

An exploration of the educational implications of experiences of witchcraft by teachers and pupils at Rengwe Primary School in the Hurungwe District, Mashonaland West Province in Zimbabwe.

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Abstract: The study sought to establish the effect of witchcraft experiences on effective teaching and learning at Rengwe Primary School in Hurungwe District, Mashonaland West Province. Methodologically, the study utilised the qualitative research which was informed by the phenomenological epistemology. Data was collected through questionnaires and in-depth semi-structured interviews. The research established that indeed witchcraft is an existential reality. It has also been established that teachers and pupils experience witchcraft manifestations at school and in the community. Muboboboand mass hysterias (kurohwanezvivandavanavachihakira) are common occurrences at the school and these greatly affect teaching and learning. It was also found out that witchcraft experiences affect curriculum implementation through teacher transfers, absenteeism of teachers and pupils as well as school climate. The study concluded thatwitchcraft adversely affects teaching and learning at the school. The study recommended that the School Administration and the School Development Committee should work together in resolving witchcraft related conflicts at the school and keep official secrets. It also recommended that the school authorities should induct teachers on the culture and religion of the society in which they are deployed. It is also recommended that victims of witchcraft experiences should get counseling. It is further recommended that similar studies be conducted in schools in other districts in Zimbabwe and schools beyond our borders.

Keywords: witchcraft, witchcraft experiences, belief, educational implications, teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION

Belief in witchcraft is a characteristic feature of religious beliefs among traditional Zimbabwean communities Bourdillon [1], Bozongwana [2], Chavunduka [3]. Incidents of witchcraft in Zimbabwe have therefore featured in recent mass media reports. Mhlanga reported that an Entumbane High School pupil collapsed and sparked mass hysteria among the students who sought to help her [4]. The girl's grandmother dismissed reports that it was Satanism. She explained that since the girl was awarded a United States scholarship in December 2012, the girl has been having the experiences. In this regard, the grandmother suspected that the predicament was a result of witchcraft. In a similar incident, an article on 08 March 2013 by a Staff Reporter of New Zimbabwe, reported that four schools in Matobo District in Matebeleland South have been forced to stop lessons due to a goblins infestation. In the article, local officials insist that pupils at Lushumbe Primary, Mazhayimbe Primary, Bhazha Secondary and Tokwe Secondary schools have been terrorised by goblins.

Witchcraft belief is therefore also common among the Rengwe community under Chief Dandawa in Hurungwe District. In March 2014, teachers and pupils at Rengwe Primary School claimed they had had witchcraft experiences. The experiences are said to have affected more than twenty pupils. The witchcraft attacks were believed to have been a result of the selection of children into the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), a scheme run by the national government to assist orphans and vulnerable children with school fees.

Studies on the phenomenon of witchcraft in traditional Zimbabwean communities have been carried out by scholars largely from the disciplines of Sociology and Religious Studies..Chavhunduka researched on the need to recognise witchcraft in the national judicial systems [5].His researches were of great influence in the crafting of the Zimbabwe Witchcraft Ammendment Act of 2006 which criminalizes witchcraft practice. Chireshe, Chireshe and Shumba, researched on the relationship between

witchcraft and social life [6]. Mafico had a comprehensive article on the debate surrounding belief in witchcraft [7]. Shoko in his book “Karanga Indigenous Religion in Zimbabwe: Health and Wellbeing”, dedicated a full chapter to witchcraft where he discussed the belief, types and practice of witchcraft [8].

Of all the above mentioned scholars, none of them explored how witchcraft can affect educational practice. It is against this background that the researchers sought to explore the educational implications of the experiences of witchcraft manifestations by teachers and pupils at Rengwe Primary School, Hurungwe District, Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research sought to answer the question:

What are the educational implications of witchcraft experiences by pupils and teachers at Rengwe Primary School?

SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem raised the following subquestions:

1. What are the types and nature of witchcraft experienced by pupils and teachers at Rengwe Primary School?
2. How do teachers and pupils deal with witchcraft experiences at Rengwe Primary School?
3. How do witchcraft experiences affect teaching and learning at Rengwe Primary School?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Nature of Witchcraft

The nature of witchcraft has been discussed by different scholars. According to Chavunduka in Simmons, witchcraft in Africa includes the use of harmful medicines, charms, magic and any other means or devices in causing any illness, misfortune or death in any person or animal or property [9]. Mbiti observed that witchcraft is a manifestation of mystical forces which may be inborn in a person, inherited or acquired [10]. Chireshe, Chireshe and Shumba argued that witchcraft is a complex and multifarious phenomenon in its perceived nature, effect and function [11]. It covers a variety of practices; from gruesome rituals, through the secret use of physical and magical poisons, “to bizarre behaviour that goes against the social norms of society without necessarily doing harm to anyone” [12]. Thus witchcraft has been regarded as a paradigm of all evil behaviour.

A witch has therefore been defined as an evil being. A witch according to Simmons is an antisocial being wreaking havoc and social mayhem wherever he or she goes [13]. Shoko defines a *muroyi*(witch) as a

person with a distinctive and inherent evilness that harms his fellows in mysterious and secret ways [14].

In Shona communities, certain individuals are normally suspected of being witches. Key suspects of witchcraft are women with excessive qualities especially the extremely beautiful and the ugliest. Old women are perceived to be practitioners of witchcraft, usually the widowed, lonely and most of them identified by tooth decay which is believed to be caused by eating human flesh [15]. The category also includes the wealthy and poor in society. The wealthy are believed to accumulate their riches through the use of charms and medicine while the poor feel deprived of prosperity and their jealousy drives them into witchcraft.

Scholars have made various attempts to distinguish a witch from a sorcerer. According to Shoko, women are commonly associated with the type of witchcraft which operates at night while males practice sorcery and are called wizards [16]. Chavunduka differentiated witchcraft as something intrinsic to a person, to his soul or his personality while sorcery is a technique or tool employed by an individual under certain circumstances [17]. According to Chireshe, Chireshe and Shumba, the Shona/Ndebele community does not distinguish the two as terms *varoyi/abathakathi* are used to refer to witches and sorcerers [18]. The main difference between a sorcerer and a witch is that the former achieves his evil end by magic whereas the later achieves her evil by some mystical power inherent in her personality. Generally males are regarded as sorcerers while women are witches.

From the Shona perspective, people can become witches in different ways. This might include becoming a witch through heredity, buying witchcraft from traditional healers or acquiring it from the spirit world. According to Mafico and Chavunduka, witchcraft can be inherited from a maternal ancestor who was a witch or possessed a *shavior* acquired through medicine given by a *nangaor* a witch [19]. Men can also inherit witchcraft from their paternal ancestors. Simmons postulates that witch status is achieved in one of two ways; through involuntary possession by an alien spirit (*shavi*) or through apprenticeship to a known witch and the consumption of certain medicine [20]. Shoko also observed that witchcraft is acquired by various means; the above discussed and further by spirit transmission through exorcism or casting away known as *kurasirain* Shona [21]. As a result of this practice of *kurasira*, the Shona are against picking up objects like bangles, wandering fowls or goats in case you contract a dangerous spirit (*unobatananzvo*).

Witches use agents called familiars in the practice of witchcraft. Familiars used include hyenas, snakes, crocodiles and owls. According to Simmons, witches are thought to be able to turn into any of their

familiars and await their unsuspecting prey [22]. Shoko notes that witches use birds like *zizi*(owl) for flight [23]. So if an owl hoots, lingers at a homestead and sits at the top of a roof, then it is an indication of the presence of witches. Witches also ride on hyenas back and crocodiles for travelling short distances, long distances are travelled using a *rusero*(winnowing basket) or sitting on a *mutsvairo*(broom) [24]. Witches are also believed to make use of *zvivanda*(animals) or *zvishiri*(birds) in order to attain their goals [25].

The activities of witches are believed to be nocturnal. It is believed that witches wake up naked during the night to perform their nefarious or wicked activities. Women leave their husbands dead asleep with either a big snake, a log or a *duri*(mortar) so that he will “feel her presence” during the night [26]. They travel by familiars discussed earlier and usually meet at meeting points where they discuss operational strategies. According to Shoko, meeting points are places such as caves where they are believed to keep their familiars as well as keep and eat human flesh [27]. They usually target a homestead, an individual or a fresh grave. Before executing their duties, they usually plead with the ancestors of their intended victim, who in turn will act with or according to what the witch intends. A witch is believed to enter houses through a key hole or may instruct the would-be victim to open the door or come out. The victim can be used for various purposes like working in the fields, having sex with the witch or getting into the graves exhuming buried bodies. The victim does all this unknowingly [28].

There are different reasons why witches use witchcraft. Reasons for bewitching others usually stem from jealousy, quarrels and accusations in the community [29]. Witches can be frustrated and revenge if they ask for something and fail to get it [30]. Chireshe, Chireshe and Shumba observed that, in Zimbabwe witchcraft charges emanate from quarrels, jealousy, envy, cruelty, status competition and hatred towards a successful neighbour or workmate [31].

TYPES OF WITCHCRAFT

Witchcraft is manifested in a number of ways chief among them being *mubobobo*, *runyoka*, *mufuhwira* and *zvikwambo*. According to Simmons, *mubobobo* is a magical medicine which allows one to have sexual intercourse with a woman unbeknown to her [32]. Guvamombe explains *mubobobo* as the use of charms to sleep with other people’s wives [33]. According to Gwandure, *mubobobo* is a belief among traditional Shona people of Zimbabwe that a woman cannot have nocturnal emission in their sleep [34]. In contrast to the pleasurable wet dreams experience, the woman wakes up angry and baffled the following morning on noticing vaginal fluids associated with sexual intercourse. A victim of *mubobobo* will show signs of generalised anxiety and fear of what happened

to them in their sleep [35]. The woman may perceive herself as a victim of a real sexual assault in her sleep. She will be confident and quite sure that she was manipulated by a man in her sleep. In his studies of the *Korekore* community Rutherford observed that females also have their own equivalent of *mubobobo* called *nyamungunira* [36]. Generally, it is believed that one may feel sexually aroused or have wet dreams as a sign of having been a victim of *mubobobo* or *nyamungunira*.

Runyoka is a form of medicine used to protect a wife and can maim or kill victims [37]. Simmons explained that a man suspecting that his wife is unfaithful, may consult an *’anga* and get a type of medicine to place in her food that will bring in a type of affliction known as *runyoka* [38]. Any man that she has sexual intercourse with, except the husband, will “waste away”. Rutherford observed that fathers may as well place *runyoka* on their daughters that they may not indulge in pre-marital sex [39]. According to Owomoyela, the Shona, in common with many African peoples, seldom attribute illness to such mundane causes as environmental contamination or physiological disorders, preferring malevolent agencies instead [40]. Not surprisingly, *runyoka* is often conflated with AIDS; however *runyoka* is curable by an *’anga* while AIDS is not. Witchcraft is ontologically ambiguous as one man’s protection is another man’s bewitchment with regards to *runyoka*.

Mufuhwira/Zwanamina is believed to be a form of witchcraft which is used by women to tame their husbands. According to Chireshe, Chireshe and Shumba, some men who are outspoken in public are docile in the domestic sphere because of the alleged powerful influence of *mufuhwira* [41]. Shoko noted that *mufuhwira* used by women to tame their husbands can be fatal [42]. Fatalities occur when the husband has used medicine for protection from *mufuhwira* usually called *kurapiramufuhwira* or when the wife had been given the wrong medicine by the *n’anga*. Because *mufuhwira* may turn out to kill or turn a man literally useless, it becomes a type of witchcraft.

Tokoloshis better known as *zvikwambo* “small boys” are spirits of people transformed by witches or *n’angas* and can be used for material and financial gain [43]. According to Simmons, *tokoloshis* are small usually invisible creatures that can either persecute people who have stolen from their owners or alternatively bring wealth and success to their owners [44]. Chireshe, Chireshe and Shumba note that, a *tokoloshi* either likes sex, suckling blood, killing or has some weird deviant behaviour it is into [45]. Simmons also noted that, the expense of keeping *tokoloshis* is great as they are believed to feed on human blood and that annually a member of the *tokoloshi* owner’s family will mysteriously die [46]. Possession of a *tokoloshi* or *chikwambo* is therefore seen as witchcraft. Other types of witchcraft include the use of *chipotswa* which is

remote control whereby the witch sends a missile, a horn (*nyanga*) or object to harm a person [47]. *Chitsingacan* be explained as injury by landmine as it involves the planting of medicine on the ground and as the victim steps upon it, he develops a problem [48].

The use of poison is also common in the practice of sorcery or witchcraft [49]. Poison can be applied in food, drinks and beer. Poison can be in various forms like herbs, cattle dip, insecticides and the most dangerous is crocodile bile mixed with brain.

Rutherford explains the practice of *kunokoratsokaas* a means of bewitching a victim through secretly picking up the soil he/she has stamped on barefooted and mix it with certain medicine resulting in sickness [50]. This results in the victim developing health problems.

According to Shoko, some leaders are believed to use secret medicine to instil a sense of awe and reverence on their subjects [51]. This type of medicine has the effect of making the victim to be emotionally unstable. Such medicine includes lion fat and eating the lion's liver or voice box.

DEALING WITH WITCHCRAFT MANIFESTATIONS

Witchcraft is an existential reality and many Zimbabweans are convinced that witchcraft constitutes a real threat to society. Acts of witchcraft are diagnosed through divination by a traditional healer who has a real knack for "sniffing out" witchcraft [52]. In the past once an individual was found guilty of practicing witchcraft, he or she was sentenced by the village court or chief's court. Sentences took various forms such as beating, killing, and destruction of household or expulsion from community [53]. According to Chavunduka, some witches were cured, in such cases, a doctor was ordered to neutralize or eliminate the evil spirit that possessed the witch [54].

Legally, at independence, the Zimbabwean government inherited the colonial Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1899 (WSA) which made it illegal to accuse anyone of witchcraft [55]. The WSA downplayed the existence of witchcraft while Chavunduka observed that witchcraft is very much alive in the average Zimbabwean's life every day [56]. Rutherford states that, the holding of witchcraft beliefs by Africans was frequently taken as a sign of their backwardness in comparison to Europeans [57]. The WSA clearly showed a lack of the application of the phenomenological method in studying African Traditional Religion by those who crafted the law. Therefore witchcraft as an African religious belief system was not taken seriously by the European colonialists.

As a result of pressure from renowned scholars on witchcraft in Zimbabwe such as the late Professor Gordon Lloyd Chavunduka, the Zimbabwean government in 2006 revised the WSA to make witchcraft a punishable offence as long as there is sufficient evidence to that effect. The legal reform was necessitated by the recognition that WSA was alien to the common beliefs of Zimbabweans and did not address realities in the Zimbabwean community. According to Chireshe, Chireshe and Shumba, the Zimbabwe Witchcraft Amendment Act of 2006 now recognises that there is, indeed, the practice of witchcraft that has been deliberately downplayed by the WSA [58]. The reform recognizes the existence of witchcraft and makes it a criminal offence to practice witchcraft. Gwandure observed that, individuals are now allowed to bring cases of witchcraft to court but the burden of providing proof in court as evidence of witchcraft is problematic and discouraging as most of the claims are lost in court [59]. Nonetheless, traditional courts tend to succeed in this regard if the victim and perpetrator mutually agree that it did happen as *uroyihwemabvukapasi/mabvurimeaning* that the perpetrator was not aware that he/she inherited the magical spirit from his/her ancestors.

In Zimbabwe *tsikamutandasare* witch-hunters who lead witchcraft cleansing rituals. According to Chireshe, Chireshe and Shumba, the *tsikamutandasare* claim to have power to cleanse witches of witchcraft as well as protect the innocent from future misfortune by neutralising witchcraft [60].

David has documented measures taken by Christian Pentecostals and African Originated Churches in witchcraft cleansing [61]. David listed such churches as Johane Masowe (*Madzibaba*) and Mugodhi as among those leading fights against witchcraft [62]. Daneel states that prophets undertake ventures to control or eradicate wizardry (*uroyi*) [63]. According to Shoko, this service is rendered to society at large and nowadays both the *n'anga* and the prophets are consulted and used to detect cases of witchcraft [64]. However, "other prophets specialise in treating the bewitched through the removal of *uroyi* medicine from the patient's body" [65].

EFFECTS OF WITCHCRAFT EXPERIENCES ON SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

Witchcraft provides a theory for causation of the bad and can be seen as a social mechanism which seeks to address the rich poor discrepancy in society. Fear of witchcraft acts as a form of social control, lest someone gets too proud or overzealous in his/her acquisition of wealth and power, steal from the wrong person or has illicit affairs with people's wives. Dolan argues that witchcraft seeks to ensure an ideology of equality [66]. It can therefore be argued that a witch's motive is to attain parity with his/her enemy either she/he gains or the enemy loses so that they are at par

(*tifanane*). This results in hardworking and innovative individuals getting demotivated and thereby stifling development.

Witches can therefore be said to be retrogressive as any development on the part of others arouses their envy and prompts them to exercise witchcraft. Simmons observed that a number of people relocate to various communities far away from their home area or even into Diasporas for fear of witchcraft [67]. This might mean loss of skilled manpower who are critical in the development of the country.

In the few documented incidents of witchcraft in schools, it can be noted that, witchcraft negatively affects educational activities and practice. Mhlanga reported of a girl at Entumbane High School who collapsed and caused a mass hysteria among other pupils who wanted to help her [68]. The article further explores that parents are advising their children not to socialise with the girl who collapsed amid allegations of witchcraft. In a similar incident that rocked four schools in Matobo District, Chief Malachi Masuku complained that, lessons were being disrupted in four schools within his area as it had become impossible for pupils to learn as they were being terrorised by goblins [69].

The ZBC (2014) had a 14 August 2014 report of a suspected case of witchcraft at Musita Primary School in Gokwe's Nemaagwe area. The school had been deserted after teachers fled their houses claiming they were being pelted by goblins with stones. The mysterious pelting is believed to have started in July 2014, with stones raining on the Headmistress' house destroying the roof and some household property. Two other houses were also showered with stones in the middle of the night. Teachers at the school revealed that they nearly died after being strangled by the suspected goblins. The teachers are living in fear and are deciding to transfer since they cannot continue living at the school.

The findings from the literature surveyed demonstrate that there are different types of witchcraft and ways of dealing with witchcraft. It was also established from literature that there are many ways in which witchcraft can affect society. It however remains to be established how witchcraft affects teaching and learning in schools. This study therefore sought to find out the impact of witchcraft experiences at Rengwe Primary School.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was guided by the qualitative research paradigm and was informed by the phenomenological epistemology. This approach was adopted because:

(a) The phenomenological epistemology argues that reality is basically subjective. It emphasizes the importance of people's lived experiences. The approach was therefore deemed to be suitable for as it aimed to explore the lived witchcraft experiences of teachers and pupils at Rengwe primary school.

(b) The approach enabled the researchers to employ the phenomenological principles of epoche and eidetic intuition. The principle of epoche enabled the researchers to bracket out their religious background, academic theories, scientific theories, feelings and judgements on witchcraft. Eidetic intuition in this research allowed the researchers to see into the essence of witchcraft without being judgemental hence the use of the phenomenological method was very crucial.

POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES

For this study, the target population included traditional religious leaders, practitioners and educational officials. The researchers targeted participants across the gender, age and class divide to come up with a small but information rich group.

Sampling was determined by the qualitative nature of the research design. The researchers used purposive sampling by handpicking participants on the basis of their possession of particular characteristics being sort. In this study, purposive sampling was used in order to access people who had in-depth knowledge about witchcraft. The school head, teachers, headmen and the chief were purposively sampled because of their qualities.

Purposive sampling was beefed up by snowball sampling. The researchers solicited for help from respondents in identifying other people fit for the research. Snowball sampling was justified because of the sensitivity of the research topic. Respondents were not forth-coming hence the need for the chain referral method.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The study utilized semi structured interviews and open ended questionnaires for data collection which were in line with qualitative research and the phenomenological approach.

SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interviews are regarded as oral questionnaires. There are various types of interviews from structured, semi structured and unstructured interviews. In the interest of phenomenology, the researcher had direct face to face encounters with the informants.

Semi structured interviews are built on and emerge from the responses of the informants [70]. The use of the method was justified by the following advantages; some people were more willing to talk than

to write and once the interviewers gained rapport with the interviewee, certain types of confidential information were obtained such information the individuals would have been reluctant to put in writing. Furthermore, when the interviewees misinterpreted questions the interviewers were able to follow in with a clarifying question. In line with the phenomenological method used in this study, the use of semi structured interviews was justified by the flexibility the method entails and its allowance on the informant to express his or her feelings freely.

THE OPEN ENDED QUESTIONNAIRE

The open ended questionnaire worked well with the phenomenological approach of this study. The exploratory nature of the open ended questionnaire allowed the respondents to provide any answers they chose without forcing them to select from concrete options and the answers would reflect the respondents' perceptions rather than those of the researchers. Also, open-ended questionnaires provided the gems of information that could not be caught in a closed questionnaire.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

THE NATURE AND TYPES OF WITCHCRAFT AT RENGWE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

SUB-RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

What is the nature of witchcraft experienced by pupils and teachers at Rengwe Primary School?

From the data gathered, there was more of an informal agreement that witchcraft exists in Rengwe Community. The informants believed that any intentional cause of illness, misfortune or death is what they call witchcraft. Just like Shoko noted, in Rengwe society, elderly women, the ugliest women, *godoboris* (traditional healers) and *vanosvikirwa* (those with spirit possessions such as alien spirits) are some of the personalities perceived to practise witchcraft in the community [71]. Though there are no distinguishing names for witches and sorcerers, the people of Rengwe believe that the way witchcraft is practised differs along gender lines. They believe males practise such acts as *kutsinga*, *kuposa*, *mubobobo* and *kurovesa ne nyanga*. These activities they believe can be done in broad daylight earning males the title "*muroyiwemasikatimachena*" (a witch who can harm in broad daylight). Women are believed to practise their witchcraft during the night and they are referred to as "*vanobuda*" or "*vanomuka*" meaning they operate at night while others are asleep. The classification of sorcery and witchcraft under one category of *uroyiresonates* well with observations of scholars such as Chireshe, Chireshe and Shumba [72].

Skill in witchcraft is believed to be mainly hereditary, bought or acquired from the spirit world

through alien spirits (*uroyihweshavi/hwekusvikirwa*). This data concurs with Mafico and Chavunduka [73], who observed that skill in witchcraft is acquired through heredity, buying, apprenticeship, alien spirit possession and through exorcism. However exorcism and apprenticeship are not very common in Rengwe. On witchcraft being hereditary, the respondents believe that the witches inherit the skill from their maternal or paternal parents or grandparents and this is usually referred to as *uroyihwemadzinza* (ancestral witchcraft). The belief is that when one is still young, *anotemererwanyora* (he or she has incisions made on his or her body) so that he/she will be initiated into the practice unknowingly and may continue to practice it without knowing that he/she is a witch. When one later notices that he/she is a witch, he/she will find it difficult to leave the trade and will even initiate someone to take over upon his/her death. Small girls who live with their aged grannies are usually believed to be accomplices in the practices of witchcraft such as opening of graves and doors of homes during the night.

On *uroyihweshavi*, the informants believe that these people are possessed by an alien spirit and they will practise witchcraft unknowingly. Some even die without anyone knowing that they were witches but some are discovered at death as their corpses may turn to any of their familiars or appear like little babies. According to Mbuya Moyo "*Vamwevanosandukakuitasezvipukazvaka dakuitasebere kana vanonokakuvigwa uyehusikuchitunhachirimumbamapere anogonakuchemapedyonemusha. Kana zvadai, vanasahwiravanobvavarambidzavanhukuonamunhukek upedzisira*". (Some may turn to animals like hyena if the burial ceremony is slow and at night, hyenas may cry next to the homestead. In such instances, the people leading the burial ceremony will not allow people to pay last respects.) [74].

On *kutengauroyi*, they believe that one visits *an'angaor godoborito* get medicines or charms to consolidate power and standing in society or at workplaces. This can also be done as a way of protecting oneself from witchcraft or to retaliate. The findings also resonate with Shoko's [75] findings as he observed that some leaders use secret medicine to instil a sense of awe and reverence on their subjects. In an attempt to get medicine for protective purposes, these people may be given concoction that may lead them into witchcraft. The respondents believed that those who buy *tokoloshis/zvikwambodo* it for the need of power and money but the *tokoloshi* may end up killing family members and even children hence they become witches.

On familiars of witchcraft, the research gathered the following animals; hyena, owl, snake (python, *maromba* and mysterious snakes), crocodiles and cats. Hyenas are believed to be the form of transport upon which the witch will ride on its back and

drive it to his/her intended destination. Owls are believed to be the watchdogs as they can see through the dark and warn the travelling contingent of intruders.

On snakes, the python is believed to offer a dimension which may seem natural of attacking enemies and their livestock. They are also used to attack hunters when they are hunting especially killing their dogs. Marimba are a rare kind of snake that look like mambas and have deadly poison and usually stay close to human paths lying low in the grasses ready to attack. Other snakes are believed to be mysterious and may take different forms at different times. As Sekuru Tsongora explained: “*Kunedzimwenyokadzinoitwazvekungadzirwamunhuanot ofambaanayosemudonzvo, bhande kana rukusharunosungwanevanhukadzi*” (Mysterious snakes are sometimes carried around in form of a walking stick, belt or a waist cloth used by women to tie their dresses or skirts.) [76].

Crocodiles are believed to be used by fishermen for catching fish or attacking rival fishermen and people in the rivers and wells. Cats are said to be agents of witches but the respondents who named the cats were not quite sure on how exactly they are used. The above animals are not eaten because of their association to witchcraft. These familiars are believed to be kept in sacred caves where the witches normally gather during the night to discuss their operations, feed their familiars, share and eat human flesh. Some are believed to keep their familiars and human remains in granaries and store rooms at their homesteads

Reasons obtained for participation in witchcraft are; jealousy, revenge (*kudzorera*), promotes business, to gain wealth and respect. Jealousy is believed to be a reason for bewitching others because one may feel threatened with someone’s material or financial gain and will work to destroy livestock, property or even kill the person or members of his/her family to instill pain. On revenge, the data gathered points out that some *n’angas* offer an option to retaliate as a way of dealing with witchcraft manifestations or even theft and robberies. In this way, one uses witchcraft as a way of retaliating and seeks parity.

Also, there was general consensus that medicine men (*godobori*) may bewitch people so that they will come for healing, hence promoting their business or trade. This was generally linked to women who cure *nhova* (fontanel) as they are believed to use crossroads, washing areas at boreholes and rivers to trap their clients. According to an informant who requested anonymity, “*Kunechemberedzinehunhubudzinoteyanhovapamharadzano, panocherwamvurauyepanowachirwakutivanavagobatiranhovavagouyakuzorapwavachivapamari.*” (Some old women are very cunning they trap clients at water sources and crossroads so that young babies may get ill

and they will come for treatment.) Because of this belief, young babies’ clothes are washed at home and mothers carrying babies avoid cross roads.

In addition, some businessmen are believed to kill their children to obtain wealth (*kuromba*) and some successful farmers are believed to use *divisi* and *nyanga* to gather crops from other people’s fields. Lastly, people are believed to gather charms and medicines for respect at workplaces and in society. The respondents believed that such activity on its own is not witchcraft but will become witchcraft when the charms hurt or harm other people or threatens them psychologically. On this regard, there was informal consensus among respondents that accusations of witchcraft stem from; jealousy, revenge, business promotion, gaining wealth and the need to be respected.

On types of witchcraft in the community, the following were obtained: *mubobobo*, *zvitsinga*, *kunokoratsoka*, *runyoka*, *mufuhwira*, *zvikwambo*, *nyanga* and *zvishiri/zvidhoma/zvivanda*. *Mubobobo* is believed to be done by men who will sleep with other men’s wives without consent. Just like Gwandure observed, the belief among the people is that women cannot have nocturnal emission in their sleep [77]. However, the community also believes that women also practise *nyamungunirawhich* enables them to have sexual pleasure with men without their consenting. This was also observed by Rutherford in his studies of the *korekore* people which by coincidence had its setting in the commercial farms of Karoi/Hurungwe [78].

From the collected data, the belief in *zvikwambo* is that they are used for material and financial gains. They believe that it is witchcraft as the *chikwambo* is believed to feed on human blood of relatives of its owner and having sexual relations with his/her spouse and even children. In the case of children, they won’t marry. *Nyanga* is believed to be a magical horn that may be used to attack, harm or kill people, livestock and property. Those believed to possess *nyanga* are greatly feared in the community and command great authority.

Zvitsingais another type of witchcraft which is believed to be widely used in the community. *Chitsingawas* explained by the respondents as more of a landmine effect targeted on harming or even killing the victim. The findings on *zvitsingaresonate* with the findings of Mafico and Chavunduka who described *chitsingaa* as an injury by sort of landmine since it involves the planting of medicine on the ground and the victim develops a problem upon stepping on the medicine [79]. *Kunokoratsokais* an activity where one picks the barefooted footprint of the intended victim and use the soil to harm the person. Because of this belief, the members of the community are against walking barefooted.

Use of *zvivanda/zvishiri/zvidhomais* believed to be a way of physically assaulting a person in mysterious circumstances; the person will be assaulted by unknown and unseen assailants leading to illness or death. The informants believed that *zvivanda* are very common in the community and they claim that some people even breed them and they may offer to you as pumpkin seeds or a puppy. According to Sekuru Chironda, “*Tuvandaunogonakutupiwakabisirasemhodzidzemanha nga*” (you can be given *zvivanda* as pumpkin seeds). Because of this belief, people usually don’t share seeds or even “*kukumbiranyamakumuvhimikana kuneanengeaurayachipfuo*” (asking for meat from a hunter or anyone who had slaughtered a beast is regarded a bad practise) [80]. When one refuses to share, he/she may be attacked by *zvivanda* or through sharing one may be given *zvivanda* that will attack him.

Runyoka and *mufuhwira* are believed to be security measures to guard against infidelity and enhance love among couples. However, the respondents argued that when the two ends up physically or psychologically harm the other spouse, it becomes witchcraft. In particular, they believe that one can have an affair with a married woman and use *runyoka* on her to kill her husband. *Godoborica* offer a dangerous charm on the guise of *mufuhwira* and this may kill or paralyse the husband hence the two are regarded partially as types of witchcraft. This concurs Shoko who observed that *mufuhwira* used by women to tame their husbands can be fatal hence it becomes witchcraft. A respondent who requested anonymity had this to say, *mufuhwiraharusirudoruye nokuti imwenhambomunhuanopedzisiravakuitaseasinakukwana achivhukanendiroikadonhauroyihuye*” (*mufuhwira* is not driven by love because it makes one useless and impotent to a stage of fearing even falling plates that is witchcraft).

On types and nature of witchcraft experienced at the school, the following featured prominently: presence of owls and cats, *mubobobo*, attacks of *zvivanda* on school children and threats from parents to teachers.

During the night, owls hoot from rooftops at the school and some can be found in classes in the morning. According to Shoko, if an owl hoots, lingers at a homestead and sits at the top of a roof, it is an indication of the availability or presence of witchcraft [81]. Cats that are not pets at teachers’ houses can be seen at the school and some of the teachers questioned said that the cats may produce sounds that are unfamiliar with cats like sounds of a crying baby and this makes some of the teachers jittery and fearful. Therefore, the presence of cats and owls at the school is an indication of the availability of witchcraft.

Some parents are well-known for threatening teachers with such insults as “*uchaona*” (you shall see), “*haupagaripachikoroapo*” (you won’t stay long at the school) and “*unozvidaneiiweuchingovaomunhuzvakeasingaremi*” (what makes you proud when you are a mere person and powerless). The local people associate such threats to witchcraft. Whether these threats are genuine or not coupled with the presence of the above mentioned familiars, teachers get emotionally stressed and contemplate leaving the school.

Mubobo is believed to be another of the types of witchcraft believed to be manifest at the school. The Eos interviewed pointed out that the school is failing to retain its female staff because of claims of *mubobobo*. The argument of *mubobobo* may help explain the male dominance of staff at the school.

Attacks of *zvivanda* and *zvishiri* on school children is quite manifest at the school. Gelfand observed that witches can be frustrated and revenge if they ask for something and fail to get it [82]. The attacks were very high especially in early 2014 due to supposed unequal treatment by school authorities on the selection of children to benefit under the government’s BEAM Scheme. The teachers claimed that over twenty pupils were assaulted by *zvivanda* at the school.

Indeed, witchcraft exists and teachers and pupils at Rengwe Primary School have experienced various types of witchcraft ranging from *mubobobo*, *zvitsinga* and *zvivanda/zvishiri*. They are not only exposed to witchcraft at the school but in society as a whole and the school as a sub-system within the society, it cannot escape from the happenings within its vicinity.

DEALING WITH WITCHCRAFT MANIFESTATIONS AT THE SCHOOL

SUB RESEARCH QUESTION 2: How do pupils and teachers deal with witchcraft manifestations at the school?

Dealing with witchcraft manifestations calls for excellent diplomacy as it may strain relations according to the interviewees. The respondents pointed out that courts are usually used as a defence mechanism by those trying to clear themselves from witchcraft allegations. According to one Shona informant, “*Hazvitenderwikutendekamunhuuroyi*” (it is taboo to call someone a witch). He further went on to say that, when such accusations arise, the elders at the courts would like to know about the causes and origins of the accusations and their authenticity. In that regard, family elders will be advised to consult different *n’angas* at least three and if they point the same person, then a course of action will be established. The Chief and his aides may fine or expel the culprit from the society. Also, the data collected pointed out that there

are *n'angas*, *tsikamutandas* and those with spiritual possessions who help prescribe on how to deal with witchcraft manifestations. According to SekuruChironda, "*munoenda: kun'anga, kunatsikamutanda kana kunevemashavimodudzirwa, kurapwa kana kudzorera.*" (You visit either of the three for divination, healing or revenge). This method is believed to be largely used in the community. Moreso, upon the advice of the chief, community elders and school authorities use the method to deal with witchcraft manifestations at the school. In this regard, traditional leaders play a very crucial role in conflict resolution not only at Rengwe School. The ZBC (2014) reported of the chief and other leaders recommending cleansing ceremonies at Musita Primary School in Gokwe. According to Gover, Chief Malachi Masuku played a similar role to disturbances that occurred in Matobo District [83]. This method is believed to be quite effective though it is believed that the *tsikamutanda* who dealt with the February 2014 witchcraft manifestations failed to completely stop them hence another method was employed.

A new wave of prophets from the Masowe sects and other African Initiated Churches or *ChechiDzemweyaas* they are referred to in the community offer a different dimension of dealing with witchcraft. An informant who stressed anonymity had this to say, "*vapositorivemasowe venguotsvuku vanopaminamatoyek umisa, mhikodzekudzorera uyedudziropanyayadzeuroyi*". (The Masowe prophets who wear red garments offer prayers to end, oaths to retaliate and explain causes of witchcraft.) in dealing with the problems at the school, the method was used and according to data collected, the method was helpful and it reduced the occurrence and magnitude of the attacks. Generally, the above three methods are the main ways of dealing with witchcraft manifestations in the community and at the school.

In addition to the above, teachers claimed that they usually call elders if they suspect any child of being attacked by witchcraft. Usually they would establish relations before calling any elders as at times they may call elders who are engineering the attacks. The affected pupil may be quarantined as it is believed other children if exposed to the attacks they may fall victim leading to a mass hysteria (*kuhakira*). This was also documented by Mhlanga when he reported of the Entumbane High School girl [84].

Generally, the study noted that there are various ways of dealing with witchcraft ranging from: courts, relocations and consultation of religious spiritual healers and practitioners. Some of these methods have been used by teachers and pupils at the school though they have various difficulties. The methods have helped bring sanity and tranquility at the school though the manifestations still remain occasional.

EFFECTS OF WITCHCRAFT MANIFESTATION AT THE SCHOOL ON EDUCATION

SUB-RESEARCH QUESTION 3: How do witchcraft experiences affect teaching and learning at the school?

From data gathered, witchcraft is seen as one of the major causes of conflicts in families and the community at large. To the respondents, witchcraft explains the origins of all problems in families and society at large. In this regard, the school as a social institution is not an exception as relations among teachers are believed to strain because of suspicions of witchcraft.

Fear of witchcraft makes teachers fearful of threatening parents and even crossing paths with them. Some teachers claim that they do not freely associate with school children whose parents have at one point threatened them or any of their workmates hence it affects teacher pupil interaction which is a pre-requisite if effective learning is to occur.

Data collected indicates that teaching of concepts that discuss on religious beliefs is quite difficult as at one point a teacher was threatened for teaching about witchcraft, avenging spirits, alien spirits and divination. Such threats do not resonate well with teachers as they end up avoiding certain topics and concepts to avoid clashes with parents and the community. In this regard, the curriculum objectives will not be fully achieved as teachers will circumvent the curriculum avoiding concepts that may create controversy.

Also, data at the researcher's disposal showed that witchcraft causes relocations and transfers. These may negatively affect pupils as they may relocate to areas that are a distant from the school. Some pupils may transfer to other schools where adaptation to the school climate may be difficult and the creation of new friendships may affect the learner.

Again, data collected points out that witchcraft causes absenteeism and affecting lessons. Absenteeism is not only on pupils but teachers as well as they may be away consulting *godoboris* prophets. Mhlanga [85] in his report about Entumbane High noted that parents will not allow children to attend school if there are witchcraft manifestations. Studies on absenteeism have concluded that it is detrimental to academic performance.

Witchcraft may also lead into labeling in class and at the school in general. Because when *zvivanda* attack they usually speak about where they are coming from and their intentions some pupils when they hear the utterances, they will call names to the affected children. Teachers claim that they try to advice pupils not to mock each other along lines of witchcraft.

When such labels occur, the teachers claimed that the labeled pupil will be emotionally affected lowering his/her self-esteem and diminishing the confidence levels of the child. These labels are also made to pupils whose parents are rumored to be witches. Such children will find it difficult to socialize let alone make friends; hence they may become bullies or become truant leading to dropping out of school.

On the other hand, collected data also showed that fear of witchcraft acts as a form of social control, lest someone gets too proud or overzealous in his/her acquisition of wealth and power or have illicit affairs with other people's wives and children. Generally, the people in the community believe that witchcraft instills fear into the people and they will always try to do good to avoid being bewitched. In this regard, teachers will aim to have professional conduct with school children and avoid abuse in all its kinds for fear of being bewitched. Also teachers will respect the community its elders, shrines and sacred trees in case "unobatananzvo"(you will meet your fate) as one teacher put it across.

Fear of witchcraft also creates synergies between the school and the community. According to one informant, the school authorities have come to realize that there is need to have collective decisions on crucial issues at the school. In this regard, the observation made by Dolan that witchcraft seeks to ensure an ideology of equity is clearly justified [86].

Generally, the collected data indicates that witchcraft affects education negatively but to lesser extent; it also has a positive impact on education. In this regard, the researcher observed that, witchcraft is a religious heritage in all African societies and its main aim is to maintain health relations in the community.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that witchcraft exists in societies in Rengwe. The community believes that there are various types of witchcraft such as; *mubobobo*, *runyoka*, *zvitsinganyanga*, *mupfuhwira* and *zvikwambo* just to mention a few. It has also been proved by the study that pupils and teachers at Rengwe Primary School have varied experiences of witchcraft at the school.

The study also noted that the community has various ways of dealing with witchcraft manifestation. These methods are; report to the village or chief's court, consulting *n'angas*, *tsikamutandaor* *godobori*, seeking help from prophets and quarantining of affected pupils to avoid further impact (*kuhakira*). The methods play varied but vital roles in dealing with witchcraft at and around the school.

Above all, from the study it has emerged that witchcraft adversely affects teaching and learning at the

school. Witchcraft causes curriculum circumventing, teacher transfers, pupil displacements, absenteeism by both pupils and teachers, emotional stress on teachers and pupils and the image of the school all of which affect curriculum implementation and educational practice at the school. To a lesser extent, when well dealt with, witchcraft experiences help in the rebuilding of channels of communication. It acts as a social behavioral control mechanism especially on issues of teachers sexually abusing children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations were made to various stakeholders:

1. Teachers should respect the community, its culture and religion to avoid controversy and resultant conflicts.
2. The School Administration and the School Development Committee should work together in resolving conflicts at the school and keep official secrets.
3. The school authorities should induct teachers on the culture and religion of the society.
4. The school authorities should create communication channels with parents for collective bargaining and decision making to ensure equity and clarify misunderstandings.
5. Community leaders should encourage people to solve misunderstandings amicably and avoid resorting to witchcraft to solve disputes.
6. It is also recommended that victims of witchcraft experiences should get counseling.
7. Universities and Colleges should take compulsory courses in understanding cultural practices and beliefs as a step towards avoiding cultural ethnocentrism and promoting cultural relativism because society is now multi-cultural.
8. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should encourage teachers to research and record about cultural and religious beliefs of their respective communities and create cultural libraries and museums which in turn will help in the creation of a national inventory on the various religious beliefs and practises in the nation at large. Such a move will help fill the knowledge gap on African Traditional Religious practices and beliefs especially among teachers.
9. It is further recommended that similar studies be conducted in schools in other districts in Zimbabwe and schools beyond our borders.

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