some of the participants indicated that their parents secured them farm employment even before they completed their secondary education. This was a clear indication that these parents did not perceive their children as college bound students. Participant-1 strengthened that

It was clear from the participants that they received no parental support to help them pursue post-secondary education. Rather, parents in the research site focused on securing employment in the farm for their children who completed their secondary education. At least two adult family members were employed in DCF. Hence, families in the research site had the financial capacity to fund post-secondary education for at least a child from each family at a time. After all the same parents successfully supported their children's secondary education. Without a change of the parents' socioeconomic status, the logical explanation for the sudden disappearance of parental support was that these parents wanted their children to follow their footsteps as claimed by Participant-1, and work rather than pursuing

post-secondary education. Therefore, using the bio-ecological systems theory and the sociocultural theory lenses to connect the dots emerging from data, the lack of parental support was one of the micro level factors which hindered the pursuit of post-secondary education by students from DCEC.

## IMPLICATIONS

A large body of literature on post-secondary education inequality affecting ethnic minorities focus on minority students who are already in post-secondary education systems in Western, European and Asian countries. Such studies attribute this disadvantage to traditional factors including low degree completion rates, low degree classifications, choice of degree programs and choice of institution among other variables which are mostly beyond the control of the affected groups. To a large extent, it appears that such explanations represent Eurocentric perspectives on ethnic minority disadvantages in post-secondary education. In contrast, this study adds the Afrocentric perspective to this discourse by exploring the microsystem of one of the most disadvantaged ethnic minority group to unfold micro level factors which hindered the pursuit of post-secondary education by their students. In this regard, three pertinent implications emerge from this study.

First, for policy makers in education, the guiding principle is that ethnic students are bona fide citizens as provided for by various international conventions as well as national constitutions. For this reason, ethnic minorities are not second citizens by reason of their immigrant background. The pursuit of post-secondary education by ethnic minority students should be viewed as their right as much as it is a right to majority students. Hence, any disadvantage arising from their historical legacy should be addressed through targeted interventions to enhance easy access to, participation and success in post-secondary education. In drawing targeted or context specific interventions, microsystem factors which hinder the pursuit of post-secondary education must be considered together with structural factors.

Second, for ethnic minority students, the pursuit of post-secondary education is widely accepted across the increasingly globalising world. Minority students should therefore, pursue post-secondary education to enhance their global relevance as well as for its utility as a catalyst for upward social mobility. For this reason, students from ethnic minority backgrounds should answer the question; for what benefit should they pursue post-secondary education? A legion of social and economic benefits associated with pursuing post-secondary education will help them in making informed educational decisions. Understanding the efficacy of post-secondary education is bound to convince them to pursue it for its long term benefits. It emerged from this study that the majority of students

from DCEC failed to pursue post-secondary education because they took up readily available employment offered to them by their host farm. On the face of it, it appeared logical for them to secure employment in the farm at the earliest opportunity rather than pursuing post-secondary education which guarantees no employment on completion due to soaring unemployment rate in Zimbabwe which was hovering above 85%. However, in making their choices, ethnic minority students should bear in mind that employment opportunities increase proportionally with increasing level of education attained. Contrastingly, literature indicates that employment opportunities for those with secondary education alone, decreases as more and more people with post-secondary education enters the job market. Therefore, post-secondary education should be pursued as a necessity and an investment for now and for future opportunities.

Third, for ethnic minority parents, extant literature shows that parental support smoothen the students' transitions from one educational level to the next. Transitioning into post-secondary education require a range of support from parents including decisional support, choosing a program, selecting the right institution, financial support, enrolment process, emotional and psychological support among others. Traditional challenges affecting parental support include but not limited to lack of information, parents' level of education, parents' socioeconomic status and presence of social capital or lack thereof. This study identified some gaps in knowledge with regard to parental support as a variable in promoting or hindering student transition into post-secondary. In this regard, it appeared that in the research site, parental support was provided sufficiently throughout primary and secondary education. This was reflected through an annual average of 35 students who successfully completed their secondary education in DCEC. However, after the completion of secondary education, parental support towards the pursuit of post-secondary education suddenly ceased. This could be designed to force students to follow their parents' footsteps by leaving them with no option but to get employed in DCF. Furthermore, the withdrawal of parental support at the point of transitioning to post-secondary education could also be influenced by the groups' long history of not participating in post-secondary education coupled with the parents' knowledge that they could easily secure employment for their children in the farm. The complexity arising from the well-blended factors, implies that targeted interventions should involve the parents and the students.

In terms of theoretical implications, it is apparent that the post-secondary education inequality affecting ethnic minorities are understood better when viewed through the lenses of theories which focus on the past and present context in which the problem is manifesting. In this study, the bio-ecological systems

theory and the sociocultural theory were used to shed light on micro level factors which hinder the pursuit of post-secondary education by students from an ethnic minority group. Researchers focusing on inequalities affecting ethnic minority groups and other vulnerable groups are encouraged to use these theories to help them to unravel foundational causes of studied problems. Although this study did not establish as to which of the aforementioned factors impacted the studied inequality more than the other, the use of the above mentioned theories clearly showed that the three identified microsystem factors nourished each other to perpetuate the studied phenomenon.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that;

- Parents should provide decisional and financial support required by their children to enable them to successfully pursue post-secondary education. Additionally, parents should partner their children during the enrolment process including choice of programs and institutions. Parental support should be provided on the purview that pursuing post-secondary is a worthwhile investment rather than a cost.
- Minority students should pursue post-secondary for its accepted long term social and economic benefits. The returns from investing in post-secondary education outweighs the short term gains which accrued from early income earned from unskilled farm occupations.
- Educational managers should monitor the transition rate from secondary to post-secondary education, especially for students from historically disadvantaged communities.

### Limitations and Future Research

The current study findings are context specific to Danckwerts Chewa ethnic community from which data were generated. While the study shows that the pursuit of post-secondary education by students from this community was rooted in their non-college bound history, readily available employment in their host farm and lack of transitional support by parents, such factors may manifest differently in different contexts. Every context is unique and similar factors may impact the students' educational transition differently. For this reason, findings from this study have a limited scope of generalisation. Any attempt to generalise the findings to explain post-secondary inequality affecting students in different contexts, should be done with caution. For this reason, the study encourages future research to carryout comparison studies involving several ethnic communities in and outside peri-urban commercial farms.

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