

## **EXPLORING SHONA PROVERBIAL MORAL TEACHINGS IN FACE OF HIV AND AIDS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Ephraim Taurai Gwaravanda

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Great Zimbabwe University

### **ABSTRACT**

The research is rooted in the conceptual framework of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and it explores the sustainability implications of Shona proverbs to behavioral change in the context of HIV and AIDS. The research notes that Shona proverbial thought has been a largely neglected zone in the fight of HIV and AIDS. While most efforts to combat HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe have focused on biomedical strategies combining epidemiological, clinical, and behavioral aspects, little or no attention has been given to IKS. The study shows that Shona indigenous conceptions of abstinence and faithfulness that have been codified in classical and timeless sayings can be put into positive use in contemporary Shona society's efforts to fight HIV and AIDS in an integrated and sustainable approach. The paper is premised on the analysis of proverbs that give useful implications on sexual self-control, faithfulness and respect among other virtues, in the face of HIV and AIDS. The research further establishes that although Shona proverbial lore is traditionally-based and while the sayings have been coined before the advent of HIV and AIDS, the application of certain Shona proverbs to the AIDS context is highly relevant and meaningful. Finally, the paper contends that, contrary to the view that Shona cultural ideas are largely responsible for the spread of HIV and AIDS, the use of appropriate Shona proverbs to sustainably educate Zimbabweans on HIV and AIDS is consistent with, and can be used in conjunction to, biomedical efforts.

**Keywords:** Shona Proverbs; HIV and AIDS; Indigenous Knowledge; Morality; Sustainability

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the era of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), the methods used in Zimbabwe to prevent or fight HIV and AIDS have been borrowed largely from the western medical practice. There is nothing wrong with western medical efforts in the fight against AIDS, such as the condom campaign (Mungwini, 2009). The argument is that there is need to combine such attempts with the indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) so that there is an integrated and sustainable approach. There is stimulating and enriching wisdom in the Shona proverbial lore that are significant in influencing contemporary notions of chastity and behavior change, which, in turn, reduce the prevalence rate of HIV and AIDS, which is currently at 13%. Presently, HIV and AIDS education programs in Zimbabwe largely ignore IKS primarily on the grounds that since AIDS had its first victim in Zimbabwe in 1985, there is nothing that IKS can provide to address a contemporary problem of HIV and AIDS. IKS is viewed as both anachronistic and irrelevant for contemporary needs. Against such rigid, narrow, and flawed thinking, the study argues that the classic wisdom of Shona proverbial lore transcends historical epochs and the beauty of Shona proverbs lies in its applicability to different contexts and times. Although Shona proverbs are formulated in specific, historical, and localized situations, it does not necessarily follow that

they cannot be applied to contemporary life situations that include HIV and AIDS. Furthermore, the study advances the position that the use of IKS in addressing HIV and AIDS is home grown, contextual, easy to grasp, open, flexible, dynamic, and sustainable. Accordingly, the study selects appropriate Shona proverbs and traces their implications in the context of HIV and AIDS. Shona moral thought is enshrined in the philosophy of humaneness, togetherness and solidarity (Ramose, 1999), in that it promotes virtues, such as self control, faithfulness, chastity, and respect for other people's marriages. This moral philosophy is encoded in various proverbs and, since most Shona people are familiar with proverbs, it is wise to use this wisdom to address the challenges of HIV and AIDS, especially in developing a positive change in behavior. Epistemologically, the use of some Shona proverbs in HIV and AIDS education facilitates a progression from the known to the unknown because it involves the use of sayings that lie within the Shona cultural conceptual scheme. According to the *Zimbabwe Human Development Report* (2003:21), the focus in the Information Education and Communication (IEC) strategy [of combating HIV and AIDS] is on the ABC (Abstinence, Being faithful, Condom) use." If a comprehensive and integrated approach that involves the use of indigenous knowledge is exploited, Shona proverbs are potentially a powerful tool for informing, educating, and communicating HIV and AIDS issues, especially in the sexually active age groups. Still, some Shona proverbs give direct moral teachings on abstinence and faithfulness that are relatively easy to contextualize in the HIV and AIDS context. Churchill (1996) maintained that,

Indigenist thinkers have advocated for the recovery and promotion of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (TIK) systems as an important process in decolonizing indigenous nations and their relationships with settler governments, whether those strategies are applied to political and legal systems, governance, health and wellness education, or the environment.

The point being made by Churchill (1996) is very important because he advocates for a rethinking of values that were eroded as useless through the colonial process. Decolonizing, therefore, encourages self-confidence among the Africans and, consequently, the use of IKS in solving different types of problems that they may be facing.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is rooted in the theoretical framework of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) because proverbs are part and parcel of the broad concept of indigenous knowledge. Ochella (2007) defined Indigenous Knowledge (IK) as a "complex set of knowledge and technologies existing and developed around specific conditions of populations and communities indigenous to a particular geographic area." The complexity results in the qualification with the word 'system' because it is an interconnected process with different components, such as knowledge and technology. Indigenous knowledge has also been defined as institutionalized local knowledge that has been built upon and passed on from one generation to the other by word of mouth (Osunade, 1994; Warren, 1992). IKS is, therefore, potentially liberating since it advocates for the use of local, as opposed to foreign, knowledge. For the Shona, the use of IKS in the face of HIV and AIDS is an area that needs serious exploitation because it has the potential to guide Zimbabweans in the fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic. In line with this reasoning, Simpson (2004) maintained that,

Recovering and maintaining Indigenous worldviews, philosophies, and ways of knowing and applying those teachings in a contemporary context represents a web of liberation strategies [that] Indigenous Peoples can employ to disentangle themselves from the oppressive control of colonizing state governments.

The analysis by Simpson (2004) shows that IKS does not constitute as just a theoretical paradigm, but it also has practical implications that can liberate them from the marginalization created by colonialism and globalization. However, the critics of the concept of indigenous knowledge, such as Horsthemke (2004), argue that the term is logically unacceptable. Horsthemke (2004) understand knowledge in the tripartite sense that involves belief, truth, and justification as the criteria and, accordingly, there is redundancy in prefixing knowledge with the adjective indigenous. In addition, knowledge is seen as universal, scientific, objective, and trans-cultural. Consequently, this line of thinking dismisses IKS as local, unscientific, relative, and cultural. Against such western mentality, it can be argued that intellectual openness should rethink Western epistemological practices. Western epistemology constitutes as just one among many alternative and contingent epistemological projects pursued by, and available to, human beings (Gwaravanda & Masaka, 2008). Furthermore, postmodernism, in its deconstruction of enlightenment epistemology, argues against grand narratives and the marginalization of localized knowledge. In the postmodernist critique of the enlightenment project, the argument is that since no culture is universal, knowledge cannot be universal because every culture is historically situated and particular (Moodie, 2003). This gives space for the validation of Shona IKS in the plurality of epistemological schemes because Shona thought systems are simply in coexistence with other cultural forms of knowledge. Advocates of the IKS conceive IKS as continuous with the sciences. The IKS endeavor to create such continuity by extending the epistemology of the sciences, such as their experienced based evidential practices, styles of reasoning, and modes of explanation, as well as the substantive findings of the sciences into the advancement of human knowledge for sustainable development. The IKS approach of human epistemological activities as historically and contingently constituted is a natural phenomena conducted by reflective human beings (Ntuli, 2002; Moodie, 2004). The nature, aims, norms, theories, concepts, and provinces of Shona epistemological activities are to be understood in terms of the life context, in which these activities are organically rooted and sustained, rather than pre-existing epistemological facts or principles.

According to Montigu (1961), although man has established a mastery over nature in three billion years of this earth's history, he has not, however, established anything like comparable mastery over himself." Montigu (1961) is referring to man's mastery over his psychological state. A capacity for self-reflection or introspection is, therefore, the starting point of addressing the HIV and AIDS pandemic. This ability to understand oneself is best seen in IKS. Developing on Montagu's point, Khuttang and Ikpe (1998) argued that, "even without the fine points of research data, it is arguable that communitarianism of the African past had done more for man's psychological development, than what western individualism has done to the west." African communitarianism of the past becomes both a useful instrument for psychological balance and appropriate moral behavior, hence the need to fully explore its potential in the challenge of HIV and AIDS. Whilst such a direction may be viewed by critics of tradition as chronologically misplaced, it is arguable that the values of the past are timeless, like classical ideas, and they can survive and transcend historical epochs without outliving their usefulness. Following this logic, Fayeraband (1988) maintains that, "a science interested in finding truth

must therefore retain all the ideas of mankind for possible use, or to put it differently, the history of ideas is an essential part of [the] scientific method.” This entails that an open investigation of ideas should include the ideas of IKS. This implies that a genuine search for truth or remedies cannot throw away past ideas because it risks throwing away grains of truth. Fayeraband (1988) goes on to add that, “the more closely we go into the origins of the world and the more closely we study primitive peoples, the more often we discover that their traditional secrets coincide with the present state of scientific research.” Contemporary philosophy of science has demonstrated this point beyond any reasonable doubt. Having justified the importance of the value system of a culture, it is plausible to maintain that values represent judgements as to the manner which the best adjustments may be made to certain conditions.

### **THE SUSTAINABILITY ARGUMENT**

The most commonly used definition of ‘sustainable development’ was used by the United Nations sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), chaired by the Norwegian prime minister, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, in its influential report of 1987, *Our Common Future*, in which sustainable development was defined as the “development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). The definition appears to emphasize economic and environmental sustainability at the expense of social and cultural systems. A broader conception of sustainability is given by The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), which identifies the society, the economy, and the environment as representations of sustainability and what should be sustainable (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, 1997). In this study, emphasis is given on the sustainability of cultural systems that encompasses values and norms, thereby giving room to Shona proverbs as indigenous resources that can be used for sustainable human development through the provision of a moral value system that can prevent the further spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Kaul (1997) viewed human development as “the widening of people’s choices, for example, their capability to be healthy, to live longer, to be educated, to be properly housed, or to participate in economic, political, and social life.” Shona proverbs can be useful for sustainable human development because they provide a basis for moral decision making in the face of sexual temptations that may affect the contemporary Shona society. IKS became a survival strategy that guided in the area of health. Gorjestan (2000) argued that, “building on IK can be particularly effective in helping the poor since IK is the only asset they control and certainly with which they are very familiar.” The Shona are already familiar with certain proverbs that guide sexual morality and harness the appropriate proverbs to significantly help boost efforts that fight against HIV and AIDS. The utilization of Shona proverbs in the fight against HIV and AIDS helps to increase sustainability of human development efforts because proverbs provide for mutual learning and adaptation within the Shona societies.

### **SHONA PROVERBS WITH USEFUL IMPLICATIONS TO HIV AND AIDS**

#### *The Virtue of Faithfulness*

In the Shona custom, a married person is expected to be faithful to the spouse. Although polygamy is allowed, marriage partners are supposed to remain married to each other. A wise saying that captures this moral expectation is *zingizi gonyera pamwe maruva enyika haaperi*, which can be translated to “insect, suck nectar from one flower, the flowers of the world cannot be exhausted.” The proverb literally explains the behavior of an insect which tirelessly moves from one

flower to the next in search of nectar. The insect was being commanded to stick to a particular flower. This analogy of the insect, when applied to human behavior, entails that one should be faithful in the partnership of marriage. Faithfulness is very important since it reduces the risk of HIV and AIDS. According to the *Zimbabwe Human Development Report* (2003), in Zimbabwe and in Africa, 99% of HIV infection is transmitted heterosexually. As a result of this empirical observation, it is important that sexual activity involves a high degree of faithfulness. The need for employment in urban areas compounded with the set up of a rural home has created a dualization of homes among married people in the Zimbabwean society whereby the husband stays in town and the wife stays in the rural area. This, in turn, becomes a driver of HIV and AIDS, due to promiscuity by one or both partners. Furthermore, young women often have more than one sex partner. For instance, they may have an affair with a young man who is groomed to be a potential husband and an older man, sometimes above the age of the woman's father, for the provision of cash and gifts. The dilemma between the need for cash and the need for a future husband is created because the young man involved may not be in a position to provide cash because of unemployment or that he may still be at college, while at the same time, the older man may be good for cash, but may be unsuitable as a future husband (and may be married). Such scenarios have resulted in the risk of HIV and AIDS in the triangle of older men (*madhara*), young women, and young men. The proverb, therefore, becomes very significant in giving moral advice in the face of the moral dilemmas by young ladies. Since cultural globalization theoretically offers greater individual options, local and foreign, it is arguable that the traditional African virtues of faithfulness and trust can be used to map a way forward in the face of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Faithfulness entails a moral ability to resist impulse. In the African moral perspective, indulgence leads to personal decline. Without temperance, pleasure can be disastrous. Faithfulness in the sphere of sex, in the African context, does not permit premarital sex and multiple sex partners outside marriage. In the African setting, the institution of marriage would exclude lying, deception, non-disclosure, dishonesty, and pretence, which are marriage vices which work hand in hand with the spread of the HIV and AIDS virus. Respect is "the tendency to regard another as having some worth and, consequently, the desire to treat them with civility" (Liszka, 1999). This approach is in line with the African communal virtue of faithfulness, which is also a form of fairness because it recognizes someone's worth and it provides with what is due.

### **THE VIRTUE OF SELF CONTROL**

Self control is a virtue that allows one to exercise restraint. This entails subjecting one's inclinations and desires to the service of reason. In Shona traditional thought, the virtue of self control is valued highly. One who lacks self control is compared to a dog that becomes a prisoner of its desires. The virtue of self control is wisely captured in the following saying: *chaona ziso ndecharaona*, which can be translated into "what the eye has seen is what it has seen". In the context of HIV and AIDS, the above proverb provides a rich moral base for behavior change because its implications discourages one from rushing to take action on the basis of sight. It advocates for sober and principled reflection. This means that a man or woman should not be bothered much about sights, but should use reasonable reflection to direct his or her thoughts. The proverbs implicitly warn against risky behavior that involves multiple sex partners. In addition, there is a logical implication that discourages hasty conclusions on the basis of insufficient evidence. A careful approach is therefore implied in the proverb. This involves taking cautious steps to study the behavior and character of a potential

suitor. According to the Zimbabwe United Nations Development Programme's *Zimbabwe Human Development Report* (2003) "It [the HIV and AIDS pandemic] varies sectorally and demographically, and is driven by sector specific sex networks and, therefore, demands different developmental interventions." An important developmental intervention is, therefore, the use of proverbial lore as IKS guides the behavioral patterns.

### **ACCEPTANCE OF ADVICE**

In Shona traditional moral thought, the Shona have always advised the youth morally and there is always an emphasis on uprightness. Acts of adultery and promiscuity have been condemned by Shona traditional communities and even today, contemporary Shona societies are against sexual immorality. A proverb that warns someone who refuses to be advised is known as: *ndambakuudzwa akaonekwa nembonje pahuma*, which can be translated to "one who rejects advice was seen with a wound on the forehead". In the face of HIV and AIDS, there is plenty of information that requires the exercise of self control, faithfulness, and abstinence. If one refuses to take advice about HIV and AIDS seriously, the likelihood of infection is very high. In addition, there is danger of infecting a spouse who may be innocent with the virus. This entails that advice regarding the need of upright moral behavior is important since it may help to avoid infection with the HIV virus. A wise person, therefore, should listen to advice and take informative advice in a responsible manner. Theoretically, exposure to foreign moral practices may result in both favorable and unfavourable behavioral patterns. According to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) *Zimbabwe Human Development Report* (2003), HIV and AIDS is beginning to have an effect on the value systems of the family as traditional norms and customs are breaking down". The relaxation of the traditional moral values of honesty, prudence, and faithfulness, among other virtues, results in risky behavior among both the youth and elders, thereby exposing them to the deadly HIV. The report also observed that the social fabric of the family is showing signs of erosion. The moral solidarity, which gives strong bonds on the family, is disappearing due to urbanization and industrialization. Moral responsibilities of family members for the direction of the youth have become blurred. This blurred scenario allows the AIDS pandemic to take its tour. The disappearance of moral education, the report noted, results in early sexual activity among the youth with multiple or casual sex partners which culminates HIV infection. Added to that, the report also observed that due to the death of parents because of AIDS, grandparents are unable to control the discipline of the adolescents, resulting in risky behavior and AIDS. Women are exposed to moral dilemmas in cases when they have to take care of their HIV infested parents and leave their husbands alone. This moral dilemma, the report observed, resulted in men engaging in promiscuous behavior, thereby acquiring the deadly virus. It can be argued that misuse of foreign cultural ideas coupled with the misuse of the depicted freedom resulted in the breakdown of traditional moral values, which increases the vulnerability to HIV and AIDS.

### **IRRESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOR**

In traditional Shona society, morally bad acts were viewed negatively. The Shona believed that immoral acts should not be developed into habits. Habits would mean that immorality would be repeated and, in the context of sexual immorality, this would lead to promiscuity. However, the Shona are aware that someone may fall into temptation and do something morally bad. The Shona proverbially warned individuals that evil acts should not be repeated through the saying: *danda haripotsi rutsva kaviri*, which translates into "a log does not escape veld fire twice". The wise saying warns against risky behavior that

includes unprotected sex. If one, by sheer chance, escapes unprotected sex without the HIV virus, it does not logically follow that such luck will be repeated in future. There is a high probability of contracting the HIV virus if risky behavior continues. If taken seriously, the proverb has the potential to liberate contemporary Shona people against careless or irresponsible sexual behavior. The Shona in Zimbabwe can combine the above moral advice with other biomedical strategies to reduce the risk of the HIV infection in a significant manner.

### **GIRL CHILD AND BOY CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

In the past few years, there have been an increasing number of media reports about older men raping young girls and isolated cases of older women forcing young boys into sex. This unhappy scenario is based on the false belief that sleeping with a virgin cures AIDS. Such a belief is both illogical and immoral. It is illogical in the sense that it is based on flawed thinking. There is no cure of AIDS and there is no way sleeping with a virgin would possibly cure AIDS. In addition, such an act is clearly immoral since it involves child sexual abuse. In traditional Shona society, child sexual abuse has been seen as morally bad and has been condemned. The Shona advised elders to be patient and wait for the young girls to grow and mature. This thinking protects young girls from sexual abuse as well as giving them the freedom to choose marriage partners. A proverb which encourages patience with young girls is *regai dzive shiri mazai haana muto*, which is translated into “allow eggs to develop into birds, since eggs cannot provide relish”. The proverb demands young girls to mature physically, morally, and psychologically so that they can make informed decisions concerning issues of marriage and sex. In the context of HIV and AIDS, the proverb helps to protect young girls from being infested by the HIV virus. Young girls are vulnerable and defenseless and it would be inhuman to abuse them. If the proverb is taken seriously, this would help to protect young girls from unnecessary abuse. Child sexual abuse damages the victim physically, morally, psychologically, emotionally, and socially.

### **THE VIRTUE OF PATIENCE**

The virtue of patience is held with high esteem in the Shona thought system. The youth, in particular, were taught not to rush but to wait and be patient, especially in matters regarding sex and marriage (Gelfand, 1973). Early marriages are discouraged among the youth to allow them time to mature in physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual dimensions. Physically, young people were allowed to marry after the teenage stage. At this stage, young people would normally grasp complex matters, were able to make informed decisions relating to marriage, and would be ready to cope with stress that is related to marriage. Given the above situation, the Shona advised the young not to hurry in sex-related matters through the proverbial saying: *kumanya handi kusvika*, which is translated into “running is not arriving”. In relation to HIV and AIDS, the Shona saying encourages the youth to wait patiently before attempting sexual encounters. Rushing into sex at an immature stage may result in serious dangers, including contracting the HIV virus. However, it does not logically follow that a delay in sexual activity guarantees protection against HIV and AIDS, but it gives a broad chance for informed sexual decisions and choices. If one is mature, one can make one’s decisions on the basis of freedom and responsibility. At the same time, foreign, but significant, virtues of openness and assertiveness can be used to map out the way forward. This study does not argue for an unrestricted or excessive communitarianism, but restricted or moderate communitarianism, a model taken by Gyekye (1992). This view gives space to individual rights and affords the

same individual responsibility towards the community. The human person is seen as "...having capacity for virtue and for evaluating and making moral judgements and hence, capable of choice" (Gyekye, 1992). In this perspective, the capacity for self-assertion, which the individual exercises, presupposes, and derives from the exercise of freedom by the person. Thus, the self-determining is also self-assertive. A combination of positive aspects from both local and foreign values gives a dynamic and flexible approach, which is neither too conservative nor too liberal. While extreme individualistic and permissive tendencies of the west should be disregarded, local myths about the AIDS pandemic should be thrown away too so that the individual faces the existential situation with a better vision. The value of sociality and associated virtues is underlined by Smith (1998) who argued that, "the idea of transforming society in order to develop one's freedom as a social being disappears beyond the horizon of a reified and isolated consciousness." This shows that communitarianism and its virtues should not be discarded in the name of freedom. In the same line of reasoning, Herbermas (1984) observed that, "the reification of social relations in so far as one's own creative power and the power of others are increasingly defined in terms of exchange values dictated by circulation as commodities of the market." This shows that the social relations, which form the basis of moral values, cannot be replaced by consumerism.

### **RESPECT FOR OTHER PEOPLE'S WIVES**

In the Shona society, faithfulness is highly valued and it is an imperative within the context of marriage. The Shona have a well developed social network to support this virtue of faithfulness. One strategy that is used is mutual respect for other people's wives. This respect is comparable to the one that exists between a man and his mother-in-law. For the Shona, a man is expected to treat his mother-in-law with great respect. This respectful relationship is transferred to other people's wives in the proverb *mukadzi wemumwe ndiambuya*, which can be translated into "another man's wife is a mother in law". The advantage of this respect is that evil thoughts and bad intentions will not be given room. In present day Shona societies, the respect for other persons' marriages is key in reducing adulterous affairs that trigger the spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. Morally, the respect for another man's wife means respect for the husband and the marriage between the two. As a result, it would be disrespectful to both the man and the wife if someone has an affair with a married woman or married man. From a social perspective, the Shona consider an extramarital affair as a violation of the rights of the entire extended family of the husband because a wife is seen as belonging to the entire extended family of the husband. This does not mean that the wife has many husbands, but that the wife depends on the entire family for social and economic needs, although she has a single husband. In the context of HIV and AIDS, the respect for marriages can help to deal with a reduction in the number of extramarital affairs.

### **RESPECT FOR OTHER WOMEN'S HUSBANDS**

Although the Shona society is basically masculine and males often make sexual advances to women, the changing society has seen women (who may fall outside the category of prostitutes) making implicit sexual advances to men. The proverb *murume akanaka asiri wako*, which can be translated to "goodness is seen in another woman's husband" is coined to describe a situation whereby a married woman can sexually admire another man who is not necessarily her husband. The Shona word *kunaka*, when used with reference to human beings, can refer to physical beauty (extrinsic beauty) or moral uprightness (intrinsic beauty) (Gwaravanda, 2011). The moral or physical goodness of another woman's husband is easy to notice,

especially at face value. When such superficial appreciations are done, steps are taken to woo the husband, who may give in. The Shona argue that such rushed decisions are morally fatal and the proverb implicitly calls for some reasoned and careful reflections. The proverb articulates that the goodness, whether physical, moral, or both, is more apparent than real because an inductive proof of the weaknesses may not have been established. Logically, the proverb entails that if the weaknesses of another woman's husband are not known by an observer, it does not necessarily follow that they are non-existent. The proverbs encourage women to be faithful their husbands because the apparent goodness of other women's husbands may prove to be unreal. Applied to the HIV and AIDS situation, the proverb has fruitful implications. They are that the women should be faithful to their husbands because the appearance of goodness is simply a bait that may result in HIV and AIDS; even if another woman's husband may look better than one's own, it does not follow that one should hook up with him; and women should appreciate their own husbands. This would help to reduce a contemporary wave of promiscuity that is initiated by married women as they experiment with sexual activity. Lately, there have been press reports that have shown women going to bed with their friend's husband or their sister's husband. In the context of HIV and AIDS, this may be highly risky.

### **Lust**

The proverb *ziso remukadzi weumwe rinodona uchi*, which means that, "the eye of another man's wife drips honey" is a proverb that is meant to guard Shona men against lust. It is a common opinion that the grass appears to be greener elsewhere and when a man sees another person's wife, he should not be overtaken by lustful desires, but should be guided by rational moral principles and be contented with their own wives. In the contemporary Shona society, adulterous affairs have led to infection and transmission of HIV. The proverb warns Shona men to be upright and be morally focused. Due to the erosion of moral values, sex is taken as a commodity on the market through prostitution. Extramarital affairs (evidenced by the multiplicity of small houses) are now viewed as normal. Such thinking rejects the metaphysics of the human person in which one is seen as intrinsically valuable. Instead, focus is on the superficial aspects of lust and gratification of desires. This attitude towards the morality of sex results in risky behavior and subsequent infection with the HIV virus. The proverb, therefore, is a mechanism of control within the Shona culture.

### **ABSTINENCE**

The virtue of abstinence is valued highly among traditional Shona societies. Young men and women are encouraged to be honest in the area of chastity so that they can have respectable marriages. Young women and men are expected to keep their virginity and not experiment with sex so that they can have an innocent start in the marriage. The proverb *usikana idamba kamwe chikuru umvana*, which means that "virginity cannot be regained once lost", encourages chastity and abstinence among Shona communities. Although HIV can be transmitted by other means, such as blood transfusion, the biggest cause of HIV and AIDS is sexual activity. Zimbabweans become aware of different lifestyles through globalization. While it is noble that greater cultural and ethnic diversity can make the society dynamic, it can also create problems. In Zimbabwe, the exposure of the youth to difficult cultures through the spread of ideas, goods, and advertizing has led to a wider awareness; but, at the same time, it has resulted in morally relaxed lifestyles. American films and brands have opened the Zimbabwean society to other lifestyles, which tend to compromise moral virtues of integrity and abstinence. The Internet exposes the youth to pornographic material and may impact their behavior. Traditional moral views surrounding sex are eroded and can be enforced particularly by encouraging abstinence among the youth.

## MORAL WARNING

The proverb *chitema chinodya muridzi wacho*, which says that, “The bad consequences of immoral action ultimately affect the moral agent in question” demonstrates that evil deeds ultimately affect the person who is involved in bad deeds. This is a consequentialist analysis of actions. The Shona emphasizes the principle of virtue, *hunhu*, which culminates in good character traits. If one goes against goodness, one becomes involved in bad deeds, which are seen as breaking the social harmony of the society. In the area of HIV and AIDS, the social teaching of the proverbs is that the acts of promiscuity eventually catch up with the individual. For the Shona, the proverb does not stigmatize those who are infected by the HIV, but it serves as a moral warning meant to encourage behavior change among those who may be promiscuous. For the Shona, the emphasis is more on character formation than on the consequences of an action, since the morally people will usually develop good deeds.

## CONCLUSION

The paper has argued that the use of appropriate Shona proverbs as a form of IKS can be integrated with existing biomedical approaches in the fight against HIV and AIDS so as to reduce the prevalence rate of the pandemic. The Shona possesses vast moral knowledge, some of which is codified proverbially, that can be used to cultivate abstinence, self control, and faithfulness, among other virtues, as an indigenously based approach to combat HIV and AIDS. The paper has shown that the IKS approach is potentially liberating since it lies within the conceptual framework of the Shona culture. The paper has selected appropriate proverbs, analyzed them, and applied them in the context of the HIV and AIDS pandemic. It is clear from the discussion that moral guidance is offered by the selected proverbs. As a result, the said proverbs can be of significant use, thereby broadening the tools that are currently used in the Zimbabwean HIV and AIDS education, because intellectual honesty demands the use of all possible value systems if effectiveness is to be attained.

## REFERENCES

- Churchill, W. (1996). *I Am Indigenist: Notes on the Ideology of the Fourth World*. In *A Native Son: Selected Essays on Indigenism, 1985 -1995*. Boston: South End Press.
- Fayeraband, P. (1998). *Farewell to Reason*. London: Verso Press.
- Gelfand, M. (1973). *The Genuine Shona: Survival Values of An African Culture*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Gelfand, M. (1979). *Growing Up in Shona Society From Birth to Marriage*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Gorjestani, N. (2000). *Indegenous Knowledge and Development: Opportunities and Challenges*. Paper presented at UNCTAD Conference on Traditional Knowledge, Geneva, November 1.
- Gwaravanda, E.T. (2011). *Shona Proverbial Implications on Skin Bleaching: Some Philosophical Insights* Journal of PanAfrican Studies Volume 4, Number 4, June 2011.
- Gwaravanda, E.T. & Masaka, D. (2008). Epistemological Implications of Selected Shona Proverbs. *The Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS)*. Occasional Paper No. 41, pp. 1-36.
- Gyekye, K. (1992). Person and Community in African Thought. In G.F. McLean (Ed.), *Person and Community*. Washington D.C., United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
- Hebermas, J. (1984). *The Theory of Communicative Action*. London: Bacon Press.

- Horsthemke, K. (2004). Indigenous knowledge: Conceptions and Misconceptions. *Journal of Education*, 32, 31 – 48.
- The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (1997). *Indicators for Sustainable Development*. International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, Toronto.
- Kaul, I. (1997). Human Development in the Global Market Place: Tracing the impact of Globalization. *Development and Cooperation*, No.1, January-February.
- Khuttang J.M. & Ikpe, I.B. (1998). Culture and Development: A Psychophysical Analysis. In E.M. Chiwome and Z. Gambaya (Eds.), *Culture and Development*. Harare: Mond Books.
- Liszka, J.J. (1999). *Moral Competence: An Integral Approach to the Study of Ethics*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Moodie, C.A.E. (2003). Alternative Ways Of Knowing: Doing Justice To Non-Western Intellectual Traditions In a Postmodern Era. *Journal of Education*, 31, 7 – 24.
- Moodie, T. (2004). Re-Evaluating the idea of Indigenous Knowledge: Implications of Anti-Dualism in African Philosophy and Theology. *African Renewal, African Renaissance': New Perspectives on Africa's Past and Africa's Present*. The African Studies Association of Australia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) Annual Conference, 26-28 November 2004, University of Western Australia.
- Montigu, A. (1961) *Man in Process*, New York: New American Library Press.
- Mungwini, P. (2009). *Ubuntu*, HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe: Philosophical Reflections on 'the Condom Campaign Language' as a Form of Veiled Public Admonition (*Bembera*). *Nawa Journal of Language and Communication*, 3(1), 117 – 128.
- Ntuli, P.P. (2002). *Indigenous knowledge systems and the African Renaissance*. In C.A.
- Odora, H. (ed.), *Indigenous Knowledge And The Integration Of Knowledge Systems: Towards A Philosophy Of Articulation* (53 – 66). Claremont, SA: New Africa Books
- Ocholla, D. (2007). Marginalized Knowledge: An Agenda for Indigenous Knowledge Development and Integration with Other Forms of Knowledge. *International Review of Information Ethics*, 7(09), 1-10.
- Odora Hoppers, C.A. (Ed.). (2002). *Indigenous knowledge and the integration of knowledge systems: towards a philosophy of articulation*. Claremont, SA: New Africa Books
- Osunade, M.A. (1994). "Indigenous Climate Knowledge and Agricultural Practices in Southwestern Nigeria.", *Malaysian Journal of Tropical Geography* , 21–28.
- Ramose, M.B. (1999). *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu*. Harare: Mond Books.
- Simpson, L.R. (2004). Anticolonial Strategies for the Recovery and Maintenance of Indigenous knowledge. *American Indian Quarterly*, 28(3/4), 373-384.
- Smith, D. (1998). Knowledge in culture and development. In E.M. Chiwome and Z. Gambaya (Eds.), *Culture and Development*. Harare: Mond Books.
- Warren, D.M. (1992). *Strengthening Indigenous Nigerian Organizations and Associations for Rural Development: the Case of Ara Community*. Occasional Paper No. 1, African Resource Centre for Indigenous Knowledge, Ibadan
- United Nations Development Programme. (2003). *Zimbabwe Human Development Report 2003: Redirecting Our Responses to HIV and AIDS*. Harare: UNDP.
- World Bank Policy Research Report. (2002). *Globalisation, Growth, and Poverty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). *Our Common Future*. Oslo: World Commission on Environment and Development.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

Ephraim Taurai Gwaravanda, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Great Zimbabwe University