

A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF TSHIFASI: AN ORDINARY AFRICAN  
MUSICOLOGICAL STUDY

By

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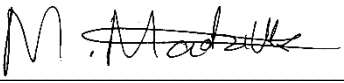
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## DECLARATION

I, **Meisie Madzivhandila**, hereby declare that this thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Venda, hereby submitted by me, has not been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other university, and that it is my own work in design and execution and that all referenced materials herein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature:  Date: 19 October 2021

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## DEDICATION

On a personal note, I dedicate this project to my husband; “You were there for me all the way”.

## ABSTRACT

*Tshifasi* music performance is part of Vhavenḁa traditional music. It seems, however, to be the least studied. As such, there is not much written about this genre. This means that the traditional value imbedded in *tshifasi* has not been fully explored for the benefit of society. It is for this reason that this current study is conducted. It seeks to describe and explain *tshifasi*. Apart from its social interactive aspect, particularly the dance performances between boys and girls, the study argues that there is more to this music genre than meet the eye. Given this position, the study analysed *tshifasi* to establish its inherent philosophies and structural patterns. The study used a combination of qualitative and African musicology approaches to gather information from prospective participants and to analyse data. Face to face interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with key informants in order to gather information that enabled the study to decode *tshifasi*. The knowledge from the study of *tshifasi* will benefit communities. In this way, *tshifasi* would be seen as an inherent part of Vhavenḁa cultural expressions.

**Keywords:** Music, Indigenous music, *tshifasi*, Indigenous knowledge, Vhavenḁa, Children.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

#### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge refers to local knowledge. It is unique to a given society or culture and contributes to the development and sustainability of cultures (Hoppers, 2001 quoted by Magni, 2017). The particularity of a culture is determined by its local knowledge as transmitted from one generation to the next. Teaero (2002) points out that for the new generation to become responsible, useful and vigorous in future, they need proper fundamental preparations and uncompromised guidance. This could be realised if indigenous knowledge is culturally learnt and traditionally practised. That is, indigenous games, storytelling and African music should become the prototype for the sustainability of African culture. These are central to the growth of the African culture (Hoppers, 2001 cited in Magni, 2016).

In any society, music plays a significant role. As Kronberg, Brooks, Crips, Elasmar, Millar, Battin, Southwick, Tierney and Miller (2013) observe that music plays a significant part in almost everyone's life. It is used to impart knowledge to communities, in addition to being used as an educational instrument on the one hand, and as a therapy for tension and boredom on the other (Hallam, 2010). Music is also a source of entertainment. It is a vital component of the communities' public relations endeavours. In short, music help bring communities together as they play, dance and listen to it in public places.

In Africa, for example, most people are talent in music. That is, in a musical show, for example, the audience always brings its own perceptions as to what proper music is or should be. In such cases, the audience would clap, whistle or ululate, these being signs of their approval of that musical concert. Such interjections, by and large, build the texture and the excitement inherent in the supposedly good music. Another African musical peculiarity is that the level of tolerance amongst band members is comparatively low. This becomes apparent when one considers that sometimes the tuning of the instruments may not be pure, nor do a few dance missteps constitute a bad performance. As Mapaya (2014) observes,

Africans in general ascribe to the notion that ‘lešaedi a le tlokege košeng’. Literally, this is to the effect that every performance is expected to feature one or several less talented participations. Also (in Sepedi), it is believed that *sa koša ke lerole* (for as long as there is dust from dancing and jubilation, the performance would have achieved its purpose) (Mapaya, 2014). That is, with indigenous music, people mainly concern themselves with the sound and performances as opposed to the finer details that are usually associated with western music.

Given the above, one would note that Vhavanḁa cultural activities such as music, dances and instrument playing have been in existence since time immemorial (Ramaite-Mafadza, 2016:4). The preponderance of Vhavanḁa culture is mirrored by the distinctive styles inherent in its traditional musical performances. It should be noted, therefore, that Blacking (1962) and Ralushai (1977) are credited for pioneering the scientific study of the Tshivḁa indigenous music. Thereafter, scholars such as Mugovhani (2009) and Kruger (2004) have

also conducted researches on Vhavanḁa traditional music, an indication that a considerable ground has been covered in this regard. Be that as it may, however, the *tshifasi* music genre has not been given much attention by the scholars. As a unique genre in the general Vhavanḁa traditional music, *tshifasi* deserves an in-depth study, hence this attempt.

As stated above, Vhavanḁa are rich with indigenous cultural practices and heritage. These are reflected in their different musical styles and genres. In essence, Vhavanḁa consider music as part of their daily lives. Even though our music was played informally back then, it never lost its educative, informative and entertainment values to the society. For instance, through traditional music, Vhavanḁa children were taught how to count numbers using their body parts such as fingers. For its informative value, Tshivenḁa songs such as *mutshavhona mutshavhona dada*, (a warning song for someone about to eat poisoned food) were sung regularly during community gatherings. In addition, Vhavanḁa music was used for motivational purposes. That is, after a day's hard work, community members would gather and sing songs that were deemed therapeutic for fatigue. Through such traditional undertakings, Vhavanḁa indigenous music was passed from one generation to the next. At this point, suffices it to note that traditionally, there are songs and musical performances that were meant for men, and vice versa.

In this case, *tshikona* is an indigenous Vhavanḁa performance that was the men's preserve. *Tshikona* musical dance and performance was traditionally done on special occasions such as, *inter alia*, the King's ceremonial installation, funerals and religious gatherings (Mafela, 1996). Tracey and Gumboreshumba (2013) indicate that *tshikona* dance is more interesting

when it is played by a large number of male performers. Here, each dancer carries a reedpipe instrument that he plays as they collectively perform (Ramugondo, 2009). In modern times, however, *tshikona* is now performed by females. The reason(s) for the sudden change in, and the abandonment of culture and tradition is/are yet to be scholarly explored.

As stated above, there are musical practices that are predominantly female in Vhavenda culture. *Tshigombela* is a typical example here. It is one of the age long performances usually done by a group of girls and unmarried ladies, and is performed for and at the *misanda*, the Royal court of a ruler (Mugovhani, 2012). Here, a *tshiviambudzi* (one who slaughters a goat), is permitted to dance with this group of girls. The *tshiviambudzi*'s inclusion here is not only for his dance skills, but he is also responsible for the goat's slaughter, and hence *tshiviambudzi*. In performing *tshigombela*, the group forms a circle, and then moves anticlockwise in rhythm with the *malogwane* (the lead singer) as she starts a song (Magubane, 2018). The *tshigombela* music was meant to entertain the Rulers, in addition to its other value of establishing a friendship bond amongst the girl entertainers *per se* (Kruger, 2002 in Mugovhani, 2012). It is important to understand, at this juncture, that Vhavenda genderise their music to preserve their cultural history.

In as much as men and women participated in community activities according to gender orientations, children were not left out as well. That is, children also took part in cultural activities where they sung songs reminiscent of their age. A notable song here was *mbale mbale*, which children sung while playing child games meant to teach them how to count (Daswa, Netshandama & Matshidze, 2019). Through songs and music, children benefited



since they developed enumeration, listening and communication skills. It should be noted that there are songs and music that catered for all childhood stages, that is, from infant to adolescent. Some of the children's songs and music were derived from stories, proverbs and folklore. For instance, *makhulu* (grandmother) would sit around the fire with her grandchildren at night, where she told and taught them child stories and their inherent songs. These musical games and songs were precisely for *vhana vhatuku* (toddlers) and *vhana vhahulwane* (teen-agers).

*Dzhombo* is one of Vhavanḁa traditional dances that was performed at night, where the participants did erotic actions. This dance is more or less the same with *tshifasi* as boys and girls dance facing each other. It is a dance done while clapping hands. With this dance, performers dance between two lines. Through *dzhombo*, boys and girls learnt cultural values and morals.

Also, *dzhombo* is not only an indigenous performance for both males and females, but it is also a *tshikanganga*, a courting dance for young people. It is a fast mode dance, similar to *tshifasi*. When dancing *dzhombo*, girls sing and play *thungwa* and *mirumba* drums, while boys play reed flutes. *Tshikanganga* is performed for socialisation and entertainment purposes. Through their performances, children become acknowledged by the headman. Given this kind of musical performance, Vhavanḁa boys and girls socialise with each other before they marry.

*Malende* indigenous music is performed by both adults and children of both sexes. It is one of the few musical instances where females and males perform together. The performers raise critical societal issues, or protest through songs. The fulcrum of this performance is to generate fun through humour. Playing the *mirumba* drums, ululating and clapping hands are part of this musical performance. Another characteristic of *malende* is that the performers call each other and then respond through singing, at the same time drinking beverages to quench their thirst after a heavy task. Thus, this performance is for amusement purposes. That is, it is specifically meant for events such as ceremonies where a mixture of females and males perform together. In view of this, one would agree that there is a strong foundation for the study of the Tshivenda indigenous music.

In other words, scholars such as Kruger (2004) have conducted research on the Tshivenda indigenous music, an indication that a considerable ground has been covered in this regard. Be that as it may, the *tshifasi* music genre has not been given much attention by scholars in general. The *tshifasi* music is an important part of our life and customs. Lanzani (2014) points out that *tshifasi* is a unique aspect of Vhavenda heritage, which is learnt and passed from one generation to another. Given its uniqueness and its inherent value to Vhavenda culture, norms and customs, it is preposterous that not much has been investigated about *tshifasi*'s socialisation aspect in the context of our children's proper upbringing. For all its worth, it is imperative to undertake a *tshifasi* musicology in order to grasp the philosophy behind its social performance and its constant negotiated forms in order to preserve our community's social order. Emberly (2014) argues that most of the Venda songs contain proverbs that require explanations. Investigating *tshifasi*, therefore, would go a long way in enriching the

Venda cultural heritage, thereby empowering our indigenous knowledge developers and scholars.

## **1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

*Tshifasi* music is an essential part of Vhavenḁa cultural practice that existed through several generations. It is performed for entertainment purposes in a variety of contexts when boys and girls, for example, socialise together (Mashianoke, 2013). The preliminary literature review indicates that *tshifasi* music performance is amongst the least academically explored Vhavenḁa traditional music genres so far. The need for an in-depth analysis of *tshifasi*, therefore, this cannot be overemphasised. In fact, any further procrastination here risks the extinction of music genre. For Vhavenḁa in particular, this will help maintain their cultural practice as inherited from their forefathers. An in-depth investigation of *tshifasi* and the subsequent development of mechanisms for its preservation would be beneficial not only to the children, but also to the nation at large. Given the above, this study's problem is that *tshifasi* is not yet fully investigated.

## **1.3. AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study was to investigate and proffer a descriptive analysis of *tshifasi* music genre.

## **1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

To achieve the above aim, the following objectives were considered:

- To trace the sociological foundation of tshifasi music genre.
- To identify the agents and their roles in the making of tshifasi.
- To determine tshifasi's sociological function.

## 1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study will answer the following questions;

- What are the sociological foundation of the *tshifasi* music genre?
- Who takes part in the making and sustenance of the *tshifasi* performative traditions?
- What is *tshifasi*'s sociological function in Vhavenda society?

## 1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Much has been written about Tshivenda music performance (see Blacking, 1967; Kruger, 2004; Kirby, 1933; Mugovhani, 2012) for instance. This study surveyed the literature on Vhavenda indigenous music. In this case, its uniqueness lies with its emphasis on *tshifasi*. This study's results would benefit both educators and scholars interested in Vhavenda culture. Even though the South African curriculum advocates for the mainstreaming of indigenous African music in the classroom, very few authentic studies exist to generate content and materials required for this. Given this void in literature, the significance of this study is that it would help complement those few that exist. Most importantly, this study's significance is in its use of oral sources to reconstruct the value of *tshifasi* in Vhavenda society.

## 1.7. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand the explanations of the knowledge holders, particularly the elderly Vhavenda people, this study used Ordinary African musicology theory. Ryle (1951) and Rambau (2015) defined and agreed on ordinary language as all related languages that are used by people to express themselves. Ordinary language philosophy provides an opportunity that benefits both the researcher and the study participants, since everyone speaks from the same point of view (Ryle, 1951). Since tshifasi is an African music genre, there is an advantage collecting accurate data from the indigenous knowledge holders, and avoiding misinterpretation. The study of tshifasi is embedded in the language of ordinary people (Mapaya, 2014).

Through the use of the Ordinary African theory, this study managed to obtain rich data that provided a deep understanding of the tshifasi as a cultural activity. In other words, the participants such as, inter alia, vhaqegulu (old women) and vhaqalaha (old men) were given opportunities to narrate in their own language, as a way of expressing the significance how tshifasi was performed back then (Mugovhani, 2014). The participants easily expressed themselves as they answered questions concerning tshifasi. The use of Tshivenda allowed them to freely relate their lived experiences in the context of tshifasi. This enabled the researcher to acquire rich and in-depth data about the origins of the tshifasi genre (Mashianoke, 2013). Additionally, the advantage was that no translations were required, a situation that would have corrupted the originality of the data captured. The use of Tshivenda for the research became also handy during data analysis.

Furthermore, the Tshivenda enriched this study through its application and interpretation of the figures of speech that included proverbs, mirero and idioms, maidioma as part of indigenous knowledge under the study (Mugovhani, 2014). Theory is connected with the present study since tshifasi is based on the observable reality that was explored, explained and generalised herein. In terms of Ordinary Language theory, the target group fully described the tshifasi genre.

## 1.8. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following terms are defined in the context in which they were applied in this study. That is, the way they are defined hereunder is the way their use and meaning should be construed in this study.

**Music:** This term refers to the sound made through singing and the playing of instruments. It is the art of arranging and combining tones or sounds in order and, often together to make a complete unit that has the beauty of form and, which is intended to communicate some emotion (Mbaegbu, 2015: 177).

**Indigenous music:** The concept refers to the cultural belonging, a part of the ceremony, storytelling, celebration and mourning, the coming together and telling of events in indigenous people's lives, both past and present (Quiggin, 2007).

**Indigenous knowledge system:** According to Warren (1996), this is a philosophical and scientific knowledge system that deals with all aspects of the indigenous people's life. Indigenous people generated knowledge with the intension to solve their social problems

such as health, education, political and psychological problems. Its crucial role is seen when it is transferred orally from generation to generation for sustainability (Noyoo, 2007 & Senanayake, 2006). The importance of the indigenous knowledge is acknowledged from the wisdom generated through observation.

**Vhavenḁa:** These are people who were previously referred to as Venda, who live in the northern parts of South Africa and southern parts of Zimbabwe. Muvenda is the singular for Vhavenḁa (Mabogo, 1990).

**Socialisation:** This is a process where young people come to appreciate the societal norms and culture through the sharing of different ideas and values that in turn help mould their behaviour. Shankar (2000) propagates for the use of music to guide an individual through a transitional phase in life.

**Tshifasi:** A Tshivenda indigenous music and dance with both the entertainment and moral values, and is mostly performed by young boys and girls (Lanzani, 2014). This music is characterised by singing and dancing.

**Agency:** It is central to the relationship between two individuals, and can help create a bridge between leadership and learning (Devita *et al.*, 2007). The agency such as parents and the elderly people could be important in creating the bridge between leadership and learning in the context of *tshifasi*. It is through *tshifasi* that children promote and preserve our cultural heritage practices in order to gain social skills. This serves to benefit them as they learn to communicate through body movements (Van Dyck, Burger & Orlandatou, 2017).

## 1.9. STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

**Chapter One** introduces this study, and provides its background, statement of the problem, and its aim and objectives. Also included here are the research questions and the justification for this study. The ethical considerations appear at the end herein.

**The Second Chapter** reviews literature on music, where the emphasis is on issues pertinent to this study.

**Chapter Three** illustrates the methodology followed by this study, its research design and the data collection methods used herein. The study's location and its limitations also form part of this Chapter.

**Chapter Four** presents data as collected through interviews and secondary source survey. Of concern to this study here are issues such as the *tshifasi* performance, its attire, and the boys' and girls' movements as they perform it. The influential factors in the reconstruction of gender relations through *tshifasi* are also raised here.

In **Chapter Five**, the description and explanation of the *tshifasi* performance as done by children is discussed. The aim of the chapter is to illustrate the aspects of indigenous knowledge holders' experiences in the *tshifasi* music and its performance.

**Chapter Six** analyses data discussed in Chapters Four and Five. Data from secondary and archival sources is analysed and integrated with that from oral interviews. A section that concludes the study is provided in this Chapter as well.



## 1.10. CONCLUSION

Chapter One introduced this study, with the *tshifasi* music performance its main subject. The background of the study, statement of the problem, the significance of the study, the aim and study objectives, and the research questions were also presented. The section on the definition of concepts such as music, indigenous music, *tshifasi*, indigenous knowledge, and Vhavenda also forms part of this chapter. The literature review, theoretical framework, and the data analysis and presentation are discussed in detail in the following Chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

This Chapter is divided into four sections, namely Vhavenḁa music and dances, and Vhavenḁa children's music, inter alia. Here, I review literature informed by the distinct types of Vhavenḁa indigenous music and games. This is done in relation to other African cultures and those overseas. In addition, literature is reviewed in the context of the origins of various music performances and their sociological foundations. The main Vhavenḁa performances include, amongst others, the tshikona, tshigombela, and malende (Emberly, and Davidson, 2011). Also, the function of the indigenous music and games is focalised as literature is reviewed here. This is so in that every performance has its own different function and meaning in community. Another important consideration in this literature review is the issue of Vhavenḁa music games for children, a central theme in this study (Emberly, 2013). These are reviewed according to gender and age, occasion, mood and customs. The significant participants in the tshifasi genre and the agents that contribute to its cultural values are also dealt with in this review. These four sections have subheadings that complement this literature review.

The following section reviews the literature on various African music and dances. The position of the agency in the context of *tshifasi* is critically reviewed here. In reviewing

literature, the scientific effects of *tshifasi* is evaluated. In the Vhembe District, for example, there is little evidence that shows that the studies on *tshifasi* have been extensively done.

## **2.2. INDIGENOUS MUSIC IN AFRICAN SOCIETIES**

### **2.2.1. Indigenous knowledge**

Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) are culture specific. They form the basis for a people's livelihood. Children's traditional songs and games are one aspect of the IKS (Mutema, 2013). Through songs and games, children get to know their environment and acquire life skills, amongst other benefits. Quiggin (2007) and Janke and Setina (2018) add that indigenous music is part of ceremonies, storytelling, celebrations and mourning and, the coming together and telling of events in indigenous people's lives, both past and present. In other words, indigenous music is local knowledge that deal with all aspects of the indigenous people's life unique to a given culture. In the majority of cases, elderly people are found mostly in rural areas where indigenous knowledge is. This study deals with the *tshifasi* performance in order that knowledge could be understood through musical analysis. Also, elderly people contributed a lot during data collection. Elderly people have first-hand information on Vhavanḁa indigenous music (Mutema, 2013). Thus, this study used the Tshivendanḁa language for indigenous people who use indigenous music as a tool in their daily activities.

### **2.2.2. Africa's indigenous music**

Indigenous music was used as a strategy by Africans to emphasise on issues. They valued it since it was used in their celebrations. When they had gatherings, indigenous music was used to address community members (Nyoike-Mugo, 2010). In any gathering, such music was in

the forefront. The same music was crucial during sad moments as well. Their children shared stories through indigenous music. Thus, Africans never left out music in their everyday activities. They could not live without music. Quiggin (2007) and Janke (2018) believe that music is part of any ceremony. In other words, when one says, ‘it is a part’, it means someone, or something is not complete without it. Similarly, indigenous people could not do without music. They enjoyed and understood the relevance of music in their cultural and traditional activities. Equally so were children with their *tshifasi* music genre. The genre addressed and still addresses children’s issues, if applied.

Indigenous music was well practised before the colonisers introduced their western music in Africa (Malcolm, no date). That is, African people, including Vhavenḁa, used their cultural wealth to express their feelings through music. Music was a good strategy that was used to bring out what troubled them, their feelings or emotions (Quiggin, 2007). Apart from being used for storytelling and in ceremonies, indigenous music was also used to trace one’s origins. As such, it provided an opportunity for one to discover her/his heritage. As much as people practised indigenous music, it is important to make further investigations on its origins.

It is important to note that ever since the term indigenous music was introduced by the psychologist Erikson in the 1950s: Much has been written and discussed about the notion ‘identity’ (Nicholls *et al.*, 2017). Uniqueness is based on the proof of identity, which in itself is based on the recognition of a common origin or shared characteristics with another person, group or ideal, leading to solidarity and allegiance’. Lindgen describes how the ‘identity

strategy' is developed by indigenous people in order to survive in one's habitat (as cited in Sarivaara *et al.*, 2013: 27). Sarivaara (201) uses this concept to show how the Sámi speaking non-Sámi in the Sámi community use the identity strategy to deal with their identity problem.

### 2.2.3. Indigenous music, a system of communication

It is through indigenous music that African people tell stories about life to promote their culture. African people tell their experiences through musical performances. That is, whatever they encounter or face, indigenous people use music as a method of expression (Idang, 2015). Besides, through music practice and performance, people bring out their emotions that manifest as ideas and thoughts. Mugandani (2016) discusses about how the *jangwa* music and its performance affect the people's sociological and psychological wellbeing. She indicates how that music should be promoted and preserved by the Manyika people in their society. Mugandani (2016) illustrates its origins, the structural performance, its function and effects in Manicaland. Her study, however, does not address *tshifasi* and its origins. Given this gap in literature, this study sought to describe *tshifasi* music, one of Vhavanḁa indigenous performances through which these people appreciate their culture.

Amongst the methods of communication, Africans also use music. According to Netshivhale (2017), music was the best way to address societal challenges. The purpose was to provide the relevant message to the situation at hand. For instance, Vhavanḁa have figurative language such as *maambele*, *mirero*, *mavhuvhisi* and *mananedzi*, *inter alia*, which they use in their spoken language (Mafela, 1996 & Lusimba, 2002). That is, if they did not want to discuss sensitive issues in the presence of a person who was not worth hearing that

information, they used words such as *huna makole* (there are clouds). In modern days, they use kind words such as *Phalaphala i a fara*. This means that the person amongst them can also hear what they are talking about. Vhavenda also used these figuratives when they were with children, who they did not want to hear what was discussed (Manyatshe, 2013). This served to avoid conflict with others. Thus, indigenous music becomes a driver in our lives as it plays a significant role in our communities. One can also bring out one's thoughts through an in-depth exploration of indigenous music. Some of the lyrics sung during a *tshifasi* performance need explanation. *Tshifasi* incorporates the Tshivenda proverbs (with deeper meanings) to avoid showing direct disrespect to the listener.

#### 2.2.4. Indigenous music games and songs

Most of the South African indigenous music, games and songs seem the same. Amlor (2016) argues that Ewe, a Ghanaian indigenous musical game literally means run and hide (similar to the commonly played game of hide and seek), and is performed by children or adolescent boys and girls. These benefit a lot through playing such musical games. Some of the benefits include friendship building and training for the future. The indigenous games such as

Ghana's Ewe prepare children for future parental roles (Amlor, 2016). Training them in togetherness helps them develop societal responsibilities, and thus destroy potential stereotypical inclinations. The same applies to Vhavenda culture, which has a game known as *mudzumbamo* (*ndi a da, ndi a da*), in which boys and girls run and hide while playing as a group (Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy, 2013). In most cases, they play such games while singing (Blacking, 1971). For example, songs such as *shavha mbevha tshimange*

*tshia luma, shavha mbevha tshimange tshia luma*. That translates to run, run mice, the cat bits, run, run mice, the cat bites. Indigenous games and songs such as these are necessary for boys and girls if they are to play together.

Even though this study focuses on the music performance, there are other indigenous games that include songs as indicated above. Amlor (2016) explains how this Ghanaian indigenous musical game was played. According to him, the song game is usually performed in an open or spacious area in the community in moonlight. For the game to be interesting, boys group themselves separately from girls, waiting for them to hide while singing play songs in soft voices. They take turns to hide. Elderly people sit somewhere, watching their children play in peace. The group to hide first is decided by the coin toss. Given this elaboration, it is clear that this Ghanaian musical game is played under similar circumstances to those of *tshifasi* performance in terms of open space. Boys and girls start the game separately. The game is a collaboration of males and females. It inculcates an element of respect for one another as brothers and sisters. Nonetheless, the *tshifasi* has no hiding aspect in its performance.

Generally, the winning mentality drives children to unite as a group, in respect of out-doing the other group. In other words, if someone does well in life, he/she is rewarded through success. Hiding makes them to socially benefit from each communication wise, and this makes them learn how to co-ordinate their activities (Veselack *et al.*, 2010; Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja & Verma, 2012). This study discusses the origins and foundation of *tshifasi* indigenous music. Tshifasi (performed by boys and girls) is also done in an open space when the moon is full.

The foundation for learning music and other social skills starts early in a child's life (Musetha & Musehane, 2012). He composed a folklore song about the significance of children's playing songs and games from an African culture perspective. His reasoning is to the effect that when children play games, in essence, that is learning in disguise (Musetha & Musehane, 2012). Children learn how to develop relationships with, and love for others. To have a good relationship with others is important for one's health and wellbeing, as opposed to being isolated. Through such association, one can compare her/his life with those of others. In this case, he include aspects where the participants learn the hide and seek game. This is similar to Amlor (2016) who notes Vhavenda children's indigenous game known as *mudzumbamo*. Children also play hide and seek in this game (Musetha & Musehane, 2012). The African children's indigenous games and songs are more or less the same since children require the basics of life while still young. This study shows how *tshifasi* music performance helps boys and girls socialise together at young age.

#### 2.2.5. Vhavenda music performances

As highlighted in the background, Vhavenda music culture is studied in order to better understand our cultural values. Blacking (1962) mentions some of Vhavenda cultural musicals and dances such as the *domba* and *malende* (also known as beer songs). *Tshikanganga* music performance, which turned pentatonic, and necessitated that Vhavenda use pipes when playing it. Also, boys and girls blew whistles during its performance. For *tshifasi* (a courting dance), Netshivhale (2017) explains it as the children's game. On children's games, it should be noted that there are those played separately by boys and girls. Blacking (1962), however, was unable to fully describe the *domba*, *malende*, *tshifasi* and



*tshikanganga*. Thus, amongst the main children's indigenous dances, *tshifasi* is fully described and analysed in this study.

It is important to describe and analyse indigenous music. Blacking (1971) reveals the deep and surface structures of the Venda music. To him, it is difficult to describe and analyse music since there is no system or musical theory that can be followed. He also mentioned two composers, Haydn and Mozart. For Blacking (1971), it is difficult to explain the differences between Haydn and Mozart's music compositions. From the notated music's perspective, it is clear that music composition needs a deeper understanding in terms of its structural aspects. That is, music needs time to describe and analyse for a deeper understanding (Tagg, 1982). *Tshifasi* music performance is described and analysed herein to establish its inherent philosophies. Given the above, the problem of deeply understanding of music and its structures, as Blacking (1971) puts it, necessitates the analysis of the following children's musical song, *tshidula tsha mutsingade*. That is, its rhythmic patterns can confuse the players if not counted well. Thus, *tshifasi*'s group performance is musicologically analysed here.

## 2.3. VHAVENḐA MUSIC AND DANCES

### 2.3.1. *Tshifasi*

*Tshifasi* music traditionally played a key role in sustaining Vhavendḥa culture. It is an essential part of Vhavendḥa heritage. Its importance lies in moulding children's good behaviour through

entertainment, and they also gain knowledge on how to behave when they are with others (Amlor, 2016). The authors who attempted to study *tshifasi* such as Blacking (1971); Mugovhani (2016); Mashiakone (2013); Ramaite-Mafadza, (2016); amongst others, assert that *tshifasi* is for boys and girls who are not yet married. The reasons why *tshifasi* is specifically for boys and girls is explained in Chapter Four. Through cultural dances such as *tshifasi*, children learn their African traditional practices, where some are grounded in songs.

Some of the children's songs are provided in Chapter Four. The reason for this is that the *tshifasi* music performance includes singing. According to Khosa (2018), the term music cannot be separated from dance. This is correct since music encompasses actions. If the beat of music is fast, it inspires one to dance, and if it is soft, it relaxes a person. Psychologically, it changes the human being's emotions towards wanting to dance. Also, the word performance, which is preferably used in this study, means embracing the dance processes. In this case, the audience views live musical performances for entertainment. Kartomi (2014) states that music performance may be defined as the live presentation of music by musicians, which is practised in an organised manner. In the *tshifasi* performance, children themselves participate, at the same time watching each other in action. Sometimes they take turns to dance. During the *tshifasi* performance, two participants dance in the centre while others watch and clap hands (instruments).

*Tshifasi* indigenous music for children has an educative aspect. This helps promote the Vhavanḁa culture, and hence shape the children's social wellbeing (Emberly & Davhula, 2015). Due to the dominance of western culture in Africa, *tshifasi* is now performed

contemporary in line with both the elderly and young people's musical tastes. Emberly and Davhula (2016) posit that children and youth enjoy their music, where emotional excitement is raised. Indigenous music back then accommodated elderly people as well, but in a modern society dominated by media such as radio and TV, it is hard to find children listening to indigenous music (Emberly & Davhula, 2014). One can also look at their everyday activities such as their use of phones and computers. Apart from that, youth, including children, do not download the traditional games as part of their entertainment. Thus, it is good to modernise music as children enjoy the modern style beats. This also happens in countries such as Greece, where cultural dance is not performed as was in ancient times. Hunt (2004) emphasises that one should not assume that the Greeks' dances today are the same as those of their forefathers. He explained the reasons for using the contemporary Greek dance movements where the original information is not available. Just as Vhavenḁa indigenous music dances are no longer performed as was the case back then, some of the information has disappeared. Thus, this study is written to preserve the *tshifasi* knowledge and ideals. It is written to guide Vhavenḁa music teachers in their endeavours to teach *tshifasi* to children at school. This study also helps preserve the *tshifasi* knowledge before it becomes extinct.

### 2.3.2. *Malende*

Various scholars such as Mashianoke (2013); Mugovhani (2012); Ramaite (2016), to mention a few, indicate that *malende* is an expressive of joy and happiness in Vhavenḁa culture on calls and responses. It is originally performed by a large ensemble of both males and females when socialising. In other words, many social events such as marriage ceremonies, the birth of a child and a beer drinking party feature *malende*. Davhula (2016)

points out that Vhavanḁa indigenous music is not only to showcase their natural skills and talents, but *malende* also contains lyrics associated with politics and arguments. It also serves to help address society's current issues such as healthy. The main characteristics of this performance are singing, clapping, dancing and ululating (Khosa, 2017). The lead singer dances at the centre, while others encourage him/her by singing and playing *murumba* drums.

### 2.3.3. The relationship between *tshifasi* and *malende*

As mentioned above, one of the outstanding characters of Vhavanḁa indigenous music is the call and respond system (Mashianoke, 2013). When the lead singer begins a song for instance (in both *tshifasi* and *malende*), the backing vocalists repeat after her/him. In most cases, the one who starts the song is the one who presents her/his case. Mugandani (2016) identifies *tshifasi* and *malende* as the Vhavanḁa's indigenous music. Also, it is a taboo to find a girl and a boy playing together in African culture. But, there are special dances that require that the two sexes play together. In Tshivendanḁa, it is played orderly as Vhavanḁa have various musical levels suitable for a particular group for its upbringing (Emberly & Davhula, 2016). There is a purpose for this collaboration as it helps mould young people's behaviour. As such, this study traces the origins of *tshifasi* in order to provide adequate information to help preserve it.

*Tshifasi* is not the only Vhavanḁa children's indigenous music that brings together both males and females, *malende* also does that. Morden people call *malende* a 'jive' performance. Consequently, some of the *malende* songs are composed situationally. This type of music is recognised as one of the main categories in Vhavanḁa indigenous music (Ramaite- Mafadza,

2016). It is played through clapping and singing. The dance is performed anywhere in a community. It does not require special preparations like other indigenous musical games (Mugovhani, 2012). In contrast, Boys and girls prepare for the *tshifasi* performance by finding an open space such as a plain ground in the evenings.

#### 2.3.4. Music, a powerful device

Music can have a major influence on one's behaviour and life. Embelry and Davhula (2016) indicate that the voice is used as a powerful instrument by children and young people since they lack physical power. Music was used by Vhavenda children in a meaningful way, and songs were identified as a good strategy to openly bring reality to light (Embelry and Davhula, 2016). To Embelry and Davhula, children have voices and adults have ideas.

Children and youth engaged in singing and dancing indigenous music, which made them exhibit Tshivenda cultural traits (Embelry & Davhula, 2016). Embelry and Davhula's (2016) work enhanced our knowledge about Vhavenda indigenous music and games. These two also wrote some songs in other languages such as the Irish and Congolese.

Davhula also discussed her musical background. She explains herself not as a musician, but an individual who only knows how to dance and sing. Lewis (2013) indicates that performances in the African perspective include dancing, singing, and music-making. Davhula explains how to play an indigenous instrument such as *murumba*. She learnt this at primary school and at home. She confirms that in the evenings at home, she would be told that a Muvenda person should be able to play one of the traditional instruments to

authenticate her/his being a Muvenda. A Muvenda is known through his/her language, music and dance (Netshivhale, 2017). Davhula believes in changes as she shows how some of the words in songs have been adapted to suit the current situation. That is, words such as *Jessy* mean traditional clothes like *minwenda*, poison is from the word *mulimo*, and jersey is from the word *zwikapa*. In addition, some of the lyrics have changed to suit the current situation.

In this study, some of the *tshifasi* words and performances have been changed because of modernisation. Emberly and Davhula (2016) conclude by saying that technology and cultural changes have impact on the adaptation of traditional music. In the olden days, children and grannies used to sit around the fire, telling each other stories (folklore). Through those stories and songs, children learnt good morals as inculcated by the elderly people. Elderly people transferred indigenous knowledge through songs and storytelling to their grandchildren. Emberly and Davhula (2016) indicate that even though modern music is great, traditional music and songs should be preserved. Vhavenḁa used this platform to learn about their roots.

#### 2.3.5. Preserving culture

Scholars have attempted to define and explain indigenous music as an important part in the Venda community (Blacking, 1998). Vhavenḁa music, therefore, is an art to express our emotions, and this becomes the source for our traditional beliefs, ideas, wisdom and feelings. This study sought to address one of the important emotional aspect of our children through *tshifasi* music performance. The *tshifasi* music performance can be respected for its uniqueness such as its rhythm, pitch, timbre and form. All these elements are collectively produced by a group of singers (boys and girls), clapping and dancing harmoniously

(Blacking, 1998). These aspects were addressed in the context of *tshifasi*. As such, this music performance becomes a vehicle for understanding how Vhavanḁa children were collectively brought up in society. Music is so powerful that Vhavanḁa used it as a healing therapy.

According to Davhula (2016), music plays a role in the healing process as listening to it soothes one's mind. *Malombo* is a component of Vhavanḁa culture, which these people relied on for healing difficult sicknesses. Davhula (2016) emphasises that Vhavanḁa believed that dead people provide spirits that can be called upon for assistance through ritual songs and dances. Shakers produced rhythms through suitable beats during the *malombo* performance (Davhula, 2016). The *malombo* were reliable amongst the Vhavanḁa, and without which, healing could not take place. Ralushai (1977) indicates that the *malombo* dance originated from Zimbabwe (a *TshiKalanga* dance performance) one of the Zimbabwean languages spoken in Matabeleland South. This language is also spoken by a possessed (by ancestral spirits) Muvenda individual. This confirms that Vhavanḁa and VhaKalanga people are related. According to Davhula (2016), her research about *malombo* was not easy as they experienced some limitations, where some participants did not want to disclose their identities due to the sensitive of the phenomenon being studied. Generally, Vhavanḁa indigenous music was used as a bridge between the ancestors and an ailing individual, as it facilitated communication between these.

#### 2.3.6. *Tshikona*

*Tshikona* (a pipe dance), is performed by elderly people through playing seven different pipes (Tracey & Gumboreshumba, 2013). In particular, it is played by men (Mashianoke, 2013 &

Mugovhani, 2012). *Tshikona* was not played anywhere, anyhow, it was mostly performed when there was death in the community. It was also played at the beginning of the *domba* initiation festivals. This music involved large numbers of people, compared with other music performances of the Vhavenda. The music was also performed at all important functions such as the installation of a new ruler, the commemoration of a ruler's death (*dzumo*), and during the sacrificial rites at the graves of the ruler's ancestors (Blacking, 1967 in Nkabinde, 1997). It promoted the interdependence and social solidarity amongst communities. Nowadays, women also participate in *tshikona*, as indicated by Tracey and Gumboreshumba (2013). In addition, *tshikona* was performed during the King's installation.

Further, *tshikona* was also used during the Royal King's Ceremonies. For instance, in 1979 when Venda was granted the Homeland Status, the ruling Venda National Party conducted its campaigns, with the traditional political leaders using music such as *tshikona* and *tshigombela* to entice voters. That is, where traditional leaders are, indigenous music is performed by diverse groups of people from the communities (Kgatla, 2016). In that type of gathering, people provide support as audience, attracted more by music than the political rhetorics. They enjoy music because one would find them dancing and singing indigenous songs. Sometimes, those who know how to dance *tshikona* use instruments related to a reedpipe and follow those who are dancing, a sign that they are enjoying themselves (Ramugondo, 2009). For example, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May, 2019, at Loftus Stadium (Pretoria) during his inauguration, President Ramaphosa Matamela Cyril joined a group known as *Tshikona Tsha Tshamulungwi* in their *tshikona* dance performances.



Additionally, in June 29, 2018, this researcher was invited as one of the performers during a celebration marking Lwamondo Secondary School's 50 years of existence in the Limpopo Province. The presence of Toni Mphephu Ramabulana attracted indigenous music to the event. There were ladies carrying *mifaro* as a sign of respect, and this is synonymous with indigenous music. Respect is one of the aspects Vhavenḁa consider as the most important characters of a person. *Tshikona* and *malende* were performed on that day (Netshivhale, 2017). *Tshikona* is performed to worship Vho- Thovhele *Vhamusanda*, a Royal ledear. It is also performed in respect of the King, for happiness and religious purposes.

#### 2.3.7. Description of *tshikona*

Mafela (1996) further explains that the most common traditional song and dance for Vhavenḁa is *tshikona* for men and was performed at weddings and other related ceremonies. The dancers used to carry reedpipes, and their attire were big old coats. Also, this type of dance symbolised war. It is unusual to find performers wearing a tie and a suit. They put on casual clothes. In the Zulu culture, *indlamu* is a dance performed by Zulu men wearing their traditional head gear, ceremonial belts, and carrying shields and spears

(Dlamini, 2017). That is, the men's performances simulate a war situation/atmosphere, as the Zulus do their performances with shields and spears, both items of war. This generally characterises most men's traditional activities. Everywhere they are, men try to defend themselves, they are not cowards, and they show power and masculinity. Thus, the *tshifasi* performance has energetic beats suitable for young people who are active and exhibit power.

### 2.3.8. Contemporary Tshivenda music

Netshivhale (2005) wrote about the influence of Vhavenda tradition on contemporary Tshivenda music. His discussion and analysis of music focused on three categories of Vhavenda music, namely *tshikona*, *tshigombela* and *malende*. That study's informants were the Adziambei Band that performed in the 1950s, Irene Mawela who played her music in the 1970s and Mutendas, whose music came in the 1990s. Netshivhale (2005) found out that the difference amongst these three musical performances were their rhythms. Sometimes musicians borrow contemporary sounds and beats, and combined them with traditional music, thereby bringing out proper musical sound mix. *Tshifasi*, as discussed in this study, also used modern style performances due to the cultural dynamism.

### 2.3.9. The foundation of indigenous music

Netshivhale (2017) states that it is important for Vhavenda to know their roots through indigenous music. The roots determine life and death. For example, if someone cuts the roots of a tree, it will obviously die. The same applies to Vhavenda cultural activities, with some indigenous performances seemingly disappearing (Daswa *et al.*, 2019). If we live without knowing where we come from, we would not understand why we are called Vhavenda. For instance, our forefathers, *mutupo*, nature and the environment would become extinction if we do not engage in indigenous music and its related activities.

Netshivhale (2017) gives an example of naming objects in Tshivenda, to the fact that it was not just provided. Van Warmelo (1989) confirmed that in Vhavenda culture, a person is praised through his/her clan names or totems, and these are from animal names such as

Mudau, which is from (ndau) lion, and Ndou (an elephant). Also, the *tshifasi* and *malende* songs, amongst others, have their origins, as discussed herein. Rivers were named according to the environment. In Lwamondo, for example, there is a river known as Munelele. In most cases, someone would compose music in relation to a particular river or place for culture preservation (Netshivhale, 2017). Menelele was named after its quiet characteristic. Further, the Dzindi River was named after the time when it was full, where people crossed when the water level was at *tsindi* (waist high). *Tsindi* is a Vhavanḁa traditional attire for men. Also, a big river in Venda known as Luvuvhu was named because there were many *mvuvhu*, hipopotamous in it (Netshivhale, 2017). Acquah, *et al* (2015) research about musical games and songs attest to the fact that children showcase their musical abilities by composing songs and games from observing human events, situations and animal behaviour. Madzivhandila's 2019 album, '*Lwamondo La Matshela Na Mbado*', confirms the fact that some of the songs have history messages of a particular area in Venda. Thus, if Vhavanḁa music is revived, it would bring back our fading history.

The importance of Vhavanḁa indigenous music is more than just singing and dancing. This means that the Tshivendanḁa language dynamics could be realised through messages conveyed by the stories told while singing. There is a relationship between language and music (Besson *et al.*, 2007). Neluvhalani (2018) states that the origin of music is realised from the sound produced. When someone dances to *tshifasi*, feet produce sound that urges a person to clap and dance. *Tshifasi* is composed of dance steps that are influenced by claps and the sound from the feet. This musical genre is not only songs, but has a lot of dancing as well. For example, if someone is at a reasonable distance listening to the performers' claps and the

feet's sound, one could tell that they are doing a *tshifasi* dance. The combination of sound, words and movements makes this performance what it is, *tshifasi*.

The word *tshifasi* includes the word 'vas', *u farana*. The word 'vas' is borrowed from Afrikaans. In terms of linguistic and lexicographic, no language is/can be self-sufficient (Mahlangu, 2015). Should investigations be conducted on how the *tshifasi* concept has been utilised in Tshivenda, we could see how it is connected with other languages. In Lwamondo and Nzhelele Communities, they call it *tshinzerere*. This name comes from the word 'tseremuwa'. The word 'tseremuwa' means someone who slips and falls due to wetness or oil. That is, Vhavana children used to play an indigenous game known as *tserere*. That is how our forefathers came up with the name 'tseremuwa'. Even the car can slip and swerve when roads are slippery when it is raining or when there are oil spills on the tarred road. *Tshifasi* music performance is done when children do slippery like actions, simulating the *u tseremuwa* and 'vas', which means to hug each other. Language becomes rich and survives by borrowing vocabulary from other languages (Mahlangu, 2015).

Neluvhalani (2018) added that the word *tshifasi* originated from the word, *fhasi*. In other words, when this dance is performed, children are supposed to kneel act (*u losha*), a respectful way of greeting. He explains that most of the words or names in the Tshivenda language are named after a particular situation or a place where a certain particular incident happened (Netshivhale, 2017). This augers well with the kneeling factor as observed above. That is, during the performance, before a boy chooses a girl to dance with, he first kneels, a sign that he loves her. Vhavana classify their music according to age, gender, occasion,

mood and customs. The following section discusses literature according to the said classification.

## **2.4. TSHIVENḌA MUSIC PERFORMED BY CHILDREN**

### **2.4.1. Africa's musical games and songs**

VhavenḌa rely on indigenous knowledge as a body of cultural and traditional information that safe guards their customs and values in their society. In that way, they comprehensively understand their culture, and their origins as a society. According to Masoga (2006) in Kakoma (2017), people in rural areas depend on indigenous knowledge as a body of information in their communities, and this enhances their awareness and understanding of who they are. The rural areas are villages where the traditional ways of life are strongly maintained to uphold traditional and customary values. For that reason, the African languages are this study's framework meant to accommodate indigenous knowledge holders (Mapaya, 2014).

Rural people are believed to be uneducated due to their unwavering traditional beliefs that involve dancing and musical performances as an integral part of the African culture (Gasperini, 2003). Activities such as hunting, the use of firewood, traditional farming methods as well as folk songs are still practised, in spite of the fact that these are looked down upon in urban areas (Gasperini, 2003). Telephones, electricity and running water are limited to few locations in rural areas (Lumadi, 1998), and these are often the preserve of the society's more affluent. Here, *tshifasi* is studied in detail due to the fact that VhavenḌa

children need to understand their culture, its origins and how their society used to conduct itself years back.

Similarly, Kakoma (2017) researched on the meaning of the Zambian children's indigenous songs. His focus was on the description of early childhood music education for both learners and teachers. His study was done in six different schools around Mangu District. The discussion indicated that mother tongue is crucial in the child's early years of life in order for her/him to develop his/her motoric growth, as well as to preserve the society's cultural heritage. It was noticed that the standard of education was negatively affected by the use of foreign languages in the Zambian communities. Kakoma (2017) indicated the positive results associated with one utilising the home language as this promotes unity, togetherness, and it links one generation to another, it displays the cultural norms and values of that particular society, and it promotes friendship. Most importantly, a new model was formulated as an approach to an African philosophy in education, same as the one employed in this research. Ordinary language provides direction to a meaningful teaching and learning. Through the descriptive analysis of *tshifasi* music and dance, our mother tongue would be promoted to preserve Vhavenda cultural practices.

Children's musical games and songs play a key role here, not only in imparting norms and cultural values, but also in harnessing the wealth of our African culture. Nyota and Mapara (2008) discusses the Shona indigenous children's games and plays. Their study found out that Shona indigenous children's games and play songs are an indigenous way of knowing the cultural treasure, where most of our heritage is embedded in children's indigenous music.

The study sought to analyse the effects of the psychological development and indigenous knowledge system on children. Through indigenous games and play songs for young people, the knowledge significance of our culture is appreciated, inclusive of the heritage inherent in the performance. Nyota and Mapara (2008) discussed various children's games and songs that are part of the Shona culture and heritage. In all this, they did not say anything about *tshifasi*.

Tapera, Gundani, Amusa, Makaza, Kanji & Mugandani (2008) attested to the fact that *nhodo* is an indigenous musical game for girls. As much as they mention some of the indigenous musical games such as *gwini* and *ukugenda*, their study does not attempt to trace the foundation of *tshifasi*. This apparent lack of studies on *tshifasi* necessitated this study. That is, African music games and dances used to flourish in our different African societies. Acquah, Winneba, Sackey-Sam and Annan (2015) investigated the use of indigenous musical games and songs in developing the child's entire wellbeing. From an intervention perspective, their study explored the use of traditional musical games as a strategy for the child's social contact and contract. They illustrated various aspects that benefit children as they play or perform their musical dances or games. Acquah *et al.* (2015) gave an example of the children's musical games called Abetifi. They indicated that these musical games could be categorised into five groupings in terms of its sex roles; games for girls only and those for boys only, and the mixed sex games. That is, naturally, there are times where boys must work together, and those where girls should meet with each other in privacy as they would not be comfortable solving certain issues in the boys' presence. There are also times where male

and females meet. Thus, literature on African music, games and songs that could balance life in almost every aspect is inadequate (Lebaka, 2015).

Acquah *et al.* (2015) further gave an example where boys and girls meet, and they sampled five of these. *Sansakroma* (hawk), is a stone passing game played by both girls and boys. Its playing shape (position of players) is circular, where players are usually in a squatting position. Every player obtains a stone or any other object, which is not too heavy or too light to be thrown.

Following the beat of the song, each player passes the object to the right (Acquah *et al.* 2015). Each player picks up the object passed to him/her by the player on the left and the passing process continues to the beat of the song. Anyone who fails to pick a stone simultaneously with the beat and disrupts the process thereby, she/he is eliminated. This study's interpretation of this game is that children learn to do better when connected with music, and hence their timing skills/abilities are enhanced as they continuously play this game. This means that children learn to go with the beat. This also happens when there is a musical selection/audition. Selectors appreciate someone who follows musical elements rhythmically, melodiously, and so on. Players who are excluded become judges by being conscious of the 'absentees' until all, but two are eliminated (Acquah *et al.*, 2015). These two players become the winners of the game. Apart from this example, other folk songs with the same movement patterns could be used for the same game. The same applies to Vhavenda children's traditional music. A game of this nature is there, but it is mixed with Sotho lyrics.



The following exemplifies the said song,

*Wa šilašila milimili n̄wana wa batho,  
Wa šilašila milimili n̄wana wa batho,  
Oh! darling oa tsamaya, lerato lefedile.  
Darling o kgoa tsamaya, erato lefedile.*

Vhavenḁa boys and girls used to play this indigenous game where they accompanied it with songs, in sync with the song's beat. Here, they held stones in their hands. Amazingly, as the subsequent Chapters reveal, certain Vhavenḁa music, games and songs were sung in Sesotho and Tsonga languages. An explanation for this may be that Xitsonga and Sesotho are neighbouring communities to Venda (Kgatla, 2016). As such, neighbouring cultures such as Tsonga and Sotho have an influence on Vhavenḁa traditional music. This is through aspects such as language, instruments and music performances. Some of the music performances and indigenous musical games are similar to that of Vhavenḁa. For instance, there is *tshigombela* in Tshivendḁa, and Batsonga call it *xinombelo*. Similarly, Vhavenḁa have *tshifasi*, while Batsonga have *xifasi* (Netshivahle, 2017). It is this extended link that necessitated this study to focus on the contribution of Vhavenḁa indigenous children's performance in the context of *tshifasi*. *Tshifasi* is for socialisation purposes as is the case with other traditional musical game performances in the African culture.

Another type of indigenous musical game is *Ehe kwan ni* (which way is this?). Here, children form a circle as they play the game, and sometimes including songs, holding hands tightly so that the leader cannot pass through (Acquah *et al.*, 2015). The leader in this game is

considered a prisoner. The leader, if he/she breaks through, wins the contest. Another prisoner replaces the winner for the game's continuity, particularly the one where the prisoner broke out from. The leader moves around, testing the corners while singing a song to find a weaker corner for a break out. This indicates that music could be used to motivate or as a source of power (Wadende, Morara & Oburu, 2016). The tempo and the intensity of the sound grow faster and louder when, after several rounds, and repeatedly singing the song, the prisoner finds it difficult to escape. This is done with serious chanting and exuberant responses. Even the song's speed has an effect on a human's mind (Acquah *et al.*, 2015).

Providing a clue on the benefits of performing children's games and songs, Nyota and Mapara (2008) pointed out that the knowledge embedded in these play songs is accessed. They found out that children's songs are educative as Shona children learn good behaviour from them. In other words, this is another strategy used by Shona societies to instil good manners in their children.

When children play together, they benefit from each other (Emberly & Davhula, 2014). Through these songs and musical games, this paper argues that Shona traditional children's games and songs create social cohesion. Since children are naturally active, it is good for them to be brought together to motivate each other for the purposes of socialisation (Wadende *et al.*, 2016). When children play together, it helps them share future life experiences. It is important, therefore, for them to learn good life through songs and musical games, as these are the pillars of their proper upbringing.

#### 2.4.2. Distinction of *tshifasi* and other indigenous musical games

Indigenous knowledge is generally acquired through music, and this acquisition could be used to promote children's interaction at school. Nyota (2008) discusses the Shona dances such as *mahumbwe*, a socio-staggering play. It is a standard adolescents' game that has influenced children aged between four and fourteen years. *Mahumbwe* involves young people acting outside their living quarters. What is involved here is that one's life partner provides support, while the mother does the cooking and other household chores (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Mmbi (2017) added that fake children were also there in the forged family to do some of the activities such as playing musical games. Some cultural aspects related to indigenous music and games could be merged in children's teaching and learning. Nyota (2008) stated that *mahumbwe* are more or less the same as *tshifasi*. That is, *mahumbwe* incorporate young boys and girls imitating social roles in an imaginary family. With *tshifasi*, children sing, dance and act as in a drama, while *mahundwane* is just a game played in the absence of music or songs.

*Ndondo* is one of the games that is also played by Shona children as explained in detail by Nyota (2008). Due to lack of time, this musical game is briefly reviewed here. It is an unfamiliar game to Shona people as it was adopted from other cultures. This has similar traces to other African cultures, specifically Vhavenda culture, where some Venda people are unskilled and do not have knowledge of their own cultural music. This often leads to the lack of knowledge about one's cultural values. The *ndondo* indigenous game is prevalent in areas around the Mozambique - Zimbabwe border (Nyota, 2008). Like *tshifasi*, it is also known in other neighbouring communities. That is, this type of dance is also found in

neighbouring communities that speak different languages, and hence it is known by different names. For instance, *xifasi*, *tshinzerere* and *xinombelo* in Tsonga areas.

Nyota (2008) further explains that the game (*ndondo*) is played by young people from five years to late adolescence. It is a series of hitting focal points of shelled maize cobs that are put on either side of the testing social parameters. Also, the players go up against each other and they could play either as a group or as individuals. The *ndondo* in itself is a plate made of broken pieces of squash that are used to make gourds (Nyota, 2008). It has an opening at the centre. A decisively made short stick that is immovably fitted in plugs the hole. The stick goes about as the shaft of the plate and makes it turn, advancing towards the adversary's arranged shelled maize cobs ready for pounding. Scores are realised upon each turn that pounds a cob. A draw is when the two *ndondos* point at each other. The one whose *ndondo* is out spun and pounded down loses the contest (Spyrou, 2011: 160). The interesting part is that these kind of musical games and songs were encouraged to be played in urban schools. Currently, in other areas in the Vhembe and other districts, indigenous cultural activities are done to maintain and sustain our culture.

Malobola-Ndlovu (2018) stresses that indigenous musical games for African children have different value in promoting children's lives. Nyota (2008) explained that the *ndondo* game instils, in the participants, good sportsmanship. First, these values include how to handle success and failure after a game. Through the challenges that the loser throws at the winner, the participants are taught perseverance. For instance, the loser realises that his loss is only for that day, not an everyday occurrence. Nyota (2008) indicated that losses are not

permanent, but a temporary setback that one can overcome through practice and hard work. The life lesson from this game is that setbacks are temporary. One has only to assess where they went wrong in order to correct their mistakes. The author also provides second learning, that is, the game also raises goals and target setting for the participants. Patience is also fostered as the participants practise repeatedly. Patience is further instilled in the participants through the Shona philosophical proverbs such as, *Charovedzera charovedzera, gudo rakakwira mawere kwasviba* (Practice makes perfect, the baboon went up a precipice in the dark) and *kumhanya handi kusvika* (being in a hurry does not ensure safe arrival). It is through indigenous musical games and proverbs that Africans learn to be patient, and hence the need to promote their culture (Malobola-Ndlovu, 2018).

Nyota (2008) mentioned the third benefit from the said game, that is, its usefulness in environmental management matters. It promotes a cleaner environment through the use of recycled waste since the *ndondo* disc is made from broken pieces of gourd that are no longer useful to anybody. The targets are shelled maize cobs. This game at least ensures that unwanted materials are not left all over the place. Overall, the game instils a sense of discipline amongst children. They carry this virtue into adulthood.

There are insufficient indigenous musical games that are documented for boys and girls about African culture. This study elaborates on what Nyota (2008) investigated about the *nhodo* indigenous game. He discussed the indigenous game known as *nhodo*. *Nhodo* is known as a musical game for children where they fork out a small object from a hole and return it at the same time. Normally, most of the African children's musical games are played outside so

that they are not limited in what they want to perform or practise. The indigenous African musical games are played out door (Ntšihlele, 2003). Nowadays, people improvise indigenous games by playing indoor because of technology that has changed our life style. That is, western culture has invaded and diluted African culture.

#### 2.4.3. Musical games and play songs for women/young girls

Nyota (2008) further explained that *nhodo* is played by young girls of five to thirteen years old, while sitted down. This means that some indigenous musical games are specially tailored for women only, so that they can share communal issues as females. Similarly, Jerome (2016) stated that women and girls sometimes gather for the purpose of sharing confidential matters. He indicated that females sometimes encourage each other to share personal identity, skills value and norms in their community. Ramaite-Mafadza (2016) describes one of Vhavenda women traditional ensemble, *tshigombela* performance not only for entertainment purposes, but to raise women's issue as well. Socialising as women is also important amongst African ladies. Girls take turns to drill a hole in the ground (Nyota & Mapara, 2008). It is interesting to find one of the African writers detailing the African musical games. Most of the researchers in this field of study, especially those who write about indigenous African music, do not provide detailed studies of their researched problems. Most of them simple list indigenous musical games. One can argue that as a consequence, numerous African cultural games disappear without trace. This leaves a gap in literature where this study hopes to help fill by providing a full description of *tshifasi*.

#### 2.4.4. Vhavenḁa children music and songs categories

Julia (2013) indicated that *nyimbo dza Tshivendḁa* are divided according to time, event, age, instruments and their role in society. According to Mnisi (2014) and Blacking (1967), Vhavenḁa music is referred to as *nyimbo dza Vhavenḁa*. These consist of the repetition of the basic patterns, with subtle melodic and rhythmic variations that take into account the musicians' skills and the audience's responses. There are diverse types of songs for children in Venda. There are songs for *dza u lela vhana*. Vhavenḁa used tossing lullaby songs when a baby cries or when they wanted a baby to sleep. For example, *Lili ḁwanḁwanaga, lili ḁwananga tshivhasa mulilo, tshivhasa mulilo khotsi vhaa vhuya, vha vhuya na nnyi, vhavhuya na donga, donga u todani* (Mafela, 1996). This song talks about the fire, which is made for the father who is away at that moment. Another one is *gumbu lia nndemela, gumbu lia nndemela, gumbu lia nndemela*. This means that my head is heavy, my head is heavy. When a child says that, he/she gently twists his/her head. It makes him/her concentrate on the movement of his head, thus forgets crying then.

A song to counting goes; *Potilo hangala hangala nda tema, temiso tshinoni tshagala matanda or ndatema, manule gunuwee!* Another one for counting is: *Hamathuthubanga banga mangongori, mangongori awe watshivhona tshidimela tshia nanganela mulenzhe muthede!* (Mafela, 1996). Some of the words here are mixed with other languages. This requires an investigation to determine such songs' origins, and the said language.

Some of these songs require that children exercise their bodies (Lebaka, 2015). It is hard for an older person to do this song-exercise since it requires that someone jumps like a frog. It

becomes a punishment because it is painful to do frog jumps like children. Currently, modern children dance using this form of exercise commonly known as *Mugovhani*. Vhavenḁa used to give wayward children punishment connected with such songs, especially at initiation schools like *vhushani*. The song goes thus; *tshidula tsha mutsingade, vhakoma vha tshiya Dzata, vha fhirisa mudinda phanda mudinda wau fhunga nwando, kudlhwa kudlhwa kumilikiti*. This song talks about a frog, and a Chief led by a headman. The headman used to wipe away the snow in the morning before the Chief came (Mafela, 1996).

#### 2.4.5. The Origins of Tshivendḁa music

A brief history of the culture and essence of Vhavenḁa indigenous music suffices here. It is, therefore, crucial at this juncture to trace the origins and places of the selected compositions in the context of the Vhavenḁa's historical and cultural musical foundations related to *tshifasi*. For understanding one's culture, it is better to know their musical style and taste. Musical styles and tastes are anything but cultural acquisitions. If we analyse the music of a culture or society, we must study the meaning of that music to its people (Blacking, 1967). That is, music is used as a tool to identify who that person is.

A brief outline on who Vhavenḁa speaking people are is necessary in order to best understand their music. Nemudzivhadi (1978) observed that Vhavenḁa background is lost in time, yet Vhavenḁa have a place of origin, where they migrated from through various places to here. The now established Vhavenḁa place of origin is called Matongoni, the lower basin of the Congo around the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa (Nemudzivhadi, 1978).



Vhavenḁa nation is comprised of different tribes that are further sub-divided into clans. These have a culture that distinguishes them from other African groups in South Africa (Blacking, 1967: 15). They are closely linked with Zimbabwe's Shona people, especially the BaKalanga ethnic group in terms of legends, customs, language and their musical traditions. Before the advent of Christianity, Vhavenḁa always strove to preserve their traditional cultural institutions.

Vhavenḁa indigenous music is closely integrated with Vhavenḁa cultural norms and values (Mugovhani, 2012). Music formed the very basis of a Muvenda child's discovery of him/herself and his/her place in society as he/she grew into adulthood. Through music, he/she learnt how to behave in various situations. As early as possible, the child learnt musical games and songs known as *nyimbo dza vhana*. From his/her early childhood days, he/she learnt songs or music for various occasions, mood and customs. Such songs were sung either in daylight or at night. Girls had special songs sung during household chores, and boys sung and played instruments in the forest, while herding cattle and goats. Counting was also practised through songs (Ntšihlele, 2003). Songs were also used to regulate social relations between boys and girls, songs that reinforced proper behaviour. As they grow up, children gradually learnt how to sing more intricate/difficult melodies and complex rhythms, thus gradually graduating into adulthood in the process.

A Muvenda child was born into an environment rich with music. To this effect, one of the most important communal instruments is the musical drum. There was music for different stages in life, in addition to special occasions such as rituals, religious and initiation

ceremonies, recreation and work. As postulated by Merriam (1982), African music is functional in almost all aspects of life. That is, children grow up singing songs that regulate their behaviour and social relations (*Ibid*, 123). I was born and bred in an environment where musical practices such as *tshigombela*, *tshikona* and *malende* were originally conceived and performed at a *davha*. Indigenous African music used to be associated with ceremonies, rituals, socialisation and entertainment, amongst others. But, some of these traditional musical practices have now developed and manifested themselves as new identities. It has been observed that music in Venda is a form of protest against injustices meted out on women, be it by their husbands, employers, co-wives and, mothers or sisters in-law, for people to express their feelings.

## **2.5. THE ORIGINS OF THE *TSHIFASI***

The origins of *tshifasi* are not yet known, but the name is mostly used by Vhavenda, Tsonga and Afrikaners. In Afrikaans, they use the word ‘om vas te maak’, which means to tie up (Deumert, 2004). Tsonga people use ‘*xifase*’ and in Tshivenda they call it *tshinombelo* or *xinombelo*, particularly people who live or play games mixed with Batsonga. Some of their songs have the vibe or accent of the Tsonga language. The original Muvenda call this performance *tshinzerere*. The *tshifasi* concept is derived from “*tshi*” and “*fasi*” to come up with the name *tshifasi*. The researcher concluded that the word “*tshi*” has to do with something since it is used in some of Vhavenda indigenous music such as *tshikona*, *tshigombela*, and *tshikanganaga*. The word *tshifasi* refers to a time when a boy and a girl develop a love relationship with each other. This makes them want to know each other before marriage. The western culture sees it as dating. When playing *tshifasi*, boys and girls practice

hugging as a way of showing love amongst each other. Years back, they used to say ‘*ndi khouya u fasa cherry*’, meaning that a boy has found a girl he loves (Nengovhela, 2018).

What is interesting about *tshifasi* music genre is that someone from a distance can easily identify that children are doing *tshifasi* due to the way they clap. That is, *tshifasi* has its unique forms of clapping (Dima & Makaulula, 2017). Without singing, one can guess that this is *tshifasi*. Its uniqueness from other Vhavenda traditional music is interesting. Vhavenda used to say “*o khirema mukegulu nga nwenda*”, (know or recognise an old Muvenda lady by her traditional clothes). This means that once someone sees a sign of something, she/he immediately concludes about what might happen. Thus, the effect of the beat produced by claps is crucial to determine the *tshifasi* performance. This means that music includes beats (Blacking, 1967). But, it is not every beat that is formal or measured. Chapter Four details the *tshifasi* beats, including some of its musical elements.

The music formation starts from numerous angles, depending on a specific genre. Sebokoboko is situated near Ohrigstad, which houses the Echo Caves. This is what we hear when sound travels in an empty space, particularly in mountain caves (Eriksson & Altermann, 1998). These mysterious caves were discovered in the 1920s by the owner of the farm where they are situated. It happened that after his cattle mysteriously disappeared from the farm, he searched for them. In doing so, he stumbled on those caves. That place is now regarded as a National Monument, a place of tourist attraction. The Tour Guide, Liza Maseko said that the name “Echo” was given to the caves because a certain stalactite formation produces a distinctive echo (Avramović, & Spasić, 2008). Vhavenda traditional music

originates from the natural resources such as reeds pipes, clapping, singing and *ngoma* made from wild animal hides.

#### 2.5.1. *Tshigombela*

In preserving and sustaining the origins of vhavenḁa indigenous music performance for children (Mugovhani and Tshishonge, 2012) focused on the indigenous cultural practices such as *tshigombela* and *tshikona*. They stated that *tshigombela* is a traditional practice for *thungamamu* and *khomba*. Also, an interview with Makhuvha Royal Family 3, (2008) revealed that *tshigombela* is mainly performed for entertainment in musical expeditions. It is a crucial social function to keep girls away from mischief making by engaging them, thereby enhancing the image of the ruler as the patron and the sole custodian of tradition and customs.

No one except the Venda Royal Leadership was allowed to organise *tshigombela*. Traditionally, Vhavenḁa indigenous music served specific functions and purposes. These needed to be observed and preserved by the society.

#### 2.5.2. *Tshikanganga*

Similarly, Vhavenḁa indigenous music has an entertainment value for boys. Mugovhani and Tshishonga (2012) reveal that there is a culturally inclined boys' practice known as *tshikanganga* where they play a piped instrument and do dance performances. Regrettably, there are no details regarding this kind of dance as is the case with *tshifasi* thus far. This implies that in-depth and extensive studies are a necessity in Vhavenḁa traditional music

performances. In order to produce a holistic account of *tshifasi*, this study integrated data collected from oral and other primary sources, and secondary ones.

### 2.5.3. *Tshifasi*

Furthermore, the *tshifasi* music performance conveys valuable information, attitudes, norms and values to young people (Mugovhani & Tshishonga, 2012). Indigenous songs and music for boys and girls are used for social courtships. These help them learn how to improvise skill-wise and develop their decision-making abilities through socialisation, and hence creative thoughts in their daily experiences. Cunha and Lorenzino (2012) argued on the secondary aspect of collective music-making. His study investigated the social, cultural, cognitive, affective and physical by-products that occur when people are in one place doing music. The type of instruments used to collect data in Cunha and Lorenzino's (2012) study was the same as the one used herein.

However, these two studies differ on the population as the indigenous knowledge holders for this study are Vhavanḁa. In light of this, the study observed that children's socialisation in communities need to be promoted, especially through African traditional life, as it is missing in most cases. In this context, *tshifasi*, becomes handy.

### 2.5.4. Music genre for boys

In addition, Vhavanḁa's indigenous music has genres for boys' entertainment. Gottschling in Mugovhani and Tshishonge (2012), revealed a cultural practice for boys known as *tshikanganga* where boys play a pipe as an instrument. This dance is not described in details,

and the same applies to *tshifasi*. This means that there is more to be done in Vhavenda indigenous music. To gather the history of Vhavenda indigenous music, dances and games from different genres, this study collected related secondary and primary materials.

#### 2.5.5. The origins of musical instruments

In the 2008 summer in Germany, a Narchaeologist discovered the remnants of musical prehistory instruments in the caves of Hohle Fels. There were, amongst the burnt animal bones and flint-knapping debris, fragments of three flutes (Conard, Nicholas, Maria Malina, Susanne & Münzel, 2009). One was remarkably complete. This delicate instrument, discovered in twelve pieces, had been fashioned from a vulture's wing bone. It was thirty-four centimetres long (roughly the length of a piccolo), with several finger holes and a notched mouthpiece (like the Japanese *shakuhachi* and other end-blown flutes. The other flutes at the site were less complete, but represented more complex craftsmanship. They were made from pieces of a big tusk that had been split, hollowed out, and then re-joined. Yet, headlines about the Hohle Fels flutes focused on neither their present condition nor their refined construction. Instead, journalists and scholars emphasised the artefacts' age. These flutes were more than thirty-five thousand years old—the earliest musical instruments known then. Incidentally, one of the earliest examples of figurative art, an ivory sculpture called the “Venus of Hohle Fels,” was found less than a metre away from the bone flute (Conard *et al.*, 2009). Together, these artefacts provided the compelling evidence for musical and artistic practices in the Upper Palaeolithic Era. The writing and the wheel, by contrast, would not appear until almost thirty thousand years later, during the early Bronze Age (that is, around the fourth millennium BCE).

The voice is an instrument that was used well before other musical instruments were invented by man, the natural instrument made by God was already there (Emberly and Davhula 2016).

The human being's body is the first instrument, which assists or improves other instruments we have today, and before. This aside, one can suggest that musicality originated from the body alone, and that instrumental play came after singing. This claim is global in writings on music and human evolution. Cross (2007) for example, argues that the use of musical artefacts would have been preceded by the expression of musical capacities by voice and body. This idea has a long history. Music is essentially technical and that vocal and instrumental capacities emerged together.

#### 2.5.6. Indigenous instruments

Indigenous instruments were seen as vehicles that accompanied songs through which Vhavenḁa expressed themselves over issues that affected them. As indicated above, some distinct types of Vhavenḁa indigenous music are *ngoma*, *mirumba*, *zwiombo*, *Mbilamutondo*, *dende*, *tshitiringo*, *lugube*, *tshihwana*, amongst others. Vhavenḁa were creative in making their instruments. Their musical instruments were made from wood, calabashes and plants. The *tshifasi* musical instruments are discussed in Chapter Four.

#### 2.5.7. Vhavenḁa indigenous instruments

Music is essentially a social activity. In music, rhythm is key, and the traditional Venda drums such as the *ngoma*, *thungwa* and *mirumba* are played by women. According to Dima (2017) and Neluvhalani (2018) women are gifted in playing *ngoma* and *mirumba*. In similar

fashion to Bapedi music, a wide variety of reed and bamboo pipes are used, named according to the note they produce, or combined into a set called *mutavha*.

In exploring the social functions of indigenous music and dance such as *tshifasi*, Mugovhani (2009) focused on *mbilamutondo* music and its instrumentation. His article highlights the significance of indigenous practices such as instruments and music in Vhavanḁa culture. Mugovhani (2009) bemoaned the disappearance of indigenous Vhavanḁa instrumental music and the effects this has on our indigenous performances. Vhavanḁa children's music such as *tshifasi*, therefore, comes into the fore here. Nemaḁuvhuni (2017) indicates that instruments such as *murumba* are nowadays used in some of the *tshifasi* performances, albeit as an improvised innovation. This study benefited from Mugovhani's work through the utilisation of his ideas on the preservation of *mbilamutondo* musical instruments. This enabled this study to make informed conclusions on how *tshifasi* performance contributes to

Vhavanḁa children's proper upbringing and heritage promotion. In this way, Mugovhani's work is relevant to this study.

#### 2.5.8. *Nyimbo dza vhana* (children's songs)

Agawu (1997) review a study by Blacking on Vhavanḁa children's songs (*nyimbo dza vhana*) where he produced a documentary on such songs. His study revealed that Vhavanḁa children's music is different from other traditional music. Added to this was the fact that this type of music seems to be ignored when compared with other music genres (Emberly & Davhula, 2016). Emberly and Davhula (2014) discuss the type of indigenous music that could



be used as a protective tool against any form of child abuse. In other words, music could also be used as an agent for child protection. On the other hand, Agawu (1997) explained and analysed the structures of various Vhavenda songs in the context of Vhavenda culture. That is, he focused on songs that were used by boys (*nyimbo dza vhatukana*). Such songs were performed to encourage small boys to fight each other in the spirit of entertainment. This was to entertain and amuse big boys when they were bored.

Even though this seemed like promoting violence, it was their African way of entertainment. According to Nemaguvhuni (2017), *tshifasi* is one of Vhavenda music performances for youth aged between 15 and 18 years. Children below this age range were barred from doing *tshifasi*. In contrast, Madzivhandila (2017) sees *tshifasi* as a cultural performance related to children aged between 11 and 16 years. Given this contradiction, suffices it to say that this study strove to clarify the exact age range for *tshifasi*. A mixed gender communal music performance to socialise boys and girls, an in-depth study of *tshifasi* is overdue. For this reason, from generation to generation, *tshifasi* performance has exclusively been for Vhavenda children who have reached puberty, where they were being prepared for motherhood and fatherhood roles.

## **2.6. THE FUNCTIONS OF INDIGENOUS MUSIC AND MUSICAL GAMES**

Cultural music plays a huge role in African societies. Traditional music and songs are used to teach moral values, teach African people how to socialise, for celebration purposes and other occasions. Every performance often has a time to be performed. Akuno (2019) said that in Kenya, as in other places in Africa, music researchers have a concern about the

disproportionate representation of indigenous music within the education curriculum. Scholars have lamented this imbalance, indicating that this overlooked children's proper upbringing, traditionally and otherwise.

#### 2.6.1. Music and the school curriculum

Policy makers have a duty to change the school curriculum to meet the present musical needs. Akuno (2019) indicated that the Kenyan policy makers heed the call for revising the national music syllabus. In 2002, the changes were made with the help from the music educators. These were considered since they were skilled on the subject. It is not everyone who can teach music. After wards, music teachers were engaged to teach the subject. Thereafter, a huge difference was observed, even by the government. They added the value on the subject and the gap was filled as indigenous music was preserved (Akuno, 2019). Similarly, *tshifasi* can be considered as one of the learners' subjects to be included in the curriculum through the policy makers' influence. This can add content in the Venda culture.

The curriculum changes in South Africa focused much on other subjects at both primary and secondary schools. Lizer (2013) researched on the impact of the curriculum changes in the teaching and learning of sciences. His findings indicated that inadequate resources affect curriculum implementation, especially in rural areas. The lack of teaching materials affect teaching as wrong information is given to learners. Not much focus on indigenous music was given during the curriculum changes in South Africa.

### 2.6.2. Music as a conversation tool

Indigenous music and cultural performances are good tools for traditional conversations. Emberly and Davhula (2016) conducted a study based on the theme; ‘my music, my voice, musicality, culture and childhood in Vhavenḁa communities’. They examined how Vhavenḁa children and young people utilised their music to connect with their traditional realities in the context of modern change. According to Vhavenḁa culture, it is a taboo for a child to insult, argue or complain against elderly people, particularly his/her parents. In order to solve such problems, Emberly and Davhula (2016) showed some of the indigenous music and songs that are currently performed by children to communicate or to express their emotions. Their study provides an example of *malende* and *tshifasi* as performed by children through dance.

Generally, to know the value of indigenous knowledge, it is important to analyse Vhavenḁa’s musical performances and music games. Ntšihlele (2003) analysed the chanted rhythms and musical games against the backdrop of specific cultural dimensions for children, depending on the function of the games played. Her concern was to reveal how music and children’s games could be simultaneously used to reflect their relevance to Vhavenḁa culture. For instance, it was interesting to discover the changes or adaptations that children make with adult songs, especially songs that focus on contemporary issues such as child abuse, HIV/AIDS-related infections (such as STIs) and crime, amongst others. This study is interested in what Ntšihlele analysed. Thus, some of the indigenous musical games and dances as played during childhood in Venda need to be extensively explored so that the new generation could use them to promote our culture.

### 2.6.3. Music changes from time to time

Ramugondo (2009) wrote about the intergenerational shifts and continuities in children's plays in a rural Venda family in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. He discussed various Vhavanḁa children's indigenous music and games, as well as those for the youth and elderly people. He investigated the everyday changes that affect their cultural lives. Compared with other researchers who studied Vhavanḁa indigenous music and songs played by children, Ramugondo (2009) managed to show how these indigenous musical games are used during performances, the types of instruments used, and how people dance and sing. He also indicated the musical games that were played, and specified why these games are essential in our society. Interestingly, the study also included the major Vhavanḁa cultural practices for males and females such as *tshinzerere*, *tshifasi*, *tshikona*, *tshidimele*, *tserere*, *ngano*, *mufuvha*, *misevetho*, *mahundwane*, *malende*, *domba*, amongst others. The main findings of that thesis were that the musical games across these three generations changed from time to time because of technological advancement. In addition, the media appear to be the most influential agent of change here. However, most of Vhavanḁa indigenous games and play songs listed on Ramugondo's research were done through the *tshifasi* music genre.

### 2.6.4. The significance of *tshifasi*

This study focuses on the descriptive analysis of *tshifasi*, an essential Vhavanḁa indigenous performance. Not much is known about *tshifasi* as most literature on Vhavanḁa indigenous music provide a generalised view of this genre. For example, studies scratch the surface on how children learn their cultural morals and values such as respect, through their *tshifasi*

performance (Mamphodo, 2017). Through the description of *tshifasi*, children could be assisted to preserve the indigenous knowledge that could be transferred from one generation to another.

#### 2.6.5. The psychological impact of music

Generally, music is used in different contexts, such as to influence and shape a person's behaviour, for example. It prepares someone's mind, it has a psychologically effect (Habibzadeh, 2015). For example, before a pastor starts his sermon in church, he starts by requesting people to sing a hymn to motivate everyone's spiritual being. The reason for that is to prepare the congregation for the word of God, to be psychologically ready to listen to the message. The same applies to *tshifasi*, where children are prepared to acquire indigenous knowledge so that they can learn about their cultural values. Music listening is one of the common human behaviours. Accordingly, music has inspired human behaviour and the way people dress (Habibzadeh, 2015). Not much has been written about *tshifasi* children's music and how it affect their behaviour as they grow up. Music bind people together as they perform in groups. Vhavenḁa music is used to bind them together as they express culturally themselves.

#### 2.6.6. Body parts train a child to count

Music has an effect in the development of a child. As stated by Chau and Riforgiate (2010), musical training can also assist in training children how to read as they grow. Some songs were used by Vhavenḁa in this context, for example,

*Vhana vhatuku vha gudiswa u amba mirado ya muvhili from head to toe* (Ngwana, 58 in Musetha and Musehane, 2012).

1. *Potilo* (first finger on the right hand)
2. *Hangala* (second finger) 3. *Hangala* (third finger)
4. *Nda tema* (fourth finger)
5. *Temiso* (firth finger which is the thumb)
6. *Tshinoni* (sixth which is the thumb on the left-hand side)
7. *Tsha gala* (seventh finger)
8. *Matanda* (eight)
9. *Mandule* (ninth finger)
10. *Guni wee!* (tenth finger which is the last on the other hand).

If further research is done, it would be discovered that the toes were also counted, and each has a name. Unfortunately, most of the information on Vhavaṇḁa are lost on the way. Other information of *tshifasi* origin is not found as it was not written down. Musetha and Musehane (2012) stated that the song was sung for a Muvenda child who was learning how to count so that she/he knows the parts of his/her body. A child was able to learn by counting from one up to ten using his/her body parts. That is, every part of a human being has a name and function. Also, children were taught to appreciate their bodies. Abdouni, Djaghloul, Thiulin, Vargiolu, Pailler-Mattei & Zahouani (2017) commented that people lack knowledge about the functions of the human finger. Their study highlights the functions of the human finger, where they indicated that the finger plays an important role in the tactile

perception, but little is known about it. Fingers in the *tshifasi* practice are used as to make beats that accompany songs.

In Vhavanḁa culture, in years back, girls were not allowed to become educated. They were taught and instructed to believe in men for everything (Netshivhale, 2017). Their duty was to stay at home and attend to household chores such as *u shula, u bika, u lelala zwitshetshe, u kuvha, inter alia*. The above song teaches children how to count. Thus, education is the key for Muvenda to succeed. Whatever stage a child manages to reach, it is accompanied by music such as in the initiation schools; *vhusha, musevhethe*, and *domba* for females. Musetha and Musehane (2012) pointed out that children who are older were the ones who taught the little ones the songs above.

Furthermore, Vhavanḁa had their own ways of teaching. It is true that it was an informal education, but education was applied through stories told about their historical life. That is why this researcher used the qualitative approach to gather data about the *tshifasi* performances. *Tshifasi* music performance was practised by children without elderly people being involved. The above song is complemented by this one below.

*Tshinwanwane,  
Na makhulu watsho  
Ha mahalahase  
Na musumbavhaloi  
Tshinungunungu  
Na madi lutshele  
Pakata nkawe*

*Mahwala danda*  
*Gulukumila*  
*Tshitefu nembe*  
*Mala- zwa- nona*  
*Mafembedzela*  
*Malunguluse*  
*Mathetshelesa*  
*Tshitumba tshambudzi*  
*Danga la kholomo*  
*Dza unga dzi tshiya lwanzhe*

#### 2.6.7. Music gives hope

Music plays a big part in the life of a child, it gives hope. As indicated by the following song, a child was sung for using by the *tshixele*, babysitter (Musetha & Musehane, 2012).

Other songs that were sung for babies are,

*Lili n̄wana n̄wananga, lili n̄wana n̄wananga,*  
Do not cry my grandchild, do not cry my grandchild,  
*Tshivhasa mulilo.*  
Lili set the fire.  
*Lili tshivhasa mulilo, lili tshivhasa muloli;*  
Lili set the fire, lili set the fire,  
*Khotsi vha a vhuya.*  
*The father is coming back.*  
*Lili khotsi vha a vhuya, lili khotsi vha a vhuya,*  
The father is coming back; lili the father is  
coming back,  
*Vha vhuya na nnyi?*  
He is coming back with whom?



*Lili vha vhuya na nnyi, lili vha vhuya na nnyi?*

He is coming back with whom? He is coming back with whom?

*Vha vhuya na donga.*

He is coming back with donga.

*Lili vha vhuya na donga, lili vha vhuya na donga,*

Lili he is coming back with donga, lili he is coming back with donga,

*Donga, u todani?*

Donga, what do you want?

*Lili donga u todani, lili donga u todani?*

Lili donga what do you want? Lili donga, what do you want?

*Toda kusikana.*

He wants *kusikana*.

*Lili toda kusikana, lili toda kusikana,*

Lili he want *kusikana*, lili he want *kusikana*,

*Ku sali mavhele.*

Who does not eat *mielies*.

*Lili ku sa li mavhele, lili ku sa li mavhele,*

Lili who does not eat *mielies*, lili who don't eat *mielies*,

*Kula ndohodzhane.*

Who eat *nuts*.

*Lili kula ndohonzhane, lili kula ndohonzhane,*

Lili who eat *nuts*, lili who eat *nuts*,

*Ndovhodzha mutanga.*

Wet *nuts*.

*Lili ndovhodzha mutanga, lili ndovhodzha mutanga,*

Lili *ndovhodzha mutanga*, lili *ndovhodzha mutanga*,

*Seli ahu welwi.*

Do not cross over.

*Lili seli ahu welwi, lili seli ahu welwi,*

Lili do not cross over, lili do not cross over,

*Huna mupfa mutunu, (dumbufulu).*

There is a sharp pointed thorn.

*Lili huna mupfa mutunu, lili huna mupfa mutunu,*

Lili a sharp pointed thorn, lili a sharp pointed thorn,

*Vhasidzana vhubva.*

Girls went out.

*Lili vhasidzana vhubva, lili vhasidzana vhubva,*

Lili girls went out, lili girls went out,

*Vho ya khunini.*

They went to collect wood,

*Lili vho ya khunini, lili vho ya khunini,*

Lili they went to collect wood, they went to collect wood,

Thavhani ya Thengwe.

To the mountain of Thengwe.

Lili Thavhani ya Thengwe (Ngwana, 1958) in (Musetha & Musehane, 2012).

The song is meant to give hope to the child that her father is coming. This is one of the songs that are not sung and performed by young Vhavanḁa children. There are a number of versions for it in terms of the text and the rhythmic arrangements. For instance, some sing ‘*huna dumbufulu*’, and in line 19, it says ‘*huna mupfamutunu*’. In general, the song gives hope to the child that his father will be back with another mother, (*donga*). It seems that the father is about to marry a second wife. However, Vhavanḁa have their unique way of presenting matters using the figure of speech.

#### 2.6.8. Music gives comfort

The indigenous Vhavenda music was also used to comfort those in distress, as exemplified by the following song.

*Tonto!*

*Vhomme vhoya ngafhi?*

*(Where are your mothers)*

*Tonto!*

*Vhoyo fhonda mafula;*

*(They have gone to prepare marula) Tonto!*

*Mafula ndia mini;*

*(What are marala for) Tonto!*

*Mafula ndia ula; (marula*

*are for eating) Tonto!*

*Dzingidzingi mafula;*

*(shake-shake the marula)*

*Tonto! (Ngwana, 1958 in Musetha, (2012).*

The power of music has effects on the people's emotions. Julia (2013) said that this type of a song is sung by *vhomakhulu* (grandmothers) and *zwixele* (baby sitters) so that babies could stop crying. This was done when the baby's mother was away from home. Music makes a child forget her mother for a while. Sometimes if the mother is away, the child gets bored. Through music, therefore, she forgets and falls asleep. Even though there are normal hours for a baby to sleep, she/he would sometimes cry for her/his mother's comfort. The above songs indicate that Vhavenda have music that comfort crying babies. This is another way for children to learn how to be patient. Vhavenda indigenous music such as *tshifasi* is educative

and informative, but the challenge is that it needs to be documented for the next generation (Knoesen, 1984).

#### 2.6.9. Music gives hope

Music gives hope to the hopeless. *Nwana o takuliwa uiswa ngei na ngei, ho lindelwa mme awe* (Musetha and Musehane, 2012) *uri a vhe na fulufhelo, u mbodi edela*. A child is carried on the hands moving him/her side to side for him/her to keep quite and sleep). That is, Vhavenda indigenous music is loaded with history, and it is a root full of richness. Vhavenda depended on cultural rules, as indicated through singing the said songs (Julia, 2013). Through *tshifasi* music performance, children learnt how issues were handled.

#### 2.6.10. Music break walls

Le Roux (2009) researched on the *Ngomalungundu*, an African Ark of the Covenant. In her study, she discussed about the origins of *Vhalemba Ngomalungundu's* big drum. She managed to indicate a link between *Ngomalungundu* and the Ark of Israelites. Vhavenda beliefs were the same as the Israelites' Ark since the drum was used as a war drum. Her explanation about *Ngomalungundu* is that the enemies became powerless when they heard the sound of the drum, they became immobile. The enemy had an aim to overcome the Israelites, but it became weak (Le Roux, 2009). Some of the battles in the Bible were won because the Israelites involved music. For instance, the walls of Jericho fell because people used music as a weapon. Thus, music is power that can move mountains. Joshua 6:20 in Billauer (2013) says; "When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight

in, and they took the city”. In this case, music was used to break the walls. Similarly, Ngomalungundu caused animals to sleep by its sound (Le Roux, 2009). Even though its main function was for the war, the fact is that the beat as used in music means a lot.

#### 2.6.11. Counting through play songs

*Vhana vha guda uvhala ubva kha nthihi u swika kha fumi*, (children learn counting from one to ten). Hopefully, as Vhavaṅḁ children grow up, they can learn to count bigger numbers. Vhavaṅḁ children used to count numbers by cutting small sticks (Mamatsharaga, 2017). For instance,

*Nthihi* = one  
*Mbila* = two  
*Raru* = three  
*Ina* = four  
*Thanu* = five  
*Rathi* = six  
*Sumbe* = seven  
*Malo* = eight  
*Tahe* = nine  
*Fumi* = ten.

Currently, children no longer use the Tshivenda counting words, they promote foreign languages. ‘Child play is serious, that is, children's games, verbal art and their survival in Africa’ (Finnagan, 2014). One can see that it is hard for youth and children when they read the Bible in church. It is hard for them to read fluently in their mother language. Through this counting, Vhavaṅḁ sung indigenous songs as the way to learn numbers. Children learnt

counting from one up to ten using their mother language, which explained the meanings of the words in Tshivenda. In this study, through its theoretical frame work, the language used in *tshifasi* was clearly defined.

#### 2.6.12. Motivation through songs

The function of older siblings in Vhavana family was to teach and look after babies, and to sing songs for the upbringing of the latter. *Nwana u tevhedza zwino khou ambiwa* (Musetha and Musehane, 2016). They indicated that a child who involves him/herself in music learns faster than those who do not. Music and songs for the little ones make them learn how to walk and talk fast. They also spoke about *tshifasi* for boys' and girls' entertainment.

#### 2.6.13. Relevant music for the community

Rambau (2015) urges that composers should be careful when composing songs and choreography. His research singles out one of the composers, Mackson Mavundla, a composer with the Caravan Traditional Dance, a Tsonga traditional dance group. It is crucial to compose relevant and meaningful music for the community as this could either positively or negatively affect the listeners. He further indicated that composers should choose proper words related to the current situation. In South Africa, for example, there is a fundamental problem of unemployment, and this has affected young people (De Lannoy, Graham, Patel and Leibbrandt, 2018). This problem also affects those who are educated since there are people with degrees, but they are not employed. The high crime rate is also caused by the high rate of unemployment in the country. It is, therefore, the artists' duty to compose songs

related to job creation. *Tshifasi* is relevant to the current situation as the problem of bringing back traditional values is vital for the current generation.

#### 2.6.14. Music motivates and unites

Rambau (2015) discussion further touches the function of Vatsonga traditional music in society, which was seen by missionaries as the performance that was not appropriate for the community. According to Rambau (2015), music is power, which motivates people to gain skills. Generally, music involves people in a powerfully shared understanding of their cultural experiences, and thereby making them aware of themselves and their responsibilities towards each other. Also, the community becomes innovative and productive. Music has the power to motivate the community, and unite people in that community to achieve their goals. It strengthens their cohesion. His thinking is that music brings people together. In this study, music is also understood as a way of bringing boys and girls together.

### 2.7. VHAVENḐA MUSIC FOR WOMEN

This study identifies and describes *tshifasi*. *Tshifasi* defines Vhavendḁ cultural music, amongst other musical games. Vhavendḁ music also reflect our history, culture, tradition and language. Women also have their own special music and songs related to their issues. In other words, African women have indigenous music and songs with special messages meant for them only (Malcolm X, no date). Moreover, recorded in 1964, the *Folk Music of Ghana* include music from West African tribes and religious groups such as the Akonodey and the Tigari. The polyrhythmic drumming and chanting feature in indigenous songs such as

"Kumi'na Gyaemi", which means, kill me or leave me. This is an oath-swearing initiation song for the Tigari religious cult of Ghana. The "Adaawe" song also features women gathered to sing about the day's gossip. Also, Vhavanḁa indigenous ways allow women to sing songs related to their own issues (Ramaite -Mafadza, 2016).

#### 2.7.1. Description of Tsonga music performance

Rambau (2015) wrote about *xibelani*, a traditional dance that is performed by Vatsonga women. *Xifasi*, meanwhile, is a dance for both girls and boys in Xitsonga. This is done mainly in the evenings (Ramabu, 2015). The boys form a chain like the train's coaches and move in a circular formation. *Muchongolo*, a tumbling/plummeting dance is performed by Tsonga-speaking males mainly from the Bushbuckridge area. He added that *Kuthawuza* is a dance done by women, where they lift the top back part of their traditional attire called *xibelana*. *Xincayincayi* is a strenuous traditional Tsonga dance performed by men at any Tsonga social or cultural event (Khosa, 2017).

#### 2.7.2. Solving problems through music

Vhavanḁa used to say, '*thavhanyedza ila mbudzi, tsalale ila kholomo*' (the one who wakes up early eat a cow, the one who comes late eats a goat). This means, first come, first served. *Mafhuwe* in Vhavanḁa tradition is one of the solo music, sung by Vhavanḁa when they need to solve some of the problems in their families (Sengani, 2011). A Muvenda woman wakes up very early in the morning, grinds maize (*u tohola mavhele*) alone where she sings the song, especially when she experiences some difficulties with her in-laws. She does this to



send a complaint to members of the family (Mamatsharaga, 2017). The reason for waking up early is that early mornings are quite, thus her voice is heard by everyone.

During the day, it does not work since there are many people moving around, doing different errands. During the day there is a lot of noise. That shows that Vhavanḁa are very intelligent. The voice can also reach to far off places as people would still be asleep. The same in the evenings. If someone needs to send a serious message to the community, evenings are the right time to shout out. For instance, in the evening, a servant is sent by the civic organisation to tell people that there is a meeting at the Chief's kraal or to announce the funeral in that area. This study would not elaborate on *Mafhuwe* since the focus is on *tshifasi*. As such, *tshifasi* is originally performed in the evenings, and this is discussed in Chapter Four.

### 2.7.3. Raising concerns through songs

Ramaite-Mafadza (2016) wrote about the indigenous protest lyrics in women's musical performances in Vhembe. In her study, she indicated that music research is very limited in African countries, particularly in South Africa. For instance, the *tshifasi* practice has vanished as far as the socialisation of boys and girls is concerned. In addition, Ramaite-Mafadza's work provides a list of Vhavanḁa indigenous music. Most of these music and dance genres such as *tshikona*, *tshigombela* and *malende*, however, are not explained in detail.

Khosa (2017) pointed out that the function of indigenous music and dance is that women are sometimes used by society in action songs. This also occurs in churches where women are requested to pray for life challenges in the congregation. As the Bible says, 'Let the weak

say we are strong, let the poor say I am rich, and let the blind say I can see'. Women are known as weak vessels. But, they are numerically superior to men, especially in church meetings. Thus, their prayers should be easily heard. The Bible also shows that God raises those who are overlooked. For example, women, according to the Bible, were not counted as responsible people like men. But, God lifted those who were humble. In this study, *tshifasi* songs are utilised to communicate with children.

Manabe (2010) explores and describes the lived experiences of initiated women in Mashau, Mashawana and Shayandima. She found out that *vhusha, domba and tshikanda* are practised in order to impart knowledge so as to help young people cope with childbearing and family responsibilities as both mothers and wives. This reflects some of the processes Vhavanḁa follow when initiating young women into adulthood. She also explored various Vhavanḁa initiation schools where music is involved. This shows that when it comes to *u laya*, the Venda people do according to sex, that is, the initiations are conducted separately. In her study, she indicated that in such initiation schools, for example, boys are taught how to take care of their wives and properties, to know their identities and how their bodies function. Vhavanḁa respect a man as the head of the family. These are done with indigenous music, and when children are young. Also, Manabe's (2010) revealed that initiations, to a certain extent, help reduce the rate of divorce, teenage pregnancies, sexual abuse and sexual transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS. In contrast, it is doubtful that today's children are like the previous generation when one considers the high rate of teenage pregnancies and other social ills as mentioned above.

## **2.8. THE SIGNIFICANT OF PARTICIPANTION OF *TSHIFASI***

It takes a world to raise a child, so goes the saying. This means that it is the community's responsibility to see to it that children are properly brought up. According to Tshihwanambi (2007), a mother is a caretaker in the family because she plays a key role in the decision-making processes and, the preparation and serving of food. She guides and looks after almost everyone in the family. The first exposure to music for the African child starts from birth. That is, mothers usually sing to the child, to either get him to sleep or to stop him from crying (Tshihwanambi, 2007). The singing usually goes with gentle body movements. In most cases, the mother would carry the child on her back, while she engages in her daily household activities. As was the practice then, she would sing and make dance movements while concentrating on her chores.

### **2.8.1. Mothers**

Mothers can have a great impact on the success of indigenous music performances if they involve themselves. The fact that musical activities have to progress and be successful need continuous practice, and here mothers play a meaningful role. Nzewi (2010) researched on the use of performance composition in African music instruments for effective music education at school, and she thus confirms the role of a mother here. Nzewi (2010) indicated that a child and mother bond from the time she/he is conceived. When a baby cries, a mother usually sings a song for it to sleep. The purpose of singing is for her/him to sleep. This confirms that a mother has a natural gift, thus she can play a pivotal role in promoting the

Vhavenḁa indigenous music for children. This would equip the child for future growth. Also, this shows us that there is a natural bond between a child and a mother since from conception. The person who feels the pain first when a child is hurt is the mother. Generally, a mother is a good agent that could also provide and encourage indigenous music easily since *tshifasi* is part of Vhavenḁa cultural norms and values.

Nketia's (1998) observations were confirmed by Tshihwanambi (2007) who stated that a mother plays an important role in her baby's life. A child is trained to be aware of the rhythms while he/she is still in the mother's womb. The time a mother sings or taps when she is pregnant, a baby in her body listens and imitates those movements (Nketia1998). In that way, a child is gradually introduced to music. In fact, a child is exposed to music before it is born. Generally, it is very important for a mother to be aware of every action she does as her child would adopt her life style. Music is a language that is used in different stages of a child's life, from childhood to adulthood. It becomes a challenge to pregnant mothers who never introduced their babies to the world of music during pregnancy when they try to do so after giving birth. Nketia (1998) further indicated that when a child cries, a mother puts it at her back and starts singing and dancing around for it to stop that. In this study, children continued with the *tshifasi* music, which they were introduced to while they were still in their mothers' wombs. In other words, boys and girls do not learn anything new here. The mother is regarded as the prominent figure in the child's learning of musical techniques.

The parents may not have much knowledge about the performance itself when children do arts, but they can play a role in the form of suggestions (Mayberry & Knowles, 1989). Parents

with knowledge and those without can equally help their children through the application of their experience. For children to stay motivated and encouraged, they need positive parental suggestions. The best from our children could be achieved when they pay attention to parental suggestions. Furthermore, the unity between father and mother protects a child from being exposed to immoral ways. Mayberry and Knowles (1989) reflected on the ideological and pedagogical orientations of home schooling. Their study focused on parents who teach their children at home. They concluded that what the parents could do is to stay united for their children's protection, thus instil sacred beliefs and principles. Cultural music such as *tshifasi* performance could, therefore, be maintained if both parents become agents by preserving unity.

#### 2.8.2. Family members

The role of the family in the transmission process is that of being a social institution, which challenges modern mass schooling in terms of its significance for an understanding of history (Lebaka, 2015). There is a need for African traditional instruments, music and games in preserving our cultural identity. Lebaka (2015) wrote about the transmission processes in the Basotho indigenous music. His study covered different Basotho indigenous music with indigenous games for children, men, and women. He also described the indigenous instruments used. Lebaka (2015) clarified and traced the origins of Basotho indigenous music that involve every member of the family. He concluded that the musical history of children's songs in Sekhukhune District is less known in terms of academic texts and written historical accounts. This gave this study the impetus to research on *tshifasi* as it is an African musical performance, which has received less attention from scholars thus far.

Lebaka (2015) did not only discuss children's music and songs, but also women music as already discussed herein. It seems as if there is more in Sepedi music as the author indicated in women's musical performances. Some of the indigenous Sepedi music, which Lebaka (2015) discussed are *makgakgasa*, *lebowa*, *mantshegele* and *dipepetlwane*. *Dipepetlwane* is performed by both Pedi girls and women, without boys. Sometimes women need an opportunity to collaborate with girls to culturally shape them. This indicates that women in the family play a significant role in nurturing children. *Mantshegele* music for women is undoubtedly one of the oldest Pedi musical art that utilises both the voice and body as natural instruments and means of self – expression. That is, the voice and body are considered as instruments that should be maintained. *Mantshegele* is a music ensemble where most songs as well as their performances reflect the Pedi history and its associated culture. The last music performance described is *Lebowa*, and this genre has the ethnic meaning that reflects historical events (Lebaka, 2015). Generally, the indigenous Sepedi music is handed down orally from generation to generation.

One interesting aspect about Lebaka's (2015) discussion is that the indigenous Pedi music is not performed for business or competition, but for collaboration and cooperation. Moreover, it is about shaping the culture of the Pedi people, motivating music practitioners, leaders and participants to fulfil the ensemble's goals. At present, our music is performed for money, and we forget why knowledge should be shared in our communities. Lebaka (2015) indicated that children in Sekhukhune District learn about their culture through music, musical games, dances, storytelling and lyrics. However, he failed to address *tshifasi* and its relevance to the Vhavanḁa, and how it can be used to promote our heritage.

Children need motivation by family members for the substance of the performativity tradition of Vhavenda. Blacking (1962) noticed that over weeks of training in the *tshigombela* dance, children who got appreciated performed better. In his interpretation, children who were pampered and praised improved greatly, while those who showed talent, but did not receive much praise, made little or no progress. That is, it is important for children to have agents, particularly family members who can identify skills and cheer them up during performances for them to improve their dances. This shows that talent could be identified and encouraged in the *tshifasi* music performance, thus help children develop an interest in their culture.

Dornbusch, et al (1985). maintains that being a parent does not mean one's biological father or mother, but an adoptive parenting can keep that status or position as well. A bond between a child and an adopter as an agent means a lot in looking after that child. In this way, a parent or an adopter may meet the needs of a child. For example, when there are special needs for that particular child, the parent(s) becomes the solution here. Most mothers, in such cases, are the ones who help the child adapt to maturity so that she/he has a better future. The same could be said of the cultural music adopters that remain the relevant agency, especially *tshifasi* music performance in socialising boys and girls.

### 2.8.3. *Vhakegulu*

*Vhakegulu* also serve as agents because they have cultural experience that can be transferred to the young ones. This could be through proverbs and knowledge transfer in solving family challenges, for example (Stayt, 1931). Historians and Archaeologists could also be of assistance here as they are knowledgeable about our past and its inherent culture and

tradition. When a person is ill, for example, they know what medicine to use to cure him/her. Historians could secure important information about Vhavanḁa music, dances and songs such as *tshikona*, *malende*, *tshigombela*, *tshifasi*, amongst others. Their knowledge about every aspect of life is useful for the coming generation (Stayt, 1931). The *domba* is important to secure good rains for the following season. They know *milayo ya* Vhavanḁa as applied to children from their early age. In Tshivendanḁ, they are known as *gugu* as they also contribute to caring for the baby. In the community, there are special roles for *gugu*, which cannot be done by anyone. That is, the more time they spend with their grandmothers, children gain more in indigenous knowledge.

The role of *makhulu* or *gugu* in the sustenance of Vhavanḁa tradition and culture is very important, and thus should never be underrated. Mukwevho (2018: 8) report in one of the Limpopo's local newspapers how one of the grandchildren described her grandmother who had passed away. She describes her granny *vho-makhadzi*, Tshililo Elisah Nthabalala, a granny who raised her six children, four of whom passed away, 27 grandchildren, 47 great-grandchildren and many great-great-grandchildren. She further describes her granny as a the skilful moulder of indigenous clay pots, bowls and flowerpots. Also, the granny was a brewer of traditional beer to raise money for her children for survival. In other words, *vho makhulu* are valuable members of the community. A lot of issues can be done by elderly people as they also bring unity, *u pfumedzanya* in the community. An amazing leadership in society could be sustained by *makhulu*. The benefits to this could be realised through respecting the traditions and culture of Vhavanḁa and its heritage such as indigenous music performances. This should be passed from generation to another in order to sustain our heritage as a tribe.



Vhavenḁa children, over the years, have been competent musicians who learn music by imitating their parents' performances. Adults play a major role as they correct children's mistakes (Blacking, 1962). It was said that *o tou mamela* (the child sucked ability from the breast). This indicates that Vhavenḁa attach so much importance to heredity in social skills. In the western history of music, most of the famous musicians' parents were talented, for example. During the performance, children who show promise as dancers or singers are singled out for praise, particularly by members of their own families. Vhavenḁa used to clap and ululate to encourage their dancers. Masakona (2018) indicated that those people who were called *who malugwane* in *tshigombela* and *tshikona* were given big meat after *bepha* as a sign of appreciation. In that situation, other people around them would become envious. The parents were even scared that their children would be bewitched because if someone was prosperous in society, other people did not appreciate that. This was confirmed by Dima (2017) who explained about the relevance of clapping and ululating in traditional music to the performer. This shows that where ability is identified and encouraged amongst the Vhavenḁa, it develops, while where it is neglected, it does not flourish. *Tshifasi* cultural dance trains children to have good morals and cultural values. Here, their talents are identified at an early age.

Kekana (2016) researched about the indigenous songs and musical games in the classroom to address the issues that relate to the proper upbringing of children by using the following strategies; facial expressions, gestures, stories, tales and songs for communication. He used one of the indigenous musical games known as *naletsana*. This is a Tswana folk tale, which allows a performer to use facial expressions and gestures. One of the idioms goes thus,

‘Action speaks louder than words’. Brace *et al.* (2006) reported that providing children with guided exercises was much more effective than words. It is advisable to always have a good approach before addressing the matter. When a person is hurt, one must first check the facial expression. When the injured looks happy, it shows the person’s feelings. This is relevant to this study since *tshifasi* is an indigenous dance where boys and girls play-act during their performance. This study described how boys and girls speak in action and what their performance means. Children learn better through actions.

The *tshifasi* music performance conveys valuable information, attitudes, norms and values to young people (Mugovhani & Tshishonga, 2012). Indigenous songs and music for boys and girls are used as a social relationship catalyst. This helps them develop and improve their decision-making abilities through socialisation, and hence creative thoughts in their daily experiences. Cunha and Lorenzino’s (2012) study investigated the social, cultural, cognitive, affective and the physical by-products that occur when people are collectively practising music. Of importance to this study is Cunha and Lorenzino’s data collection instruments. These are similar to the ones used in this study. However, these two studies differ on the target population for data collection. In light of this, the study observed that children’s socialisation in communities needs to be promoted, especially in African traditional culture, as it is missing in most cases. In this context, *tshifasi*, it is hoped, will play a central role. The issue is, in some of Vhavanḁa communities, there is a problem of the disappearance of our cultural values, norms and traditions that are linked to our musical practices. That is, young people are no longer guided by their parents as was the case in the past. Children who spend time in crèche, for example, communicate in English, a foreign language in Africa (Mapaya,

2004:177). This contributes a lot to the disappearance of our cultural values and norms. Through the descriptive analysis of *tshifasi*, it is envisaged that Vhavenḁa children would be motivated to follow our cultural ways of socialisation to become proud performers of our indigenous music.

#### 2.8.4. Children

Children function as agents in the process of social learning. They acquire knowledge and develop new skills when they play together. Taber (2011) reviewed how learners participate in problem solving and critical thinking when they are together. That is, through the socialisation processes, children come to appreciate the value of their culture. This brings us to the point that if *tshifasi* could be embraced by the community, it could be an agency for children, and this would help bring new knowledge and skills in the promotion of our culture and indigenous performances.

Also, children are agents, and their agency is realised through collaboration as they spend most of their time playing with each other. In other words, they fill the parental gap for each other in the absence of their mothers. That is when children become agents for one another as they learn from each other. When children play together, they are able to compare their skills with those of their peers. Children enjoy more when they play without elders interrupting them. Learning certain skills at an early age from their grandparents is imperatives for children. Masemola (2017) emphasised that almost half of South Africa's children grow up without their fathers, and this has sad effects on their proper upbringing. Almost 50% grow up without both parents, particularly the father.

#### 2.8.5. Media

SABC also plays a big role in uplifting the standard of music. It is regarded as the means or vehicle for reinvigorating the Tshivenda culture is slowly diminishing. The South African Arts and Culture Youth Forum is currently protesting for the artists' rights (South African Film Summit, 2019). They are calling for the 90 percent local content on our SABC stations (both radio and tv). From June 2018, they intended to push it to 100% as they see that the local airplay is not enough when it comes to the promotion and marketing of local music. *Tshifasi* music, *inter alia*, is less promoted if one is to consider such protests.

During the early years, Phalaphala FM, which was known as Radio Venda, used to recruit artists who understood music to support the radio station. There were insufficient musicians then. Some of those recruited were Mandisa, Mukhesa, Mundalamo and Mposa (Ramadolela, 2010). Munonde, known as Gizara in the Muvhango Soapie, declared that educators and researchers should try to find the relevant words that can be used in Tshivenda to a modern-day language. He gave an example of the word policy (*mbekanyamaitete*). He also requested Vhenda writers to add some of the Tshivenda words in the Tshivenda Dictionary, which could be used in music composition since music is a simple tool that is accessed by anyone. He concluded by appealing to us not to “kill Tshivenda language because *zwaashu zwiri ita vhathu* (ours is ours) (Rabothata, 2013). Artists' collaboration with the media can also play a part in promoting the cultural activities of Tshivenda indigenous music such as *tshifasi* music performance.

### 2.8.6. Teachers

Teachers at our schools should also act as agents that encourage *tshifasi* music genre by forming groups across all learners as some are older than others. There are very few programmes, especially for children that promote indigenous knowledge amongst them (Daswa et al., 2019). Formal education has disrupted the practical everyday life activities of indigenous knowledge and ways of learning. Nkabinde (1997) wrote a thesis on the indigenous features inherent in the African popular music at the University of Zululand. He identified the teachers' challenges, particularly those who are not qualified to teach in schools. He showed the inadequacy of facilities in musical departments. In other words, nothing is provided to sustain cultural education. For instance, the researcher is part of the trainers in one of the projects, Arts in Schools around Vhembe. Some of the selected schools do not have instruments that learners could use to perform traditional dances (Nkabinde, 1997). In other words, learners practice without proper instruments. In other schools, there are no instruments at all. The exposure to indigenous music and instruments could also motivate teachers to train learners. Thus, *tshifasi* cultural dance could be grounded if teachers do not provide the right information to their learners.

As such, Vhavenda indigenous music would be lost if something is not urgently done here. Also, the indigenous music such as *tshifasi* is severely misinterpreted. It is important that learners do such cultural performances at school to correct this. This kind of music is revived in institutions such as secondary schools and universities and, thereafter, it is forgotten. Elderly people who performed *tshifasi* in their childhood are no longer there, while some are

too old to perform. Traditional dances are no longer performed like before. That is, *tshikona* is there, but it is no longer the same.

*Tshifasi* genre is an indigenous performance of Vhavenḁa for children. Vhavenḁa children feel uncomfortable in taking part in performing their own traditional music. They believe that it is barbaric, old fashioned and valueless. This is the performance that was supposed to be known by every Muvenda child. Also, in school competitions, teachers teach learners for entertainment purposes, not as a class subject. In other words, it is not on the school curriculum for cultural promotion. The cultural knowledge of *tshifasi* could change this perspective by bringing out its significance through explanations and providing the clear meanings of its actions during performances. Thus, through the descriptive analysis of *tshifasi*, the hidden practical meaning and value could be appreciated as a significant cultural knowledge of the Vhavenḁa.

## 2.9. CONCLUSION

The indigenous music in other African countries was discussed in this chapter. Insufficient literature on *tshifasi* led the researcher to focus more on other Vhavenḁa traditional performances such as *tshikona*, *tshigombela*, *malende*. This chapter provided the background knowledge on the indigenous music performances from other cultures as well. Further, the foundation and the origins of Vhavenḁa tradition is provided. The sociological function and the agents in the making of *tshifasi* are discussed. This study provides the description and analysis of *tshifasi* music performance in order to add to Vhavenḁa traditional music literature.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter two dealt with literature review where traditional music for children, Vhavenda music for women, the function of indigenous music and indigenous games, which include indigenous music of other African countries were reviewed. This was in view of the fact that the study focuses on tracing the origins of Vhavenda traditional music, with emphasis on *tshifasi*. This study specifically describes and analyses the *tshifasi* music with a view to preserving it. That said, this chapter outlines the methodology and research design that were used in this study. The population and the number of participants, and how data was collected are also discussed. Qualitative data collection techniques such as face to face interviews, focus group discussions and different group performances in the Vhembe District are outlined as well. Before detailing the above, it is worthwhile to provide this study's paradigmatic perspective.

#### 3.2. PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

A researcher is expected to obtain additional information by reading other materials in order to establish the best way to view knowledge. It is imperative to take into consideration how the researcher investigated her study after finalising the research topic, the motive being to solve the problem (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012; Huitt, 2011). This is done so that the philosophical framework used is made clear. This is known as a paradigm. Knowledge gained

through data collected from documentary sources enable the researcher to have a perspective on how issues could be done in his/her study. A paradigm necessitates the study to have a model, which involves ontology and epistemology. An understanding of these two concepts informed the choice of the methodology that was adopted. These are discussed in detail below, beginning with ontology.

### 3.2.1. Ontology

Ontology is a branch of philosophy that deals with the nature that already exist. Ontology influences the way the study should be conducted (methodology and design). In this way, the study was able to identify the right tools or the relevant techniques for data collection.

The same applies with epistemology (Dippold, 2006), a subject of the following discussion.

### 3.2.2. Epistemology

Epistemology is the part of philosophy that relates with knowledge, which addresses questions such as how, why and which. It is an existing knowledge that is linked with the methodology. Epistemology requires that the nature of reality be studied in order to answer the research question(s). Information from the participants should be constructed and interpreted based on what we know (Ngwenya, 2017). In other words, epistemology has a systematic view on reality. However, the researcher needs to gain an insight and clarity from the participants' experience. Thus, this study used the interpretative paradigm to gather in-depth information from the participants. *Tshifasi* music is described in terms of how and why it was performed. Most of the sources used were primary and secondary documents. These



were read critically in order to ascertain the nature of Vhavenda traditional music. *Tshifasi*'s function in society was explained in detail. During data collection, the researcher tried to dig out the life history of Vhavenda as it relates to their music, which needs more explanation.

People's experiences, views, and feelings regarding the performance were unravelled. Some of the participants volunteered to be interviewed, and agreed to be video taped.

### **3.3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

As stated above, the paradigmatic assumptions inform the choice of methodology since there are three types namely qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods. Olivier (2017) discusses the three options that need to be surveyed when choosing a research methodology, and these are qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods. Methodology provides a detailed explanation of the procedures that are utilised in a research. It is a systematic way of scientifically solving the research problem where various logical steps are adopted by the researcher (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Here, the researcher used the qualitative methodology to collect data from indigenous knowledge holders, traditional leaders and traditional musicians. Also included in the methodology were discussion procedures followed when collecting, organising and, analysing and synthesising the data. Thus, the descriptive and explanatory analysis of *tshifasi* music was done qualitatively.

The study is musicological, which employed a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research methodology is usually associated with the social constructivist paradigm of reality

(Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). This requires that the researcher explains the participants' views in the context of her interpretation of information gathered. Its nature does not require numbers, but an interpretative and naturalistic strategy. Through qualitative methodology, the researcher is allowed to gather data from the participants, and then explain the information in her own understanding in an expressive way (Kim, 2014). This study, therefore, allowed indigenous musicians to give a description of *tshifasi* as it is interpretative in nature. The researcher took pictures and notes and conducted a research in a natural way (Sutton, 2015). This study, through pictures, explained how *tshifasi* is performed, the meaning of those actions, the attire worn during performance and, the instruments used and why they are used.

Qualitative research methodology was used as it does not utilise statistics (Govender, (2016). The participants in the Vhembe District were visited by the researcher to gather information and write down their experiences about the *tshifasi* music performance (Ngwenya, 2017). Stories from the traditional leaders and indigenous musicians were interpreted. That is why qualitative methodology was chosen instead of other approaches. The advantage of using the qualitative methodology is that it allows for different interpretation of ideas. According to Austin and Sutton (2014), the voice of the participant is expected to be present, which helps the researcher make a final analysis to solve the problem statement and answer the research question(s). Qualitative methodology helped the researcher to collect data from a small number of participants (Austin & Sutton, 2014). In this case, *tshifasi* was given different perspectives, depending on the areas from where the participants live. As such, the qualitative

methodology was used to obtain the relevant qualitative responses from indigenous knowledge holders, amongst other informants.

Accordingly, the study used the following techniques to collect data; interviews (Alshenqeti, 2014), focus group discussions, and the survey of both primary and secondary sources. Also, the qualitative data collection methods gave the participants an opportunity to explain their experiences regarding *tshifasi*, particularly in terms of its originality and relevance in society.

Primary data are more reliable because of their originality. To gain an in-depth understanding of *tshifasi* as a socialising mechanism, the researcher visited the areas where prospective informants live (Ngwenya, 2017). Most of the participants were found at *misanda*, and the traditional healers' homes (especially in Nzhelele). These proved to be knowledgeable as asserted by Ralivhadelo (2017). This enabled the researcher to deeply understand where *tshifasi* originated from, and how it is performed, as she observed their performances. Burns and Groove (2001) refer to qualitative methodology as a research conducted to gain new insights, discover new ideas, and for increasing one's knowledge about the phenomenon. This study explored the experiences of those who played *tshifasi* during their teenage years. To compliment data from interviews, secondary information from relevant materials was studied (Ngwenya, 2017). The information was used to analyse and verify issues raised during the interviews. A discussion on the research design follows below.

### 3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Musicological approach was also employed since the object of this study is *tshifasi*, a music performance, which was also analysed. Regrettably, few authors wrote about the musicological approach. Thus, this study would help fill this gap in literature, as it looks at the aspects of music previously ignored by scholars. Khosa (2017) describe and analyse indigenous Xitsonga music dance by employing the musicological approach. He confirms that a musicological design looks at music for what it is and appreciates how the practitioners express themselves. This approach allows for the practitioner's views about the music to flow (Khosa, 2017). That is, whether it is the attire, songs, performances or dances that are emphasised by the empirical data or scientific methods, it does not matter (Rambau, 2015).

In this study, the researcher enquired about aspects that had to do with *tshifasi* and its performance from the participants. In music, there are musical forms that form the overall structure that makes a part of music such as melody, rhythm, tempo, dynamics, and texture (Khosa, 2017). Müller, Chew and Bello (2016) indicated that in their report. The focus of their study was on the area of music structure analysis to discover the unknown patterns. On the study of *tshifasi*, this researcher unearthed the structural patterns in the relationships that govern the music such as notes, events, tone and sounds. This was discovered during data collection and analysis, which mainly described the genre. In this regard, the musicological research design attempted to capture all the details of the social setting into groups of *tshifasi* music performances. *Tshifasi* actions, sounds, instruments and patterns during its performance were also highlighted. The study employed the qualitative research design to

discover the underlying qualities of subjective experiences, and the meanings associated with *tshifasi* actions.

A research design is, in this regard, a plan or an arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to fulfil the research purpose (Kothari, 2004:31). Centred on this definition, the research design is a specific system that guides a research process in its quest to obtain answers to research questions and to solve the research problem at hand (Ngwenya, 2017). Due to its set-up, the study is musicological in nature as it deals with a musical phenomenon. The idea is to give an extremely detailed description that convey intimate feelings for the setting of *tshifasi* (Neuman, 2000). Further, this study adopted a musicological design to achieve its objectives as the object here is music. Musicological design also allows the researcher to observe the music performances and generally analyse them (Khosa, 2017). In this case, it was the most appropriate design for this study. The analysis was musicological, even though the search for meaning was purely qualitative. This was to generate the kind of data required to answer the research questions posed.

### **3.5. LOCATION OF THE STUDY**

The study was carried out in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province. The Vhembe District is situated in the northern part of the Limpopo Province. It comprises of four local municipalities, namely Musina, Makhado, Thulamela and LIM 345. The district was chosen because that is where Vhavanḁa live (Ramaite-Mafadza, 2016; Rampedi, 2010; Munyai & Foord, 2012).



Figure 1: Map of Vhembe District, where the data was collected (Source: [www.vhembe.gov.za](http://www.vhembe.gov.za))

### 3.6. POPULATION

The researcher identified the population that has all the characteristics relevant to this study. According to Goddard and Melville (2004) a population is any group of individuals that are the subject of a research interest, or a complete set of events, people or objects to which the research findings are to be applied. In this case, population refers to a group of participants in a research whose function is to provide vital information concerning the study.

This study relied on the participants' *tshifasi* experiences. The study's target groups were elderly indigenous musicians, traditional leaders, *vhana* (children) and indigenous

knowledge holders. To ensure that the study obtained rich, in-depth and balanced information about *tshifasi*, children were observed performing.

### **3.7. SAMPLING AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

The study employed a non-probability sampling method to analyse *tshifasi* descriptively since it was difficult to gain access to the entire population. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated that a non-probability sampling method entails an emphasis on the process and an in-depth understanding of perceived meanings, clarifications, and behaviours, in contrast with the measurement of the quantity, frequency, or even intensity of some externally defined variables. An in-depth understanding of data, therefore, was sought and emphasised.

Sampling is defined as the process of selecting members of a research sample from a defined population, usually with the aim that the sample accurately represents that population (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996:769). The participants with information on the subject under investigation were purposively selected in an endeavour to identify relevant informants. The notion behind sampling is that a small set of observations can give an idea of what can be expected in the total population of the intended study (Maree, 2007). Davis (2007) described purposive and snowball sampling as an invitation by the researcher to identify and target individuals who are understood to be ‘typical’ of the population being studied. Since there was limited time and money to interview everyone in the target group, the researcher picked out a few members of the whole group.

Moreover, purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable or experienced about a particular issue (Morrison, 2007:115). The researcher purposely selected 20 participants through non-probability sampling, where their selection was based on her judgement since they had the characteristics of interest here. The first two informants were purposively selected, whereas the remainder was through snowballing. The sample met specific characteristics so that it reflected a true proportion of individuals required for the research. For example, before the researcher had an interview with indigenous knowledge holders, she consulted the Hasani Chief (*Vhamusanda*) for assistance in identifying the prospective informants. He identified knowledgeable people in that area. The first participant was an elderly person who was herding cattle in the veld. With no choice under the circumstances, we decided to track the potential interviewee, a principle of snowball sampling. *Vhamusanda* of Basani accompanied the researcher to find the said old man, an apparently well-known *tshifasi* performer in his youth.

The participants were chosen from the Vhembe District's four local municipalities vis; Musina (Ngundani, Shakadza); LIM 345 (Vuwani, Hasani); Thulamela (Tshififi, Ha Tshikonelo, Lwamondo) and Makhado (Tshakhuma, Nzhelele). The sample was representative of Vhavanḁa who are knowledgeable about *tshifasi* and other Venda traditional music. These were the best people to provide accurate information about *tshifasi* and its relevance in our society. Generally, these people are the custodians of culture and tradition, and hence were suitable to provide in-depth information on *tshifasi* and its socialisation role in society. The chosen participants were 45 years old and above, while



children were learners, either doing grades 7, 8, 9 or 10. This grade range was chosen because it is assumed that most of the learners there play *tshifasi* in one way or the other.

### **3.8. DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

Methods that were used in collecting the data were suitable for a qualitative research. The methods employed helped gather the information that was clear for one to understand how *tshifasi* is practised. They allowed the participants to describe what *tshifasi* is. Rhodes (2014) indicated that the advantage of utilising these methods in data collection is that there is no need for generalising information. That is, the information is applicable across the Venda society since the participants narrated the historical background of *tshifasi* indigenous music. In this study, data was collected through one on one interviews and focus group discussions.

On the other hand, children's performances were captured during the Arts and Culture competitions done at both primary and secondary levels. Indigenous knowledge holders such as traditional leaders and indigenous musicians were interviewed at their places, the assumption being these are comfortable and natural (Kelebogile, 2016). In other words, the researcher realised a lot of data more than her expectations. One on one, face to face interviews were an advantage than using phone or social media interviews. Actions during the *tshifasi* performances by elderly experts were captured and explained in the mother tongue as part of Venda culture, and for expression purposes (Kelebogile, 2016). The local Venda language was used in this study as the basis for understanding the text contents.

According to Mouton (1996:67), data collection involves applying the measuring instrument to the sample or cases with reference to the topic under investigation. Sallee, Hallett & Tierney (2011) explain that the researcher may need to post or hand out questionnaires when conducting interviews, observe, measure or count subjects or phenomena. As such, information from indigenous musicians, traditional leaders, children, and knowledge holders was collected through interviews and focus group discussions. On a qualitative research observation, Mudzielwana, *et al* (2012) stated that rather than using a measurement scale as an instrument of observation, the researcher might be the instrument of observation. The performances were recorded during observations. During field work, data was captured using audio and video recording devices. Audio and video recordings were transcribed for the purposes of data analysis (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2008).

### 3.8.1. Interviews

An interview is a conversation between an interviewee and interviewer, with the purpose of gathering information (De Vos, Greeff, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2011). In a research, a researcher asks the interviewee questions in order to obtain specific answers. There are several types of interviews, some of which are face to face and telephonic. In this study, face to face and focus group discussions were appropriate to obtain stories from the indigenous musicians, traditional leaders and indigenous knowledge holders.

Interviews were conducted face to face and through focus group discussions. The researcher was able to capture the participants' dance performances. Through face to face interviews, the researcher was able to see the informants' actions as they narrated about *tshifasi*. She was

able to make meanings out of those actions and movements. The researcher saw the performers' attire and she could vividly describe them.

There are three types of interviews, and these are structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. This study used a semi-structured interview, where a guide was developed to collect data. A semi-structured interview is a data collection method where the researcher prepares a set of questions in a formal manner to gather in-depth information from participants (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kruger, 2008). The kind of interview questions give the interviewee abundant chance to relax. In this way, semi-structured questions provide direction to focus on the core areas under the study (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). During this process, recording of data consumes enough time, and that is obviously expected since the tool generates more information (Alshenqeeti, 2014). In this study, traditional leaders responded freely in their own words, and the situation allowed the researcher to probe further as to why *tshifasi* was different from other indigenous Vhavanḁa music such as *tshikona*, *tshigombela malende* and *tshikanganga*.

Questions were open-ended, and these were written in Tshivhenḁa so that the participants could understand. Elderly people were able to give their responses freely in their mother tongue. They were able to utilise proverbs and deep Tshivhenḁa words (Mafela, 2008). They explained the meanings of those words. Open-ended questions helped gather detailed information from the participants without limit (Marvasti, 2003). On the other hand, closed ended questions bind the respondent to have less voice and expressions (McGuirk & O'Neill (2010). Also, this helped the researcher to understand the concept of *tshifasi*, learning the

ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and how children behave as they perform this musical genre. This approach created an environment of openness and trust, where the interviewees expressed themselves realistically and comprehensively on *tshifasi*'s social functions. Qualitative interviews permit flexibility rather than fixity of sequence of discussions, allowing the participants to raise and pursue issues and matters that might not have been included in a pre-devised schedule. Indigenous musicians explained their stories and gave their insight about *tshifasi*'s role in society, rather than giving an incomplete feedback in “yes” or “no” form.

### 3.8.2. Focus group discussions

Focus group discussion were made up of people with the same or common ideas. These consisted of a small number of participants meant to effectively manage these discussions. To maintain order amongst the discussants, 12 participants were appropriate since they had the same characteristics as required by the study. Also, the focus group discussions provided an open conversation atmosphere. Conversely, a larger number is uncontrollable. The advantage of a focus group discussion is that group members assist each other to recall issues and events. In this study, focus group discussions were used to gather additional information about why *tshifasi* music is not popular like other traditional Vhavenḁa music. Focus group discussions are group interviews that reveal how people feel or think about an issue, product or service (Morgan & Krueger, 1998). The group is focused because it involves collective discussions, which saves money and time compared to individual interviews. For instance, the researcher interviewed selected individuals in a focus group in Tshififi, a village within the Thulamela Municipality. This was done within a day. The group members shared their

ideas on their experiences about the phenomenon under study. Bringing people in one place for a group discussion saved travelling costs, time and food.

Other focus group discussions were held at Makhado, Mussina and LIM 345, where the participants were comfortable to talk to each other. Focus group discussions also gave the researcher ample time to do follow-up interviews on grey areas, particularly consultations with elderly people. Elderly people need time to understand others' views, and they articulate themselves in strange ways. As such, the researcher needed time to understand what they wanted to say. Eight indigenous knowledge holders, traditional leaders and indigenous musicians were adequate to generate a productive discussion. The researcher's questions were answered quickly and clearly. In other districts such as Mussina and LIM 345, only three participants were used in focus group discussions as the researcher failed to get an adequate number of people who were knowledgeable about *tshifasi* music genre.

### **3.9. DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis enables one to make sense of the data gathered. Beker (1999:643) defines data analysis as the system of combining the ideas of the research hypothesis using the data, and the testing of that research hypothesis. Data was analysed qualitatively through coding the text segments, and then coding these into themes and sub-themes. Here, the researcher looked for values and meanings that participants have about their experiences of the *tshifasi* music performances. In a qualitative study, data analysis is an endless process that only ends when the final draft of the study is done. The transcripts of the interviews were analysed according to Mouton's (2005) steps which involve themes, patterns, trends and relationships. Data was

collected, sorted, categorised and coded in separate themes and sub-themes. In this study, the researcher summarised the responses from the participants' understanding or interpretations of *tshifasi* music to come up with the general notion of how it is related to the role of shaping children's behaviour in our society. After data collection and presentation, data was analysed and briefly evaluated. This is the technique that was used to recap the interpretations from different individuals.

### **3.10. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Ethical practices ensure that the participants are protected and are aware of their rights with regard to being participants in a research study (Madzivhandila, 2015). Pillay (2014) talks about protecting children, where he confirms that young people are voiceless, they need protection until the end of a study. In this study, elderly people were safe during demonstrations as they performed freely without being forced to. But, the age was a serious challenge for them when it came to demonstrating what they used to do in their young age. During the investigation, the following ethical principles were observed. There was a need for a researcher and the participants to be aware of the general agreement about what is correct, and improper in scientific research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:470). Every participant was made to understand how the research would affect them.

In this study, the researcher was guided by the ethics' principles of informed consent, confidentiality, avoidance of harm and deception, and the right to withdraw. The researcher did not force the participants to give information, which they were not sure of as some of them had forgotten how *tshifasi* is performed. Thereafter, the researcher interpreted data in

such a way that eliminated the element of biasness. For instance, the researcher had a focus group discussion in Musina with only those who were free and understood the researcher's motive in undertaking this study. *Nama khombetshedzwa I hafhula khali* (the meat that is forced into a full pot destroys that pot). Also, Vhavenḁa say, *A lu kokomedzi lukunda lwa kokomedzwa lu a thara*. *Lukunda* is one of Vhavenḁa traditional attire, and this means that when someone is forced to wear a small sized *lukunda*, it gets torn. This is to the effect that if someone forces somebody to do something, which does not fit that situation or an object, the outcome would be immoral. This study gave justice to indigenous musicians to contribute freely without being forced to perform or describe *tshifasi* music performance, following a certain pattern.

The set of guidelines imposed on a study ensured that the project did not compromise or upset the subjects in any way. This study dealt with the descriptive analysis of *tshifasi*. As such, it did not aim to harm or injure individual feelings. For example, other participants were pensioners and could not be able to dance because of age. The researcher saved the situation by dancing with them as an encouragement. The researcher has knowledge about *tshifasi* from her teenage years. In this study, elderly people who danced and described the *tshifasi* performance were those who freely volunteered, the reason being to contribute their knowledge to this study.

The interviewees' names were not put in the study without their agreement. In this study, the participants' names were not written to ensure the anonymity of indigenous knowledge holders. The participants from all four municipalities were interested in revealing their

names. They were also interested in being photographed and video recorded as they performed *tshifasi*. They felt proud to be part of this research as they believed that their contributions would be read by generations to come. Mamatsharaga, for example, offered to accompany the researcher when visiting *misanda*, and to organise the focus groups in Tshififi Village. Furthermore, certain types of information can be regarded as sensitive or confidential by some people. Thus, an invasion of privacy such as asking for such information may upset or embarrass a participant. On the other hand, if the researcher does not ask for such information, it may not be possible to pursue his interest in the area and contribute to the existing body of knowledge. It is not unethical to ask such questions if done following the laid down procedures. In this case, the researcher was careful about the sensitivities of her participants. Questions answered with difficulties were not repeated.

The researcher treated the information received confidentially. Overall, this study was purely an academic undertaking, nothing more. Any information disclosed in this study was the agreement between the researcher and the participants. No access to such information was given to friends, relatives and co-workers. This maintained trust and a good relationship between the researcher and the participants in this study. The researcher made it a point that whatever transpired during the interviews remained between her and the participants. Confidentiality is a principle that allows people not to talk in confidence, but also to refuse to allow the publication of any material received.

Data was analysed in the manner that avoided false statements, misinterpretations and biases. Misinterpretation renders data invalid. This becomes a form of organised error, which has



negative effects on the scientific investigation. The systematic error can happen through wrong sampling, and this leads to wrong results and incorrect conclusions. This research follows the methodological procedures. Information in this study was written to describe, explain and interpret *tshifasi* from a neutral perspective. To gain and analyse the knowledge about *tshifasi*, specifically that from elderly people, the study used Tshivenda language. Before the researcher visited the research area, the following institutional ethical issues were observed; the proposal was presented at the Department of Music, and the School of Health Sciences' Higher Degrees Committee for quality assurance. It was then submitted to the University's Higher Degrees Committee for final approbation. Permission was then sought from the participants after the issues of informed consent, confidentiality, trustworthiness, credibility, anonymity and the respect for participants were addressed. It would be unethical to collect information without the knowledge of the participants and their express willingness and informed consent. Seeking informed consent is the common method in ensuring ethical conduct in research. In this study, the researcher verbally acquired consent from the participants. The researcher made them aware of the type of information she wanted from them, why the information was sought, what purpose it would be used, how they are expected to participate in the study, and how this directly/indirectly affected them.

### **3.11. CONCLUSION**

This chapter addressed the pertinent issues around this study's methodology. In addition to outlining the methodological imperatives, the chapter also dealt with this study's philosophical underpinnings. In this way, its methodological position was informed by the

said philosophical paradigm. In dealing with this study's methodology, focus was put on the study's adopted research design and the subsequent data collection techniques. Key here were the face to face semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions. These were the two principal data collection methods. Needless to point out that the use of such techniques was informed by the research design, a case study of Venda in the context of *tshifasi* music performance, a building block towards our children's self-discipline and wellbeing. It should be noted that the use of these techniques afforded this study to collect enough data that formed the basis for discussion herein, a subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter Three outlined the research methodology and its design, data collection instruments, and data analysis procedures. In this chapter, the data collected is discussed. The chapter focuses mainly on the *tshifasi* music genre. For a nuanced understanding of the above, interviews were conducted with indigenous musicians, indigenous knowledge holders and the traditional leaders found in Vhembe District. Pertinent issues here were the origin of *tshifasi*, how it is performed, how it differs from other performances, its attire, who performs it and, when and where it is performed. In addition, the chapter also looks at the agents of *tshifasi* and their role, and its sociological function in society.

It is imperative to first discuss about other Tshivenda indigenous music if we are to understand the origins of *tshifasi* (Nepfumbada, 2017). Also Vhavenda music is connected with their daily lives. For instance, the first interviewee had two visitors who also joined in the interview. They were recommended by the said interviewee. This illustrates the power of the snowball sampling technique. The interviewee showed his expertise in *tshifasi* and its related dance. In fact, he alluded to the fact that he used to perform *tshifasi* in his youth. In telling his story of the Tshivenda indigenous music, the interviewee said;

It is important to discuss the background of Vhavenda first before dealing with anything else. In terms of the history of the Tshivenda music, it is important to note that Africans generally

communicated through music (Mugovhani, 2012). Music was used to unify people. It served as a warning sign during war times. In addition, Africans used music to express their emotional feelings. That is, it was sung to indicate joyous moments, or in times of sorrow to console the distressed. Music was also sung to encourage people to assist each other, to work as a collective. In addition, Dima (2017) describes the origins and foundation of the Tshivenda traditional music. According to him, the history of Tshivenda music is important to trace in order to discover where it comes from. To him, *malende* for example, is some of the typical Vhavana cultural music.

#### **4.2. THE ORIGINS OF *TSHIFASI* AND WHY IT IS CALLED *TSHIFASI***

According to Singo (2018), the word comes from the Afrikaans word ‘*vas*’, which means two people joined together playfully. *Tshifasi* is for both boys and girls, playing together. This is the time when boys and girls do *om vas te maak (u funana)*. For instance, sometimes people borrow words from other languages. For example, the word ‘*lepel*’, in Tshivenda is called *lebula*. Singo (2018) said that the performance is called *tshifasi* since boys and girls are separated.



Figure 2: Boys take girls from their line and join the boy's line, picture captured from District school completions at Itsani. Source: Madzivhandila, M. 2017.

Figure 2 above shows children performing *tshifasi* indigenous music. As the figure depicts, boys come out of their line one by one to pick a girl they would love to dance with. In this case, one of the participants explained thus, “I was still young when all this was happened, but I acted as a kid then. Thereafter, I was promoted to be a young adult so that I could perform *tshinombelo*” (Magaba, 2017).

*Tshifasi* is like the chicken's actions, *khuhu*. When one sees the children performing, the actions are more or less the same as *khuhu ya phambo* and *mukukulume*, those of two chickens proposing or playing with each other. We say they are proposing each other because thereafter, those two meet sexually. A *gukulume* (male) chicken does the *phambo* (female) movements, progressing towards the *phambo* chicken (Tshikota, 2018).

Upon locating him, it turned out that the old man did not have any problems with being interviewed. Our case, I presume, was simplified by the presence of *Vhamusanda*. Masango (2017) did not hesitate to give us information for he had once practised and participated in *xinombelo* in his youth. Our experience with this cattle herder made one interview aspect clear, that the involvement of elderly and respected people in data collection processes is magical. Communities respect elderly people's reliability.

Ha Hasani is an area in LIM 345 municipality. Here, the researcher wanted to know the origin, the reason why *tshifasi* is performed and how *tshifasi*, *tshinzerere* or *tshinombelo* were performed compared to other areas in the Vhembe District. Furthermore, LIM 345 was one of the study areas, and people in ha Hasani are mixed, both Vhavanḁa and Shangaan.

Masango

(2017) said that as they grew up, they found other children playing *tshinombelo*. He did not know where *tshifasi* or *xinombelo* started. He added, "When practising, we performed until we got tired, sometimes we would spend the whole night performing *tshinombelo*. We would not sleep, making noise for those who stay in the vicinity where we did our practice". In this case, its real name is *tshinzerere*. Elderly people were said to be the ones who could shed more light on *tshifasi*, such as vho Mphephu, vho Regnard and other indigenous knowledge holders (Masango, 2017). It was not easy for the researcher to find the participants who would explain and describe where *tshifasi* originated from in this area.

Dima (2017)'s views were that originally, teenagers clap hands as they performed *tshifasi*. Those who play drums in their performance were playing *mirumba*, a modern version of *tshifasi*. He went on to provide us with the *tshifasi* songs. He even demonstrated on how to sing some of the songs. The courting dance, according to Netshivhale (2017) is *tshifasi*, where children date each other. He explained that old women and grannies used to tell stories about the origins of our traditional music. They also narrated tales to children. Grannies are experienced in tales, *dzinganeya*. Such tales could be dramatised to illustrate the courting dance.

#### **4.3. WHO PERFORMS TSHIFASI?**

As explained earlier on, *tshifasi* was performed by boys and girls, in preparation for their adulthood. *Tzeketzeke* as already mentioned, was a performance done by boys and girls. Singo said, "Boys and girls of 12 to 13 years stand on either side of an imaginary line, and one boy then steps forward to choose a girl he likes amongst the rest". Providing further details on *tshifasi*...stated that what influences the girl to agree to the proposal is money. She first checks whether the boy comes from a rich family or not. In figure 3 when she agrees, the boy would give her *lukunda* (engagement ring) as a promise. Mmbi (2017) said that *tshifasi* is performed when children have completed all their household chores for the day. They then prepare to go and perform *tshifasi* after supper and bath. Ramatsitsi (2017) differs with Singo as he proclaimed that it was performed by young girls who had not yet developed breasts, where they would sing songs and dance.





Figure 3: A girl is given a *lukunda* by a boy to emphasize love, captured at Lwamondo Zavhavhili. Source: Madzivhandila, M. 2018.

#### 4.4. THE FUNCTION OF *TSHIFASI* IN OUR SOCIETY

When a girl is chosen by a boy, their relationship sometimes leads to marriage. One of the initiates is called *khomba*. The boy's parents present *lobola* (bride's wealth) for that particular *tshifasi* girl. In Nzhelele, Tshavhalovhedzi, the participants invited the researcher to attend some of the indigenous events for more details on *tshifasi*. The point is, children who do not take part in *tshifasi* grow up rebellious, and hence become anti-social in future.

Nepfumbada (2017) agreed, pointing out that children were taught good manners through such indigenous practices. The young ones learnt how to respect one another and elders, in addition to socialising and being united as young people. Most of the lyrics are love related, and some teach respect and loyalty to a partner, though.



Magaba, 2017 said that it is unfair to find teachers teaching children at crèche how to perform *tshifasi*. In other words, they are playing a game meant for mature teenagers who are about to be married. “Little kids know nothing about family issues, it is an abuse *vhathu vha Mudzimu*,” decried an informant teacher. She continued, stating that one of those children cries when others laugh as she plays with the boy. They mock her, saying, “We saw you dancing with a boy”. The learners at crèche are too young to understand what is happening around them. Their minds are still empty, they need to be filled with good morals. Children are innocent and delicate, they are not yet responsible.

On *tshifasi* rules, Mmbi (2017) expressed his ignorance. He said its essence was in promoting good moral values amongst teenagers. It inculcated the respect for each other through statements such as ‘do not beat one another’. Such general guidance made them keep order. In addition, they were forbidden from stealing as some of them would bring eats such as sweets as presents for their friends, *haka*, *lukunda* or bracelets. Children were not allowed to provoke others, and vulgar language was discouraged. These were general rules amongst ourselves, especially young adults amongst us. Our leaders were older than us, and I remember some of those mature youth like vho Waramu and vho Mutshekwa.

*Tshinombelo* is performed when children are out for a *mahundwane* in the late afternoon (*mathabama*). With *mahundwane*, children practice family issues. They dramatise family matters, with a boy acting the father’s role, while a girl acts that of a mother, and others act as children. Also acting are the *vho-makhadzi*, *malume* and other relatives.

Another participant who spoke about the role of *tshifasi* explained that children were moulded into behaving well in future. *Tshifasi* has lost its popularity because children no longer follow tradition. They no longer respect or behave properly. Also, they do not respect their bodies. *Wo vha una tshirunzi*, having respect. Generally, *tshifasi* is the name familiar to many people in Vhavanḁa community. *Tshifasi*'s aim was to train girls and boys for marriage. It was done in full moon light for children's safety. The training for marriage started with *tshifasi* to *domba*, then marriage. "It is a nocturnal indigenous game. I believe this dance should not be part of the school competition, to preserve its meaning and relevance in community", commented a female participant. "It was so interesting and lovely to play this game. I can still remember the songs we use to sing when we wanted to start this performance.

Some of the songs were meant to warn girls to be careful of danger when playing. In short, girls should be watchful of boys. Girls were taught in this way to realise that boys could sometimes be unsafe to play with. Another intention was for boys to take girls as their sisters, while girls were to take boys as their brothers. This performance could be brought back by introducing it in schools, through community and traditional leaders, and the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture.

My parents' relocation to another area disadvantaged me from gaining knowledge about my culture (Magaba, 2017). During the performance, elderly youth sometimes chased young ones away so that they could not see what was happening as they practised *tshifasi*. There were times where those young adult girls would go for *u toliwa* (virginity test), where elderly people, *vhakegulu* check whether the girls are still virgins or not. Those years back, if a girl

got pregnant, elderly people would send her to her in-laws to stay there with her supposed husband. The songs in the *tshinombelo* performance were interesting as we enjoyed a lot when we were still young. That is, hearing other children singing, one would be forced to wake up and join them at that time. It was hard for parents to allow a little child to go there because of age as reflected in this study in chapter five.

Singo (2018) said that boys and girls were trained to have a good relationship (*udowelana*) amongst themselves. It should be noted that back then, Vhavanḁa boys and girls were not supposed to play together due to fears of immorality. Children were taught how to respect each other, for example, a man is the head of the family. *Tshifasi* was an entertainment performance, to make children relax after cooking, fetching water, and *u reda khuni*. Netshivhale, Tshoteli (2017) added that *tshifasi* also educated kids about the future, it taught them about their responsibilities should they have their own families. In other words, *tshifasi* was the strategy used to prepare teenagers for a family life. They were taught how to be selective when it came to a marriage partner. For example, how does one choose a hard working individual as opposed to someone lazy? Is he or she disabled? These were issues children were taught to address before choosing a marriage partner.

Masango (2017) illustrated that because of *tshinombelo*, it was very much rare to find a pregnant girl before marriage. Through such games, children learnt to respect their bodies. Even though they used to walk in the evenings, boys and girls were safe from any harm because they learnt to respect one another. Boys were taught not to touch a girl's breasts. If a girl was ready to be married, there were procedures that were followed. The parents were

also involved as children were not allowed to do anything on their own. Boys were not allowed to marry a girl they saw during *xinombelo*. One hardly heard of children committing immoral deeds (*a swi chabisa*).

Netshivhale (2017) from Dzwerani observed that *tshifasi* was used to educate the youth about life. This was in preparation for *mahundwane*, where children would go out to the fields and simulate family set ups by building make-shift shelter, cooking and feeding their families without any misdeeds. It was used to teach children that one day, they would have their families and carry such responsibilities between them. The songs and dance tackled social aspects such as working hard and being a responsible parent. It also dealt with the concept of trading goods and services to sustain one's family. There were songs that addressed the issues of cultural morals and values.

Netshivhale (2017) concurred, adding that *tshifasi* taught young boys that a woman is to be married, and she is to be treated with respect. It also taught young girls that a man takes care of his wife by providing for the family. This is the reason why Vhavanḁa culture is rooted in the family institution. When a boy grows into a man, he is called before the elders to address the issue of him working and providing for his family. Again, he would be advised about the dangers of getting into adulterous affairs with married women. That is, not to engage in sexual activities with older women (*mugwegwede*, a common term for a loose woman).

Netshivhale (2017) continued, pointing out that *tshifasi* helped the community because it would keep children busy, while elders dealt with more pressing issues. In some cases,

children would be sent out to play so burials and births would occur without young eyes disturbing the proceedings. Separating children from such happenings preserved their innocence and kept them out of harm's way. When a mother passed away, her children would be informed that their mother had gone away on an important visit. Adults would then teach young children on how to address someone else as their mother, and when the time comes, they would inform them of their mother's passing away. This prevents the need for counselling those children.

There was a *tshifasi* competition called *bepha*. This was arranged for social cohesion. It was very much effective when communities were mixed (the Vatsonga and Vhavanḁa). This led to a good relationship between Vhavanḁa and the Vatsonga. The game also promoted the love and acceptance of each other's culture. People called each other 'nwana wa tinzhobo' or 'Vhavanḁa vha a via'. Generally, the main purpose of *tshifasi* was to entertain children, encouraging good relationships amongst them. This relationship would lead to marriage.

The role of *tshifasi* or *tshinzerere*, was to build a good relationship between males and females. In other words, a boy was expected to be connected with a girl and the same applied to the girl. Another role of *tshifasi* music was to promote clean life amongst children, to help them stay away from criminal activities. One could not find a case of rape or unwanted pregnancies then. Even during the times of our forefathers, their engagement in love was secretive, one could not see it, until marriage. *Tshifasi* music genre also aided children to learn other languages. It encouraged young people to visit each other. Parents were also involved in their children's friendships. In other words, parents were kept abreast of what

was happening between two young people so that they could monitor and control unbecoming behaviour. A girl was not allowed to just engage in love with a boy, parents were told for guidance. Children were told that if they fell in love or sleep together, they would die, and because they were scared to die, they never attempted to get involved in sexual or love matters.

Dima (2017) clarified the difference between children who participated in performances and those who did not. He admitted that some children were forced to play with others. Parents knew very well that their children needed to socialise with others. So, those who did not play with others learnt nothing in life. Children who did not play such games were mostly from *tshitasini*. These experienced some challenges with others. Dima continued, stating that boys valued girls, and hence *tshifasi* was the only dance where boys showed full respect for girls.

Netshivhale (2017) pointed out that most of the activities in Tshivenda have their own songs. These songs were informative, educative and motivational. That is, Vhavana spoke through music. To him, there is no other tribe that has cultural practices than Vhavana. Venda music is more like jazz and reggae music. Vhavana are gifted like when they sing they sound nice and unique. Vhavana have that ability to sing, they have the skills to put things in order musically. When a Vhavana sing it touch the heart and soul of a human being. One can feel that his/her inner person has changed.

Additionally, the secret behind Tshivenda songs or music is that they inspire the performer or a singer. For instance, even if one do praises and worships, Vhavana music is bound to

make someone cry with emotions. Not that one feels bad, but because of the emotive words being sung. Those words destroy the element of bitterness and brutality within an individual. “I was in Diepkloof recently, and this other person told me that my singing reminds him of Venda. He even cried when emotions over powered him”, concluded the informant.

For children who perform to courtship music, the participant said that the different is, in most cases, those who do not dance act as back up in singing. Children learn how to support each other, to carry one another’s burden. Children who do not participate miss a lot of opportunities to learn about responsibilities through parental motivation. None dancers do not know where they come from. In other words, they do not have the knowledge of where their culture comes from. They do not know their Venda culture. In fact, they do not have the Tshivenda characteristics of respect and other aspects related with good morals. What they do is different from what other children who attended do. Those who do not participate lack discipline. They also become a problem in the community and to other children. Vhavenda do. They differ in how they talk. These kinds of performances are informative, educative, and they also contain the entertainment. That is why we have a high rate of crime amongst young people. That is because they do not know where to go. They watch a lot of television. The crime they see on television is then put into practice in real life. They play with what they should not be playing with.

#### 4.4.1. The purpose of *tshifasi*

The reason for children to play away from their parents was a sign of respect. When children did that, they were not hiding something, it was just to keep a distance in whatever they were

doing so as not to disturb their parents. Netshivhale, 2017 asserted that *tshifasi* was performed outside, in an open space, a distance from where elders were, to avoid noise.

Netshivhale (2017) added that the courting dance was performed anytime when people were free. In other words, when children had nothing to do, they gathered and played the courting dance. The courting dance was meant for dating boys and girls, before marriage. For their relationship to last, these needed enough time to know each other.

As indicated on the pictures in chapter five, *tshifasi* started when children came from their different homes to play together. Children came out from their homes early to play night games. Tshikovhi (2017) illustrated that it was important for boys and girls to play together so that they got used to each other. Nowadays, however, boys and girls play separately. There is no longer any collaboration as it used to be. There are several reasons for this. The notable ones are sexual abuse and modern lifestyle. For fear of the former, girls are not allowed to be outdoors in the evenings. This is compounded by a high crime rate in our society.

#### **4.5. TSHIFASI AGENTS AND THEIR ROLES**

Nepfumbada (2017) acknowledged that Vhavanḁa's cultural dances such as *tshifasi*, could be sustained in the communities by involving traditional leaders, civic structures, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, and the elderly people. He added that these structures could be able to organise practices and encourage youth to revive our African culture. One of the traditional practitioners (Livhadelo, 2017) in Nzhelele, Ha-Matsa, reflected that *tshifasi* could be brought back through universities, *mahosi* (Chiefs), *misanda*, civic or



stakeholders. On being requested to provide some of the *tshifasi* songs, Livhadelo (2017) could not do so. Her excuse was that she has forgotten those songs as it has been long since she last sung them. To compound her predicament, the genre is no longer performed in her area. *Misanda* and other traditional leaders no longer encourage this in the community.

To resuscitate *tshifasi*, Singo (2018) said that parents should be actively involved in its making and sustenance. He pointed out that her parents used to teach them various aspects of life such as to prevent early pregnancy because if they became dishonest, they would die young.

Netshivhale (2017) pointed out that the mother plays an important role in the community. A mother is responsible for caring for the whole family as she is endowed with natural skills for that. That is, she does the family errands whole heartedly, errands such as working in the fields, tending the crops and collecting food. She makes sure that there is plenty of water at home. Girls help their mothers and grandmothers in the fields and around home. On the other hand, a man does not naturally possess such talent as with women. Their job is to work hard in outdoor errands. Herding cattle and goats are such activities suitable for men. If a man tries to do a female job, it tends to be an embarrassment. But, fathers play a key role in the upbringing of a boy child. Boys used to guard crops against wild animals.

Masango (2017) of Basani indicated that they were not taught how to perform *tshifasi*. To him, they just saw others doing it and they imitated them. There were no elderly people to perform with them. In other words, children learnt *tshifasi* from each other, on their own. In

contrast, Netshivhale (2017) declared that *tshifasi* is conducted by the elderly women and mothers of the community. Community mothers' role is to teach *tshifasi* as a younger version of *tshigombela*. *Vhabvana tshikegulelo* (middle aged women) is the term used to refer to mothers who reach the age of 50. *Vhabvana* is from age 20 to 40. *Vhakegulu* mean old woman from 55 and above. *Malugwane* refers to those who led different dances by virtue of their expertise. The above makes sure that children know how *tshifasi* is performed. Mothers in the community have the duty to show why this performance should be practised.

The participant indicated that *tshifasi* was performed because it preserved a child's innocence in life. Elderly women made sure that *tshifasi* was performed by children from different places according to their age groups. They were called by the Chief in order to recognise those who would progress to the next rite of passage, and this resulted in unity. Different cultural performances were organised at the Chief's place. All the practices were arranged at the Chief's kraal, *musanda*. The reason was that the community knew that it was safe. Elderly mothers and *vhakegulu* also used *tshivhambo* to practice children and youth activities. *Tshivhambo* is a place or a house at *musanda* where initiation activities took place. These were held for children so that they can learn different dances, while staying with the Chief.

A leader in *tshifasi* music dance was seen through her/his actions. Musanda Vho Mmbi (2017) from Ha Tshikonelo, admitted that anyone who has the skills could lead in *tshifasi* dance. Sometimes a girl or a boy is chosen by a group, especially if they realised her/his talent. It was fine to be chosen by the group. Sometimes there could be two or three leaders.

The group leader played an important role, such as collaborating with other groups. There was an atonement in *tshifasi* performance *bepha*. This was for social cohesion. It was very effective, particularly when we mixed with the Batsonga as we married each other (Mbi, 2017). Thereafter, there was a good relationship between Vhavenda and Shangaan peoples. We then called each other in-laws (*vhosivhara*). Generally, the role played by the leader was to encourage others to see *tshifasi* as a way of establishing good relations with other children, an attachment to each other. Such relationship also led to marriage. In addition, we should also realise that Vhavenda and Shangaans married each other due to their closeness.

Marandela (2017) from Ha Masia Tshiphuseni stated that in the traditional and modern Tshivenda culture, elderly people, especially *Vho makhulu*, are regarded as useless people in the community. Babies and infants are cared for by their grandmothers, and children understand and adopt some of their instructions. Elderly people were the right agents for children's proper upbringing. They taught them how to perform *tshifasi*. Their role was to guide children, and teaching them how to sing *tshifasi* songs properly. Masakona (2018) of Ha-Matsa stated that in doing so, elders did not perform with the children. The performance was for boys and girls as they socialised.

Elders played an essential role in the community. According to Magwedzha (2017), elders provided guidance to young people. In this area, *tshifasi* is called by another name. They know *tshinzerere* as a traditional performance. He said that it is the elders' duty to show children why and how the Tshivenda indigenous performance is arranged that way. Furthermore, what Vhavenda do or make, it is practised for a reason. In *tshinzerere*, children

were taught by their elders (Magwedzha, 2017). It was discovered that some of Vhavenda lyrics needed explanation. Vhavenda proverbs and idioms need elderly people to explain and clarify to children.

On the possibility of bringing this tradition back, Dima (2017) pointed out that *nwana ha bebwi na u tshimbila* (a child is not born to walk at once). “Our culture will be back”, vowed Dima (2017) adding, “Only if our government encourages us to preach this gospel in the media and in our communities. Decolonising our culture is important for this new generation and others to come. Also, mothers should lead us in this journey of bringing back our culture. They can be used as agents. If mothers do not assist, they are killing the nation, and hence the saying, ‘if you educate a man, you have taught one man, but if you educate a woman, you have educated the nation’”. She indicated that the stage that shows women’s importance in society is that of being *makhadzi*. When a child is sick, for example, the family needs the presence of *makhadzi*. Her role is to nurse that ill child. Her presence, in short, heals the child. Equally, when installing a King, *makhadzi*’s presence is needed. Dima (2017) further explain that women are respected people in society. To her, it is wrong to allow a pastor to unveil the bride in a Christian wedding. In our tradition, *makhadzi*, a sister to the father of the bride unveils the bride. This is planned for a purpose. When a bride is unveiled, it means that her parents officially allow the groom to take her as his wife. Here, what we want to show is that *tshifasi* is performed to show respect to a girl by a boy, while they are still young.

In Ha Masia, it was difficult to reach where *Vhamusanda* lives. There are procedures that are followed. Luckily, one of the research assistants facilitated our access to *Vhamusanda*’s

place. He is a *mukalaha vho Mamatsharaga*, an elderly person, who is well respected in the community. It took us more than an hour to get an opportunity to interview *Vhamusanda Vho Matsila*. He is a respected business man, educated, passionate and knowledgeable about our culture. In his own words, he sacrificed his time for us to interview him. Unfortunately, he did not manage to give us any information about *tshifasi*, but gave us names of those with knowledge about it. This was a case of snowball sampling procedure.

On our way from *Vhamusanda Vho Matsila*, we then visited the four participants. One of those four participants was designated by local school teachers to train learners on indigenous music. Through observations, we found out that the said ‘instructor’ performed wrongly. She became scared to dance for us as she was teaching the learners wrong moves. Initially, the three participants had explained what *tshifasi* is, but they could not perform it. In her dance, we observed that she was mixing *tshifasi*, *malende* and *tshigombela* moves. Through her demonstrations, children had adopted that style. We made follow ups on that, and we were told that the young lady was given the chance to instruct the learners by the teachers so that she could be paid allowances by the school. Unfortunately for the learners and their school, their instructor could not differentiate amongst those three dances as she lacked sufficient knowledge.

In all this, young children were the losers as they were taught incorrect dance moves. In this case, the love for money superseded the need to teach children the right dance moves. The truth is, it is the children’s right to be taught correctly for their future’s sake. It is necessary for the community leaders to visit rehearsal practices in order to observe how children are

taught our tradition. As such, indigenous knowledge about our traditional music should be well documented. *Tshifasi* should be documented to preserve Vhavenḁa culture. With regard to *Mamatsharaga*, Netshivhale (2017) of Dzwerani pointed out that the role players in the courting dance are elderly women, grannies and young girls.

#### 4.6. WHERE AND WHEN WAS *TSHIFASI* PERFORMED

One of the participants acknowledged that *tshifasi* was also performed with another indigenous dance called *tzeketzeke*. She revealed that *tshifasi* and *nzekenzeke* were practised at night. *Nzeke-nzeke* falls under *tshifasi*, but nowadays, people perform it as if it is *tshifasi*, at night. When children play *tshifasi* and *nzeke-nzeke*, they do so away from their homes. *Tzeketzeke* was performed during harvest time, between April and May, she added. It signified a special time for children to entertain themselves, a time for them to know each other. As with *tzeketzeke*, *tshifasi* was performed during harvest time, April to May. Singo (2018) reiterated that *tshifasi* was performed during autumn, in the evening when the moon is full.



Figure 4: Boys and girls performing, *tshifasi* during the night in an open place. Picture captured at Zwavhavhili Lwamondo by Madzivhandila, M 2019.

As shown above in figure 4 “When the moon is out at night”, Netshivhale (2017) pointed out, “it reminds me of back then, when it was the time for children to play *tshifasi*, *wo tshena wo to mboo!*, when the moon is full and bright.” Netshivhale (2017) added that children were allowed to play in places with short grass for their safety. A place called *zwihuni*, a plain area. Walking as a group, Netshivhale (2017) remembered the place where he used to play *tshifasi*, and pointed it out to us. To him, it was a way of having fun in the evenings. As an afterthought, Netshivhale, (2017) told us that they played *tshifasi* after doing all household chores for the day. *Tshifasi* was not played in darkness or in the middle of long crops like *mavhele*. Netshivhale (2017) reiterated that *tshifasi* was practised by innocent children who did not know much about life, who had not yet met a boy.

*Tshifasi* is performed under moonlight, but Mmbi (2017) said that he cannot remember the season when it was practised. When the moon started, the *tshifasi* music performance also began until the moon disappeared. One of the elderly people confirmed this assertion, adding that it is played in winter during *mahundwne*. It was performed during the harvest time when there is food (*thalane*). It was not performed in summer, autumn or spring. We arranged for the *tshifasi* and *mahundwane* when there was food. This was from April to June. In Tshivenda, they call it *mavhuyahaya*,” elaborated (Mmbi, 2017). It was not played at home or at the *musanda* like *tshikona*, which was performed at the Chief’s place. Children were not permitted to drink alcohol while practising *tshifasi*. Magwedzha (2017) from Makhado Municipality in contrast with other participants in Vhembe District confirmed that *tshifasi* took place at the Royal kraal, in respect of the King.



#### 4.7. THE MEANING OF *TSHIFASI* ACTIONS

The actions of *tshifasi* was appropriate for a male and female as children act like lovers. *Tshifasi* was performed from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m. But, this was not the actual time for *tshifasi* in years gone by. Boys and girls used to dance till midnight. In the late 1970s, however, when many indigenous games and music started to disappear, people began to adopt western lifestyles, which negatively affected Vhavenda culture. Early pregnancy also contributed to the demise of *tshifasi*, admitted (Magaba, 2021). On the other hand, *mahundwane*, a young children's game also changed, with children no longer allowed to sleep out, for example. Children came home after their plays. Thereafter, the *tshifasi* performance completely disappeared.



Figure 5: A girl u a losha, a sign of respect, captured at Lwamondo Zwavvhili. **Source:** Madzivhandila M, 2019

When children congregated from their different places, they organised themselves ready to play. See picture shown in figure 5, back then, girls were not allowed to stand, they knelt



down, *u losha* as a sign of respect. *U losha* in Tshivenda culture was also associated with agreement, a symbol to accept a boy when proposing a girl in *tshifasi actions*. Also, Vhavenda used *u losha* to reject something if they are not fascinated on or to halt someone such as the word *masha*, its well. It is said when someone is dancing for a long time, *u thadula*, to assist him or her Vhavenda use the action *u losha*. For instance, when one of them started a song, a boy moved (*a tshi khou dzedzeleka*) from his line to the girl's to choose the one he loves to dance with. Others sang songs, dancing and clapping, while the boy danced towards his chosen one. Then the boy would finger the girl he wants, and in turn, the girl would bow down in respect to that. If she does not like the boy, she would not bow to him. Sometimes the chosen girl would cry. To show his responsibility, the boy would smoothen her with gifts like *lukunda* or *dugu*. Nowadays, they use money for gifts. Having received the smoothening, the girl would then dance with her suiter, smiling all over the place, reciprocating the boy's love for her. A girl was not allowed to dance in the middle if not chosen. Sometimes the problem would be solved by allowing boys to repeat their performance and choose another girl so that they have two girls, just to accommodate her. When a boy gave *lukunda* that signalled real love. In our culture, when someone is about to get married, parents want to know whether their children are marrying into a respectable family or not. Issues such as witchcraft (*u lowa kana u silinga*) are investigated also. When a boy picked up a girl, it represented the love he had for her. Their dancing together represented marriage. When the girl knelt down, she signalled acceptance or agreement.

Picking up two girls was polygamous. A girl would cry as they danced, an indication that she was not accepting being the second wife. In explaining the meaning of *tshifasi actions*,

Singo (2018) said,

- Attire- funny clothes that mean improvisation.
- Two lines- males and females for a boy to choose the one he loves with ease.
- By choosing a girl- a boy shows love to the girl.
- By choosing more than one girl- a sign of polygamy.
- Dancing- expression of love and happiness.
- *U losha*- respect and accepting the boy's love.
- Present/gift- a sign to confirm love.
- Smile (*u setshelela*)- expressing one's joy.
- Crying (*u lila*)- rejection of being a second wife.
- Ululating (*mufhululu*)- expression of joy or appreciation.

Netshivhale Tshoteli (2017) said that during the performance, when a girl who is chosen by a boy refuses to dance with him that is a sign that she does not like him. But, to the one she loves, she responds quickly by kneeling as a sign of positive response. There are those girls who fail to get admirers, of course. Some girls are not lucky, and these were called *khombamutshelukwa*, young adult old enough to be married, but is not. *U khombatshelukwa* is not good in Tshivenda. Such girls were usually married by someone who also did not have a girl. Vhavenda or *vho- makhadzi* dealt with such girls' predicaments. In most cases, they would look for an old youth or a cousin to marry her.

Explaining, *tshifasi*, Masango (2017) illustrated that the *xinombelo*'s actions meant nothing in their area. To him, it was just an entertainment game for fun. Even if one boy would choose two or three girls, it meant nothing to them. He stressed that they satisfied each other by dancing in the centre, and thereafter, all was over. Masango (2017) said that what we referred to was a Vhavanḁa culture, not theirs. To them, a boy chose a girl and they performed in the centre, after which that boy would return to his side, the same for the girl. There was no meaning attached to it. The significance, however, was that children were not allowed to engage in love affairs. Dancing together did not translate into marriage in their culture.

On *tshifasi* performance, the boy who initiates would dance *u thatharea*, the movement of hands up and down towards someone he loves, and points to a certain direction. He would dance from corner to corner, just to frustrate others. This was the strategy used to search for girls. Others would suspect something, although the boy already knew who he wanted to dance with. Until he goes straight to the girl of his interested (*swatha*), the rest would be kept in suspense.

All those actions were done while singing. There were stages (*mirole*), in other words, participants were not equal. That is, some of the songs were sung by little ones. In Tshivenḁa, if one has a concern, starting a song led to the solution of one's problem. Small children were not involved in the performance, but gave their complaints in this way,

*Rine a vha ri nangi,*  
We are not preferred

*Tshinange, tshinange*  
*Vhaswatha vha hulu,*

they choose elders  
*Tshinange, tshinange*

*Vha shavha maduda,*  
they ignore our problem

*Tshinange. Tshinange*

The above song used to be sung by young children as part of *tshifasi* songs, when they did *tshidula*, moving up and down like *tshidula*. In other words, small children who were not yet mature to perform *tshifasi* used to beat the ground with hands while singing this song (Mmbi, 2017). *Tshilangano* is one of the familiar songs in the *tshifasi* performance. However, the way people sing it today is not the same as was in the past. Some, for example, say *chomi yanga* (my friend), others say *muthu wanga*, my person or my love. The lyrics were sung in diverse ways because of cultural changes. One of the songs that used to be sung and had a Shangaan influence goes like,

*Kikirikikiri nga ngomu ndunee!*  
Fighting inside my house.

*Ndi Ngwaneni na muzala wawe.*  
Is Ngwaneni and his cousin.

Further, the participants indicated that they used to collaborate with other groups next to their village. Their performance moves were different from those of Thengwe. Each group had its own stars, those who performed better than others. The Ha Tshikonelo children collaborated with the Vatsonga children. Most of the songs were sung in Shangaan.

#### 4.8. INSTRUMENTS

On the matter of instruments that were used to performed *tshifasi*, the informants revealed that hands and feet played an essential part. *Tshifasi* was done through clapping hands. In fact, there were no tangible instruments apart from singing songs. In other words, the sound was heard by people a distance from where children were performing. The combination of hands and mouths as instruments provided *tshifasi*'s flavour. Children used their mouth to sing, feet to dance and hands to clap. There are songs children use to sing when they performed.

Every village had its own *tshifasi* type of dance, observed the Ha Tshikonelo participants. Collaboration days were organised so that various groups would perform together in one place. The performances were started by clapping hands (*makwa*). No drums were played to accompany such performances. It was amusing, even though there were no other instruments played. People at a distance could hear hands clapping before seeing the performances. This shows that *tshifasi* is a dance best done through clapping, nothing more or less. There was no need for additional instruments. To Ramatsitsi (2017), *tshifasi* only required our hands to clap and mouths to sing.

Dima (2017) explained that those who performed *tshifasi* clapped their hands as instruments. That is, the hands were in tandem with the legs to produce systematic rhythms. Meanwhile, ululating encouraged dancers as they went through their paces. It also brought the girls' respect, and their abuse connected the dancers to the audience. Women needed to be respected. There are different ways of showing respect in Vhavanḁa culture. Some of these

are ululating, groaning, kneeling down, and taking off one's hat. Ululating is a joyous language used when consulting ancestors, and during weddings. This comes out naturally. Clapping hands produces varied sounds. It encourages dancers, and follows a certain pattern or sequence. There are various kinds of claps. That is,

- For boys from initiation, *zwigwamathukhwi*, the clap is *phuphutha*. *U phuphutha*, *gently clapping* is different from *u vhanda*. To clap.
- *U vhanda* has more sound than *u phuphutha*. *Tshifasi* used *u vhanda* with rhythm and *vhadzimu* is for *u phuphutha*.
- In *tshifasi*, they clap hands like in *malende*. It gives courage. The way children clap hands in *tshifasi* performance gives a pleasant background to the voices.

The hands go with the beat.

We clap hands in appreciation of something. Western culture clapping is not that powerful. It seems as if they are lazy to put hands together. One hand is motionless while the other moves, producing a weak sound. In contrast, Africans' hands go together. In *tshifasi*, they do not play *mirumba*. Some say they play *gokoko*, an empty big tin yet *gokoko* is a latest invention. Feet are counted as an instrument in *tshifasi*. The feet of a performer go together with the beat of a song and clapping.

## 4.9. TSHIFASI'S POPULARITY COMPARED TO OTHER TSHIVENḌA

### 4.9.1. Performances

It is a pity to find that most of the participants, unfortunately, said that they have forgotten many of the songs. That is, VhavenḌa indigenous music has lost their connotation in society. Acculturation has distorted VhavenḌa indigenous performances and dances. *Tshifasi* is no longer popular because children who should be doing it are busy with their school work. The participants gave their views regarding this issue. Some of the *tshifasi* songs at present are not enough. *Nyimbo dzau kaidza* educate and guide, but they are no longer sung. Storytelling and other indigenous practices need to be revived if we are to keep with our culture. It was hard for the elderly people to demonstrate how *tshifasi* is performed. The energy to demonstrate was no longer there. VhavenḌa say, “*khumba ye yavha ina muno, ludungela lutshehone*” meaning that even though the study is not utilising participatory observation, in some of the interviews the researcher was forced to perform with the participants. We attended most of the performances and the children sang the same songs. In most cases, the songs had the same rhythm, yet they were different *tshifasi* songs. The popular song was;

*Tshilangano ahee Tshilangano.*

*Tshilangano ndo mu ruma ha raliwe,*

*ha raliwe a vhuya na kusidzana,*

*kusidzana kutsuku kutambatuwa,*

*kwa ipfi lingaho musevhe...*

Back then, children were taught how to be well mannered. Ironically, children no longer have good manners as was the case back then. Through these songs, children learnt a lot of things including cultural values and morals. *Tshifasi* is not more popular than other Vhavanḁa indigenous dances. Originally, it was performed by people of a certain age, *thungamamu*, teenage girls and boys. *Tshifasi* is not common because it was a performance for the community.

#### 4.9.2. *Tshifasi*'s attire

All Vhavanḁa performances have their own specific attire. Putting on certain attire serves to identify a specific type of performance. These performances were used for a specific purpose. Attire dignifies the performance. Women and men had their own attire, which indicated their age and performance. No one wore someone else's attire. Traditionally, young boys and girls had their own attire. Vhavanḁa had their own favourite colours. Other attire which were different from the *tshifasi* were; boys, males- *tsindi*, and females had *shedo*, *nwenda*, *mapala*, *vhukunda*, *thavhula*, and *tshirivha*, to mention a few.



Figure 6: Children wear old clothes for bringing flavour to the performance, captured during Dzindi circuit school competitions. Source: Madzivhandila M. 2017



*Tshifasi* has its own attire that differs with other Tshivenda music performances. Its uniforms are now different from the ones used back then as presented above in figure 6. Today, when children perform *tshifasi*, they put on long jackets (boys). No specific uniform was designed for *tshifasi*. The participants indicated that the *tshifasi* uniform is important if the performance is to have flavour. For example, a boy would wear an oversized overall stuffed with materials for a big stomach. Sometimes with an artificial bear face for decoration and effect. Acting holding *mugo* (an old stick for an old man with old hat). Children used to wear old oversized torn clothes so that the dance could be exciting. Children were not supposed to wear tight clothes. The right clothes were their parents' old jackets and hats. The reason being that these made the dance to be entertaining and funny. Sometimes children wore *vhukunda* on legs. There was a type of *vhulungu* that was used for decoration,

*tshithivhelavivho* (Mmbi, 2017). Ramatsitsi, (2017) said that the uniform or attire for *tshifasi* was *shedo* for girls and *tsindi* for boys. Magwedzha (2017) added that there was no specific attire, but boys would usually wear *tsindi* and girls would wear *shedo*. The way children wore uniforms, was in line with their song. Sometimes a person had to sing like an old man. He would wear a big jacket to show that he was old, holding a walking stick. If they sung like an old man, they had to look like one (Netshivhale, 2017). In other words, Vhavenda are capable of acting. Also, when it came to *tshikona*, they wore like old people.

#### **4.10. CURRENT AND THE PAST PERFORMANCE OF TSHIFASI**

*Nzeke-nzeke* falls under *tshifasi*, but nowadays people perform it with *tshifasi*. It is performed at night. It is possible for the indigenous performances and dances to come back, and they

could be performed like back then. A child who played with others was morally good, but today's children isolate themselves from others. The one who plays knows how to communicate well with others, and she enjoys doing so. Technology now contributes towards children playing indoor games.

Those who do not play with others become aloof or unfriendly, do not want to socialise or share, and they become anti-social, parallel to others, and do not want to play with them. It was difficult for some of the participants to sing the *tshifasi* songs. It seemed as if they did not know much of these songs. The songs that were sung by the elderly people were audio recorded to preserve them. One of the participants admitted that she forgot some of the songs. The fact is that the *tshifasi* songs are plenty (Nepfumbada, 2017). One participant proclaimed that *tshifasi* music genre is no longer done as was in the past. To this end, Singo (2018) said, "The *tshifasi* of nowadays is different from that of the past because of our lifestyle and changes". Netshivhale Tshoteli (2017) added, "Nowadays, children act like boys, wearing overalls and men's clothes for decoration. *Tshifasi* is now done by girls alone, no boys". That is, girls now wear trousers to do the boys' actions. Back then, boys gave *lukunda*, the first gift, after which they gave *lusomi* as a sign of love for the girl.

It is unsafe for a girl child to be outdoors in the evenings. Also, *mahundwane* is affected by the same phenomenon (Mamatsharaga, 2017). Previously, children used to take stalks to construct temporary shelter for their games. Here, a boy would stay with his girl, simulating marriage. This was to prepare them for future marriage. Age did not matter. Everyone could play, but these days nobody does largely due to reasons pointed above. The participants

voiced out their displeasure with the fact that *tshifasi* is no longer practised like before. Children do not have much time to play as they are given lots of homework. Even at school, children are not given enough time to play.

These days, we no longer find a girl child playing with a boy child, especially teenagers. They are not taught from the word go. If *xinombelo* is reintroduced, elderly people would be involved to motivate children, even though it is not performed like the way it was back then (Masango, 2017). Even if *tshifasi* is done originally, children would still lack the knowledge and skills. Some of the Shangaans' indigenous music such as *xigubu* are no longer done like before. Here, boys would pick girls as a sign of love. When a boy chose a girl, it did not mean anything as it was just a game, unlike nowadays where it would lead to a girl sleeping with the boy. Back then, it was a taboo for a girl to sleep with a boy before marriage. That is why *tshifasi* is not performed like before (Magwedzha, 2017).

In terms of giving gifts, in the olden days, girls were given *lukunda*. When boys give a token of appreciation these days, they give money. Dima (2017) commented that children's performances no longer imitate certain moves. That is, hands should not dangle as if a person is walking or a soldier is marching. Banding the hands like as if in refusal of something is the right way of dancing *tshifasi*. This is in line with what a *mukulume*, male chicken and *phambo*, female chicken do. If one looks at what chicken wings do (*u thatharea*), they flap their wings up and down, *tshifasi* is done in that way. If children perform without imitating a hen, it becomes different to *tshifasi*. Dima (2017) indicated that the reason *tshifasi* is compared with the characters of a hen and rooster is its actions. Vhavenda used to associate

their everyday life with nature. So, the only animals or creatures related with *tshifasi* performance were chickens.

The hen wings' actions is the way of proposing each other. *Galaguni*, male chicken, uses its back wings. Someone can also here its sound, drrrrrrrrrrh! The *tshifasi* performance is a *kaalkoen* and *phambo* actions like. When *mukulume* do some actions, the *phambo* female imitates as well, playing, raising their feet to each other in response. That is why boys and girls' hands should be up and down in a V shape, and that is how *tshifasi* is performed. When the lead vocalist starts a song, simultaneously hands performers do some actions. From there, the boy as a *mukukulume* goes to the girl as a *phambo*. Simultaneously again, the feet act according to the hands' beat. Feet make a certain sound. Automatically, the voice goes together with hands. Many *tshifasi* songs use the same beat. One participant stated that her children know *tshifasi* music. She said that she was surprised by one of her children who knows how to play drums. Mkhombo (2019) and Venda Cultural Experience state that when Vhavanḁa indigenous music is performed in churches, community meetings, people no longer consider time and place of the performances.

#### **4.11. TSHIFASI REVIVAL**

It is possible for the indigenous performances to be revived. Singo (2018) said that *tshifasi* may come back in this modern world, the target should be schools, particularly primary children. Children are mostly at school during the day than in the streets. Netshivhale Tshoteli (2017) asserts that during *tshikona*, children learn to socialise with others. *Tshitasi* children were not interested in attending indigenous performances. Those from *musanda* engaged

themselves on these, and gained a lot traditionally. *Tshitasini* was so named because there were many Christians in that area. The participant volunteered to show us a group of children who practice *tshifasi*. Unfortunately, most of them were on vacation as it was during the festive season.

Masango (2017) observed that children would not be pleased to perform old fashioned dances as they are used to contemporary music. He said that he thinks the Chief should decree that children be taught *tshifasi*. According to Masakona (2018), this dance will never be performed like it used to, as modern-day children ask questions, and they follow instructions, and demand monetary compensation for doing that. Netshivhale (2017) pointed out that Vatsonga have a similar dance called *hi chifasi*. Children would be happy to perform this kind of indigenous music as they compete with other cultures, and share knowledge in the process. Dima (2017) observed that if *tshifasi* could be revived, target places should be crèche and primary schools where it would be done during the day. His argument is that children are at school during the day as opposed to the streets.

#### **4.12. FOCUS GROUP FROM GUNDANI, MUSINA**

The researcher spent a lot of time searching for people who could provide the information on *tshifasi* music around Musina. This was a bit challenging, but inspiring because it confirmed my fears that some of Vhavanḁa indigenous music were about to disappear.

We, however, managed to locate Gundani Village. Back then, this village was under Mutale Municipality. Talking to one of the participants, we realised that children at present are no

longer interested in performing indigenous dances. They take it as an abuse, so elderly people are discouraged from teaching them. We were then directed to three houses in the village whose owners were said to know a lot about *tshifasi*. We got two of those people, one was not available.

#### 4.12.1. The sociological foundation of *tshifasi*

On being questioned, the participants said that *tshifasi* was introduced while they were already married. *Tshifasi* was not there in their village. Long back, there was no *tshifasi* type of dances. Boys played alone, and the same with girls. The still remember is that we used to play *mahundwane*. No one was supposed to sleep away from home when playing *mahundwane*. Boys and girls also used to play *tshigombela*, *malende* and *domba*. We played another indigenous game known as *khadi*. The participants expressed their ignorance of *tshifasi*, asserting that they do not know about its origins as they were young by then. They said that when they played *mahundwane*, they used *tshikoli* and *thalane* to cook. These were leftovers after a harvest, and parents would deliberately leave such. It was common that children would come and use these.

When playing *children's* game, every one of us was given a fake husband. Boys were given fake wives. But, when changes came in our area, our life styles changed also. Boys used to catch birds in the veld and girls acted as mothers. They would cook and eat as a family. What is happening today was not done during our time. Today we easily find a boy and girl in the street walking side by side. When we see what our children do, we just keep quiet because they no longer have respect for us as their parents.

On asked whether they did *tshifasi* or not, the respondents said that they did not. It took some time before the group provided the origins of *tshifasi*. These days there is a new dance where a guitar is played and people dance to it. These are new musical innovations. In our youthful years, there was indigenous instruments such as *tshihwana*, *dende*, *lugube* and *mbila*. My sister who Ramukhuba knows how to play *mbila* since a few people can play it. We had the privilege to see *tshifasi* when we grow up. *Tshifasi* was known as *makhasane* in those days, specifically in our area. One of the songs went thus,

*Tshi a vhuya makhasane tshivhuya,*  
He is coming back Makhasane is coming back,

*Tshi a vhuya tsho kanga!*  
He is coming back!

*Tshi a vhuya makhasane tshivhuya,*  
He is coming back Makhasane is coming back

*Tshi a vhuya tsho kanga!*  
He is coming back!

To differentiate *makhasane* from *tshifasi*, the researcher suggested that the group demonstrates how the former was performed. This was because at times, elderly people confused issues. When one respondent was requested to demonstrate how *makhasane* was performed, she declined thus, “Aah! Aah! Ixaech! We cannot remember, we suggest you go ask others, they will show you how it was done. We have forgotten”. They, however, finally performed for us after having a change of heart. This managed to see how *makhasane* was done. It was different from *tshifasi* because when dancing *makhasane*, in the centre they pass each other. After the dance, they stand in different positions. It was interesting, particularly when they were reminding each other as elderly people. We observed their actions to see

whether they were fit enough to dance as they looked frail. The dancers (*vhomakhulu*) laughed as they danced in apparent joy. Their laughter was directed at each other as they seemed to have forgotten some of the songs and dance steps.

Responding to a question on who taught those dances, the discussants said that nobody did as there was no *malogwane* (a leader). To a question on who played *tshifasi*, the informants said that it was performed by elderly people, and as children, they had no knowledge about it. They only saw others dancing it, without actually getting to know where they got it from. During the performance, adults used to play *murumba* and big drums. There were boys and girls who would wear *musenzhe*. This was one of the indigenous trees whose leaves were worn by children while dancing. This reminded us of years back when we used to play outside our homes, doing various Tshivenda indigenous performances wearing *mahiya*. We then realised that what those ladies were doing was more or less the same as *musenzhe*.

#### 4.12.2. The role of *tshifasi*

Children who participated in performances such as *makhasane* and *tshifasi* acquire knowledge, for instance, in good behaviour. The group discussants explained the role of this musical performance in that it was performed at *musanda*, and hence children were kept away from crime. Children were taught respect and obedience. Through music that was performed, that is, no child would enter or cross the river without permission when elders were bathing there. Long back, Vhavana used to bath in rivers. Even when nude, they believed that they were safe because of the cultural morals and ethics as enforced through such indigenous performances. Another issue is that children were not allowed to eat from their parents'



*ndongwana* (plate). It was not easy and it was not acceptable for a child to get inside her/his parents' bedroom without being asked to do so. *Zwazwi tshi ila*, it was an abomination to enter where one's parents sleep. Such manners were taught and enforced through indigenous music performances.

On the concern of modern children coping with the old lifestyle, the discussants said that they do not these would cope. They stated that nowadays, children do not have morals as was the case before, that is, they do not respect elderly people. *Tshifasi* and other indigenous performances could help if they are reintroduced. For instance, nowadays children do not listen to anyone anymore. The participants also blamed television for this societal decay.

Children are no longer shy to say someone...mmmh! ... is pregnant, in front of elderly people. The Vhavanḁa's indigenous musical games played a significant role in the society as they helped guide children on how to behave, and respect others. Children do not feel ashamed to talk about issues that are disrespectful in the presence of their parents. In years past, if a *mazwale* (mother in-law) needed something in her daughter in-law's room, she would hardly enter it. If it was urgent, she would converse with her from outside. When a husband worked in Joni (Johannesburg) the money from him was received by the mother in-law, not by his wife. Such respect was inculcated through songs and dances to maintain peace and order in families. If the wife wanted to buy food, clothes or soap, she consulted her mother in-law. If the daughter in-law came back with the change from the shops, she would give it back to her mother-in-law.

#### 4.12.3. *Tshifasi* unites children together

Some of the stories, folklore, songs and dances in Tshivenda culture were used to unite the family. The focus group discussants said that *vhana vha khotsi vha thukhukana thoho ya nzie*, meaning that children of the same father share one head of a locust. Vhavenda believe on sharing as a family. Boys and girls learnt how to love each other and good creativity skills as they assisted each other on how to dance. Songs saturated with informative messages were sung during such performances. Vhavenda considered music as a powerful tool in which to educate their young ones. The discussants continued, stating that in their time, there was no tea and bread, but they were able to comfort themselves through songs and related performances. They also made joy for ourselves in order to forget about their problems. They used to eat *muroho* from January to December, and this was health to them.

#### 4.12.4. Benefit of participation in the *tshifasi*

Dealing with the issue of those who used to participate in *tshifasi* and those who did not, the discussants agreed that children who participated were protected against sexual molestations. Those who did not participate do not how to deal with challenges related with respect, discipline and morals. Those who attended *tshifasi* practices acquired knowledge about life. They were well prepared for marriage. Their parents were sometimes involved in assisting them to make proper choices. Children who did not participate were vulnerable to making erratic marriage decisions. That is, they did not even know *tshitavhe, u mona murahu ha nndu*, associated with virginity testing for girls. When elderly people investigated girls for

their virginity or lack thereof, it was to prevent teenagers from getting involved in sexual activities.

#### 4.12.5. Learning *tshifasi* through observation

The participants in the Gundani focus group discussion also indicated that during indigenous performances, an old lady would beat *murumba* interestingly. It was beautiful to practice *makhasane*. This happened when we were still young. As such, we were not aware of the difference between *tshifasi* and *makhasane*. One could also here small children shouting;

“mother! come and see! people are doing their things, *vhathu vha khou ita zwithu zwavho*. Their performance were like *chachacha*, dancing facing each other. *Tshifasi* is more or less a *chachacha* dance. Sometimes we would spend our time playing and bathing in rivers. That is the time when we would meet foreigners from our neighbouring states called *mabulantanga*. Some of the songs were taken from them because they used to perform their culture while we watched. Those people used to wear shorts, and they would ask to be directed to Thengwe. They spoke a language we did not understand. They carried food in their bags. They were a large group of men, women and children. That’s where we learnt that children simply learn things through observation as some of the performance actions were copied from those foreigners.

#### 4.13. FOCUS GROUP FROM THULAMELA AT MANAMANI

In Manamani, we spent a lot of time looking for people who know *tshifasi*. It was after we met Mulaudzi that we got directions and names of three people who knew *tshifasi*. After introductions, the discussions began.

##### 4.13.1. The understanding of *tshifasi*

According to those three, the understanding of *tshifasi* was informed by the fact that one of them performed *tshinzerere*. The performance was practised next to his house. They performed *tshinzerere*, not *tshifasi* in Dzwereni. There was a special ground prepared for children to practice *tshinzerere*. To this group, people from Lwamondo knew *tshifasi* as a game called *tshinzerere* that was performed by both boys and girls. It was like performing *tsingannededede*. *Tsingannededede* is an indigenous performance where children form a circle while dancing. To these discussants, there was no difference between their performance and *tshifasi*. They said that they needed such dances for the sake of our culture that is different from that of Vatsonga. They used to stay with Vatsonga, and this meant cultural mixes. The informants indicated that they played this game outside, away from the gate. They would perform *tshifasi* until 12 midnight sometimes.

##### 4.13.2. The origin of *tshifasi*

On the origins of *tshifasi*, the discussants said that when they grew up, they found other children playing it, and they also joined in the play. Later, they were also joined by those who were younger than them.

#### 4.13.3. How *tshifasi* is performed

Initially, boys used to play *tshifasi* using reed pipes. Girls sang and danced, while boys played instruments. When doing *tshifasi*, boys moved from their line to that of girls and danced in the centre. It was interesting, and one of the songs was,

*Tsingannededede vhonnyana,  
Riya mugeroni vhonnyana,  
Tsingannededede vhonnyana,  
Riya mugeroni vhonnyana*

When requested to demonstrate, the Gundani discussants said, “We can show you, but our legs are not able to move like before due to old age. *Yowee! Yowee!, yowee!*, my legs are so painful, but I will try to show you”. Another participant said, “I cannot show you, my leg is unable to move also”. Then they sang the following stanza,

*Tshilangano ahee tshilangano,  
Tshilangano ndo muruma ha Raliwedzha.....*

#### 4.13.4. The role of *tshifasi*

In those days, we were afraid to make love. We had a great respect for our parents. If any one of us misbehaved, we would be disciplined. We also organised *mahondwane* to refresh our minds when we were tired of performing *tshifasi*. In doing *mahondwane*, we prepared for the harvest, and then we did *thalane*, cooked food, did every piece of work done by our parents as we imitated them. Even when working, we entertained ourselves by singing songs that motivated us to work harder. A fake mother would say: “You are disturbing us, go away and play. We would then go out to the open space and perform indigenous performances such

as *tshifasi* and other games namely, *tshidimela haka matorokisi haka*. *Tsha makhuwa haka matorokisi haka*. This was for entertainment purposes.

All these events were like drama, yet it was a learning curve where we learnt a lot of stuff like to respect our parents and other people, to love one another, and how to cooperatively play with others. We also learnt skills needed for solving problems without our parents. What is done by our children today did not happen in our generation. If someone misbehaved, in Tshivenda they would say, ‘*zwi a tula*’, meaning that something bad would occur amongst us. Nowadays, it is easy to find a little child of ten years giving birth. It is no longer an issue since other people appreciate it. It is amazing to us because it was not there in our time as young people. Back then, we used to be accompanied by boys and nothing happened on the way. We just treated boys as our brothers. We used to respect each other. On other indigenous performances played, the Ha-Masia discussants stated that they could not remember because they were young, and it has been long since they last performed those games. “We enjoyed playing Vhavenda games, but we cannot remember how it was done”, they stated. Some of the songs are lost on the way, though those songs were educative. We were taught that if someone falls in love with a boy, that person would be disciplined. Those were the Chief’s pronouncements.

On the issue of our children’s wayward behaviour, the participants said that they think western education is to blame. It is difficult to trace where *tshifasi* originated from, and currently, there is less about it. The participants maintained that during their days, there was

no formal education. Through *tshifasi* and other indigenous performances, they became trained and informed in different spheres of lives.

Through such indigenous music, it seems as if we got nothing but the principles of motivation and how to live properly. For instance, some of the teachings we got from the time when girls were taught by grandmothers, boys would be in the initiation schools known as *thondoni*. From there, boys were given *lukunda*, a sign that they were grown up (*u vhina*). Elders organised celebrations for boys (*vhutambo*). As a sign of respect, when a boy met girls in the river, he would give them *mulayo* to show that he is from an initiation school. The boy knew that he could not just cross the river. Such information about Vhavanḁa culture is about to vanish. *Tshifasi* could be revived to make us remember the way we were trained and this could also help the coming generation.

#### 4.13.5. *Tshifasi* seems not popular

The group was also given a question why *tshifasi* is not popular like other Vhavanḁa traditional practices. The participants indicated that *tshinzerere* was not practised at the *musanda*, which is why it is not popular like other dances. As such, this kind of performance is not common amongst modern children as it is no longer performed in communities. Also, they do not know *tshifasi* because they live in the contemporary world where culture has no meaning. The problem is that modern children do not have respect, even though they are guided. It is very simple for them to speak vulgar words and not worry about it. They normally use these words, “I do not care”, as they use bad language. Sometimes they respond very badly, such as *vha ni vhudza na nga ha vhomme au vha kalekale vhofaho*, telling an

elderly people about their ancestors. Generally, Vhavenḁa traditional music is no longer as popular as it used to.

#### **4.14. FOCUS GROUP FROM LWAMONDO, THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY**

##### *4.14.1. Tshifasi* origin

*Tshifasi* is a form of performance whose origin is unknown. It is danced amongst young boys and girls of the ages 12 - 14 years. It is a form of playful flirtation amongst themselves, creating relations and, discipline and respect amongst peers. Good leadership is also nurtured through this dance. Older teens were not allowed to play as they had gone through such traditional rites of passage that made them men and women. Parents would be called to supervise the dances.

##### 4.14.2. How is *tshifasi* performed?

Standing facing each other ensured that young boys would clearly see their desired partners. This was a playful gesture of picking a wife, as some would end up in courtship and eventually marrying each other after the girl had completed her rites of passage into womanhood. In some instances, the boy would take two girls to simulate a fighting scene between the two. The winning girl would then be the one who gets to be his wife (all this was playful). The boys wore *tsindi*, while girls put on *shedo*. In these days, boys wear coats and girls dress anyhow in order to act out scenes similar to *malende*. Young girls would bow their heads in agreement with the courtship. If she says no, another boy dances with her. This teaches us that if one is not accepted, one would still get someone else.



Previously, Vhavenda would marry their partners by simply looking at their pictures. They would accept the proposal just like how people do in social media platform dating. *Tshifasi* was mostly danced at night when children played by themselves. If parents allowed their kids to play now, it would be a good way to reintroduce it. But, rules would have to be discussed before the performance of *tshifasi* began. We need to educate our children before they develop an interest in doing these dances, and learning about their culture. The songs helped teach young girls and boys about their bodies and how to live, as the songs had a message. Songs such as *ariedeli* (we don't sleep) *Vho Jacka munna wo vhidha* (Jack an ugly man) and *he inwi* Sophie (you Sophie), were some of the songs sung then. A girl dances with her head facing down as a sign of respect of her courting partner.

We are slowly losing our culture because of churches that vilify our traditions. *Tshifasi* was just playful dancing amongst children to counter their misbehaviour. It is currently not as popular because children are sometimes ashamed of dancing with a partner. It teaches those courting rules and rites of passage, and this sets them apart from other children.

#### **4.15. FOCUS GROUP FROM NZHELELE AT TSHAVHALOVHEDZI**

We had a group interview led by *musanda* vho Mmbudziseni, a Chief in one of the villages in Nzhelele. She was eager and ready to assist with information about *tshifasi*. She also arranged for a visit to a local radio station, Nzhelele FM. She organised other people to participate in our group interview. It was advantageous to us since it was not easy to arrange for a group interview about *tshifasi*. These were traditional leaders, children and elderly people who once performed *tshifasi*. Children were present to do the *tshifasi* performance

and also to learn how actions are done. In her speech before we started the interviews, *musanda* indicated that she had opened a traditional school in the village, Vusanitshikale Community Development. She said that anyone who needed information about Vhavenda culture and the Tshivenda performances could get the information from that school. *Musanda* also welcomed us since the researcher was accompanied by photographers and other assistants in notes taking. When *musanda* concluded her speech, she knelt down (*u losha*), thereby opening up the discussions.

#### 4.15.1. *Tshifasi*

On *tshifasi*, the discussants acknowledged that it is an indigenous performance for boys and girls, and was performed in the evenings (*hu tshi khou dzedziwa*). It was played when all people were relaxed at home after the day's work. Vhavenda children were entertained through *tshifasi*. Children were not allowed to disturb their parents when they were resting. They would go outside (*khroni*) and entertain themselves through playing different indigenous games. On this focus group discussion, *tshifasi* performance was explained the same way other informants had narrated earlier. But, the difference was that in their narration, they did not care whether it was a young adult or little children. There was no age limit.

#### 4.15.2. *Tshifasi* actions

Any one from those two lines was allowed to start a song of his/her interest. There was no arrangements made for a boy to start dancing with a girl. The one who started went like *u dzedzeleka*, dancing towards to the one he or she loves. From there, the girl knelt down (*u losha*) in front of a boy she liked to dance with. The chosen boy did not just dance, he gave

his girl partner a gift (*nyanisi*) as a sign of love. The girl bowed in response. After that, they both moved to the centre (*luvhandeni*) to dance together, while others sang and clapped their hands.

There were also other actions where two boys would fight for one girl. This mostly happened when two boys showed an interest in one girl. They would fight until one defeats his opponent to pick that girl. When everyone else was done, there would often be one girl left without a suiter. According to our culture, this was bad omen for the future of that girl. She would most likely fail to get a suiter in future. Under such circumstances, the girl's parents would be involved where they consulted *vhomaine*. They wanted to know how best their child could be assisted. *Tshifasi* meant the confirmation of love between two people.

#### 4.15.3. The role of *tshifasi*

When children performed together, they did not know what was happening there. To them, it was just a game. But, parents knew what their children were doing, learning how to choose a future partner. Children also learnt that in future, they would have families of their own choice. Before the introduction of *tshifasi*, parents used to choose life partners for their children. *Tshifasi*, therefore, promoted the idea that children should choose their partners themselves. It was a sign that love comes from the heart, and should not be forced on someone. In general, boys were taught how to propose, and girls were taught loyalty or submission. Boys who did not have the skills to propose could be seen during *tshifasi*.

After *tshifasi*, everyone would go back home as they would be tired. The advantage of these kinds of child performances was that there was no time for them to think about or to engage in crime and other evil acts as an advantage. Children became tired due to dancing, there was no time for them to play. They danced energetically, clapping hands to produce big sounds. In this way, there was no time for them to engage in immoral activities such as sexual intercourse.

#### 4.15.4. Difference of *tshifasi* from other performances

*Tshifasi* songs were and are different from *tshigombela*, *tshikona*, *malende* and other types of Vhavanḁa indigenous music. One would hear *tshifasi* sound as we practised. We also practised *malende*, *tshigombela* and *tshifasi*. *Tshifasi* did not have *ngoma*, we use *mirumba* these days. The performance was accompanied by clapping and singing. Sometimes people used small tins and hands to make the beat in later years. This changed because of time. Children did not use *ngoma* as an instrument because it was big for them to carry to the gate (*khroni*) from the house where it used to stay, compared with *mirumba*. *Mirumba* were easy for them to carry as they are portable.

#### 4.15.5. The origin of *tshifasi*

On *tshifasi* origins, the discussants stated that it was children's performance for entertainment. *Tshifasi* united children. The performance was a game because in the evenings, children would gather to do storytelling, folklores and sing songs. They did this during *u dzedza* (overnight). *Tshifasi* is related to *mahundwane*, where children do fakefamilies with each other. They do everything normally practised in the real family set-

up. Also, with *tshifasi*, children chose their loved ones to dance with, acting as future parents in the process.

#### 4.15.6. The meaning of *tshifasi* actions

The discussants interpreted the above differently. Some said they do not ululate in *tshifasi* as it would be just children playing. Standing in two lines means that everyone has a choice in life. Bowing is a sign of respect, as our culture demands respect of us all. In this case, the girl respects the boy she agreed to be part of. If a girl does not bow, it means she is not interested in being part of that boy. Obviously, if a girl refuses a boy would try his luck with another girl. When children face each other, they want to see each other clearly for an informed choice. The boy cannot find a good wife if he stays in one place. That is why Vhavenda say *wasa tshimbila udo mala na khaladzi*.

In addition, *khuhu ya phambo ai imbi mutsho*, Vhavenda say. When one sees boys standing on the upper side, it means that they are the head, they are the leaders. It has an important meaning in this performance. Girls must show submission to their husbands. That is why girls are in the lower side. Even when doing intercourse, a man is always on top of a woman. But, in these days, it is not like before, it is vice versa. I call that Satanism because it is not customary to do like that in Vhavenda culture, one participant explained. In other words, no matter what a wife does, she is always under her husband. She must respect her husband always. Another issue is that a woman is not allowed to propose a man in our culture. Even if a woman is interested in a man, she cannot open her mouth and say ‘I love you’. It is not allowed.

#### 4.15.7. Attire

The *tshifasi* dress code did not include overalls, funny hats, and big tummies. It was not like that then, but nowadays children perform for competitions. They decorate or improvise to gain marks. We used to wear our traditional clothes (*nwenda*), a small piece of cloth. Boys would wear *tsindi* (short trouser). In fact, there was no uniform in *tshifasi*. *Tshifasi* is a family making game, and hence no one would love an angry man or woman. All *tshifasi* performers were always happy during the performance.

#### 4.15.8. *Tshifasi* time

*Tshifasi* was done in any season, as long as there was a full moon for children to see each other. The dance is no longer popular amongst children because it used to be performed in the evenings, not during the day. In the afternoon, they were busy with their daily work. It is possible to resuscitate *tshifasi* through the Chiefs, and other community structures. For example, I started this traditional dance in my house with my children and now I have a well-known school in this community. The community joined me because someone started something. It also inspires parents as we perform during the day after school. It would not be possible if we did not start from somewhere. I can also advice those who are interested to start it in their communities. That is, start with people who are next to you, from there the children would come one by one. I started with my children and my grandchildren. I managed to get a small drum in my house, and children like acting fun.

#### 4.15.9. The sociological function of *tshifasi*

Children become physically fit when they do traditional dances. They avoid doing drugs, alcohol and they are protected from sexual transmitted diseases. Look, these days, a child as young as nine years already knows about sex. But, those engaged in *tshifasi* become responsible young people. What I have noticed is that once a child tries to be away from the performances, soon rumours spread that she is pregnant. The school I started in my house helps keep children busy so that they grow up as responsible citizens. On top of this, the government has come in with some assistance. It helps by providing food to our children since children came here hungry. After school, they head straight for practice here. Sometimes one or two might make a mistake. Also, children learn cleanliness like how to care for themselves or to clean their houses like *ushula*. We train them while they are still young, for it would not be possible to guide him or her when he is old.

On our rehearsals we also assist children with their education. We advise them to come with books and we get people to assist with writing homework. They also help each other because we always say that education is the key to good life. Someone who does not afford basic commodities is limited in life if he or she is not educated. We do not encourage children to perform *tshifasi* only, we also encourage them to study hard. After producing well-trained children in *tshifasi*, we send them to other communities to teach others. We are quite sure they can teach others. Those who rehearse know household activities such as *u reda khuni* for their future use.

#### 4.15.10. Why it is called *tshifasi*

On why the name *tshifasi*, the informants said that it was given due to the fact that two people join together in love. Given *tshifasi*, the informant sang the following song,

*Mavhiligamma, mavhligamma huwee!* (Lead singer),

*Mavhiligamma, mavhligamma huwee!* (Backing vocalists),

*Mavhiligamma, mavhligamma huwee!* (Lead singer),

*Mavhiligamma, mavhligamma huwee!* (Backing vocalists).

#### 4.15.11. *Tshifasi* music for love proposal

This song is a special song for a boy and a girl during affection times, according to the participants. This was the first time the researcher ever heard this type of a song since she started collecting data. Here, the girl is allowed to move from her line to the boys' to choose the one she loves to dance with. When the girl is in front of boys, it becomes difficult for them to go to her for a dance, in other words to propose. Boys leave that girl dancing alone without entertaining her. They think and conclude that there is something wrong with her. To the boys, she is selling her body in order to transfer some sexual transmitted diseases to them. Boys were scared of being infected by a certain type of illness known as *tshimbambamba*, a type of sexual transmitted disease. The above song has its own interpretation. The message in the song, according to the participants is that, it is not usual for a woman to propose a man, especially in our culture. When children dance in *tshifasi*, boys always standing opposite girls. Boys propose girls. But in Nzhelele Tshavhalovhedzi, it is not like that, girls proposed to boys. In figure 7 the girl moved from her position to the



centre towards boys as indicated below. Vhavenda say “*khuhu ya phambo ai imbi mutsho*”, meaning that a woman is not allowed to propose a man.

#### 4.15.12. *Tshifasi* performance

In this focus group discussion, the performance was demonstrated inside the studio, but later they went outside because the space was too small for them to demonstrate their actions. We were forced to move outside even though it was too hot. Children were not able to express



Figure 7: A girl moving from her line to propose boys, captured at Lwamondo Zwavhvhili.  
Source: Madzivhandila M, 2019

themselves inside the studio. More interestingly, the participants were much excited to perform. They were so excited such that they also performed other indigenous dances such as *tshigombela* and *malende*. They were smart, wearing their traditional clothes such as

*minwenda, misisi, makunda, malungu, thavhula* (towels) and *zwickipa* (t-shirt). The dancers were disciplined as they were trained. If *musanda* gave an instruction, they responded positively. More interestingly, *musanda* also performed, leading some of the songs. Her role was to motivate the young ones to love their culture, and hence promote Vhavanḁa heritage. Their dancing techniques were different from those done in other areas we visited. They had their own styles, and they were nice and inspiring. This is one of their *tshifasi* songs,

*Wali vhona liduna lau vhifha, Khelo!*  
*Litshi toda musadzi wau naka, Khelo!*  
*Wa li vhona, wa li vhona, Khelo!*  
*Li tshi toda musadzi wa lunako, Khelo!*

The other song was,

*Tshifasi ndi mini,*  
*Ndi muthannga mutuku,*  
*Ahee ndi mini,*  
*Ttshifasi ndi mini,*  
*Ndi muthannga mutuku,*  
*Ahee ndi mini,*  
*Malele hae,*  
*Ndi khou ni toda,*  
*Malele hae,*  
*Malele hae,*  
*Dani ri tuwe,*  
*Ri yo tangana wee,*  
*Malele hae mulamboni,*  
*Nne thifuni,*  
*nne thifuni wee!*  
*Nne ndo rumiwa,*  
*Malele hai ida ri tuwe (response),*  
*Malele hae!*  
*Nne a thi funi,*

*Malele hae nne ndo rumiwa*

This song is about a boy and girl communicating. Years back, a boy would only sing a song when he needed to talk to a girl. This was an ordinary conversation, not a proposal. During those times, there were no pens or papers for writing. People used songs to communicate, even to propose each other. When a boy started a song, a girl responded by singing that song too, particularly when they longed to see each other, or if they wanted to do something together.

4.15.13. The difference between *tshifasi* and *malende*

During group interviews, the participants also performed *malende* even though it was not the study focus. *Musanda* included *malende* in their performance to demonstrate the need for Vhavanḁa indigenous music in our society. She allowed the group to perform *malende* in order to welcome us. Here, the concern was that Vhavanḁa music is no longer considered. She explained that modern musicians perform *malende* in a distorted way. *Musanda* decried the fact that elderly people no longer involve themselves on such issues. Most people are busy with church activities. That is why they are no longer serious with cultural issues. She explained that *malende* is also part of Vhavanḁa indigenous performances for elderly people, when they are drunk. The performance is practised anyhow. Anyone can lead a song, mostly the one who starts a song dances. It differs with *tshifasi* as the latter is performed by boys and girls for entertainment. There is no order as to who dances first in *malende*. Today, children include this dance in their performances, especially in school competitions.

#### 4.15.14. The difference of *tshifasi* and *tshigombela*

The *tshigombela* songs are not the same as *tsingannedede* of *tshifasi*. They are different from that of *tshifasi* because the last word ‘*dede*’ in *malende* the notes are high, and the voice goes up. Whereas in *tshifasi* ‘*dede*’ the notes are low. Also, the rhythm is not the same. In *tshifasi* song, the lyric is ‘*vhonnyana*’ and in *malende*, ‘*vhonnyana*’ words are not there, the participant said. For additional information from *Tshavhalovhedzi*, we went to the Dzata Ruins. The Dzata Ruins are one of the memorial sites in South Africa where one can find the history of Vhavenḁa in pictures, the history of Dzanani and other villages around Nzhelele, and the indigenous instruments and other related artefacts. Another reason was that it was easy to find the primary data regarding the origins of *tshifasi* and other Vhavenḁa dances and music.

#### 4.16. FOCUS GROUP FROM LIM 345 AT HAMASIA TSHIPUSENI

The participants who know about indigenous music from the focus group above were traditional healers who are also part of the indigenous knowledge holders. Marandela (2017) is a traditional healer who assist people from home. We found her with clients, but when she was done assisting them, she attended to us. She explained her understanding of *tshifasi*.

She explained *tshifasi* as *tshinzerere* since these two share the same type of dance. Other participants confirmed this. *Tshifasi* for boys and girls was performed at night where children clap and sing songs. *Tshifasi*, according to the focus group from Lim 345 (Hamasia Tshipuseni), was performed by children when they entertained themselves. Both girls and boys performed *tshifasi* songs in the full moon at night. This was in open space so that they

could observe every movement, and to see each other clearly. It was not performed during the day, according to the participants. Not everyone was allowed to do this kind of performance, only teenagers at puberty stage were allowed since they knew nothing about sexual matters. This kind of performance was not planned for those who were married or toddlers. Little children had their own music and songs suitable for their age. Similarly, married people had their own performance since it was suitable for them. *Tshifasi* was played in winter when there was less work.

Another reason to perform *tshifasi* in moon light was that children wanted to pick out the one they loved to perform with. Three other participants added that there was another performance called *ngosha*. *Ngosha* was performed by both girls and boys as was *tshifasi*. It was played during the full moon, at night. It was performed in winter at the Royal homestead. Villages also competed against each other in this village (Marandela, 2017). In this kind of performance, girls performed with each other, and the same applied to boys.

#### 4.17. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter discussed data collected in the Vhembe District. Participants from the Thulamela, Mussina, Makhado and LIM 345 Municipalities were interviewed. Through the data gathered and presented, the researcher managed to identify what *tshifasi* is, and how it is different from other Vhavenda indigenous music. In addition, it ascertained *tshifasi*'s origins, why it is called *tshifasi*, who performed it and how, its functions in our society and, where and when it was performed. Also, the chapter dealt with the meaning of *tshifasi* actions, the instruments played during its performance and how they were played. The

reasons why *tshifasi* is not popular than other Vhavenda dances are also highlighted, its attire and why that, how do the performers reacted (emotions) as they performed the dance, and why such emotions. The study also looked at whether *tshifasi* is currently performed as was in the past. This involved the why and how *tshifasi* could be revived in modern perspective. Performance action photos on *tshifasi* are shown. This is to show how *tshifasi* was performed, moreover, how it differs from other Vhavenda indigenous music performances such as *tshikona*, *malende*, *tshigombela*, *tshikanganga* and others. Also, the songs were included since *tshifasi* cannot be complete without them.

All the participants in Thulamela, Musina, Makhado and LIM 345 were treated the same way, in line with the research ethics, although the researcher experienced some challenges here and there. During the research process, the researcher sometimes became innovative in finding the relevant information from the participants. Particularly, with elderly people who are no longer energetic since they last practised this genre years back. Thus, the chapter provided a nuanced version of *tshifasi* as a Vhavenda indigenous music genre.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses and interprets data as discussed in chapter 4. Data are analysed and interpreted following the research questions' sequence. In other words, this is made following themes formulated from the research questions. In this way, the study determines, as indicated in chapter 6, whether the research questions have been properly answered, thereby solving the study's problem. The said themes help trace the sociological foundation of *tshifasi*, its agents and their roles in the making of *tshifasi* and its sociological function.

Data collected through individual interviews and focus group discussions are analysed and interpreted in conjunction with those from the secondary sources. At this juncture, it suffices to analyse and interpret data concerning the *tshifasi* performance in general. This provides the background to the origins of *tshifasi*.

#### 5.2. WHAT IS *TSHIFASI*?

The researcher managed to interview the participants from four local municipalities, namely, Thulamela, Musina, Makhado and LIM345. The participants' understanding of the origins of *tshifasi* was almost similar. All participants from the four municipalities agreed that *tshifasi* is a music performance practised by boys and girls. However, those from Musina

added that girls were not allowed to play with boys. This means that parents in this municipality viewed *tshifasi* through a different lens. To them, it was not proper for boys and girls to play together as this would not suit the way they interpreted their local culture and tradition. Instead, their playing together was accomplished through an indigenous game known as *mahundwane*. *Tshifasi* is different from other Tshivenda performances such as *malende*, *tshigombela* and *tshikona*, which means “turning back”. One considers the way they are performed, their attire, the place and time of their performances, the age group and the songs.

#### 5.1.1. The purpose of *tshifasi*

Back then, parents and elderly people had enough time to teach their children cultural values (to stay away from sex), while they were still young, through indigenous music and games. *Tshifasi* was used to keep children busy, and hence they stayed away from sexual activities. They collect each other by singing the song *A ri edeli* (see figure 10). However, *tshifasi*'s cultural value, that used to be transferred from one generation to another, is no longer there. This has led to the high number of children and women who are raped every day. It has become a serious challenge to communities that can only be solved through reverting to the use of *tshifasi* music to empower children while they are still at their tender age. *Tshifasi* was also done to amuse boys and girls when they became bored. It was a pastime meant to keep children occupied in the evenings.

The difference between *tshifasi* and other performances is that the former has songs, while the latter do not. Generally, *tshifasi* is an indigenous performance that originated from the



need to help socialise boys and girls as they play together. It is not designed to be performed by one gender only (Magaba, 2017). The game ceases to be *tshifasi* if it is only performed by the same sex group, lamented the informants. Since Vhavanḁa arrange their indigenous music and games for a purpose, *tshifasi*'s purpose was to help children grow up responsibly, with respect, and hence knowing their place in society. Children of different sexes had no problem playing together. According to the informants, children could spend a week together in the same place without engaging in sexual activities as is the case now. Thus, *tshifasi* emphasised respect for each other, and for the community, as it was embarrassing for the children to be caught by elders in compromising positions.

*Tshifasi* promoted social cohesion and togetherness amongst children. One of the participants confirmed that in years past, a girl child was made to stay for a week with the neighbour's boy, where they did not even think of having sex with each other as they were taught that they were brothers and sisters. In fact, boys and girls were trained to socialise together. This also taught those youngsters tolerance, particularly boys. Based on such upbringing, one can point out that cases of rape were minimal, if not unheard of then. It is doubtful that today's children can be that disciplined when provided with such an opportunity. It is not guaranteed that a boy and a girl can be made to stay together without their indulging in sex. This view is informed by the current lack of proper upbringing of our children.



Figure 8: Boys and girls calling each other using the song *A re edeli*, captured at Lwamondo, Zwavhabili.  
Source: Madzihzndila, M., 2019.

### 5.1.2. *Tshifasi* season

*Tshifasi* was originally performed at night, as pointed out by the participants from the municipalities. Playing at night was ideal in that by then, as has been noted, boys and girls would be done with their family chores. The moonlit environment was chosen so that children could clearly see each other. Its use was necessitated by the lack of electricity and tower lights. This means that when the sky was overcast, children could not perform owing to the invisible environment. Performing *tshifasi* in summer was rather difficult owing to bad weather. Winter was the best time for performances that were dependent on moonlight. It was safe to play when there was natural light. Vhavenḁa took advantage of the moonlight to socialise with each other through storytelling and folktales.

Boys and girls used to play indigenous games together, away from their parents. This also contradicts what the informants from three municipalities claimed with regard to the teaching

of *tshifasi*. In this way, children did not interrupt their parents when they were resting, and hence played their *tshifasi* games by the gate (Livhadelo, 2017).

On the other hand, Netshivhale (2017) had a different understanding of *tshifasi* from that of his compatriots. He stated that *tshifasi* was done any time when children were free. To him, *tshifasi* was seen like any other musical games, such as *tshigombela*, that are played during the day. According to his understanding, *tshifasi* was done either in daylight or at night. The night *tshifasi* was not conditional upon the moon, argued Netshivhale (2017).

Given the above, it is clear that indigenous games and music are an integral part of Tshivenda children's upbringing. Children, it seems, enjoyed playing such games at night, because night games gave them freedom to express themselves out of their parents' prying eyes. As Mmbi (2017) put it, "They used to play until the moon disappeared." This indicates that children played for longer hours, dictated by the availability of the moonlight. This makes us question Netshivhale's assertion that children played even if the moon was not available. How possible was this, given that it is sometimes pitch dark when the moon is not there? In view of the fact that it is not only dangerous to play in the dark, but also scary for young children to do so, one is compelled to accept the idea that *tshifasi* was performed in full moonlight. To this effect, a Vhavenda proverb on *tshifasi* goes: *la kovhela u late mbado vhusiku ndi dada lia luma* (during the night throw away the axe, it is dangerous, you can be hurt). According to the majority version, some of the Tshivenda music and performances such as *tshifasi* were more interesting when played in the evenings than during the day. It seems as if children learnt something from playing such games. Milubi (2019) explained that another

reason for boys and girls to perform *tshifasi* in the evenings was for girls to develop trust in boys. Girls were initially taught not to trust boys.

### 5.1.3. Who performs *tshifasi*?

One participant in Makhado objected that there was no age limit as older youth were also allowed to practise it; it was just like any other game for entertainment. The participants confirm that music creates a social space for children to show their creativity, styles and skills when playing together. This is the period when children need to learn from others how to be responsible, when they need more attention. It is the time when they get into sexual activities, and a large number of girls usually fall pregnant as a result. In short, *tshifasi* was done at the puberty stage to protect children against immorality. Mashianoke (2013) disagree, however, that there is no age limit. They state that *tshifasi* is a cultural dance for Vhavanḁa boys and girls. These are boys and girls who are not yet married. Nowadays, however, Tshivendḁa indigenous practices are performed by anyone owing to the prevailing cultural dynamics. What is important about Tshivendḁa indigenous performances is that they kept children busy, giving them no chance to misbehave. After playing, they would rest as they would be tired. *Tshifasi*, therefore, was performed (as already mentioned) to keep boys and girls away from mischief.

#### 5.1.4. Description of *tshifasi* performance

As stated above, *tshifasi* was performed when boys and girls stood opposite each other. The participants said that the two straight lines were arranged in order for them to see each other clearly. A boy would be able to see *khomba*, his partner or the loved one, clearly. This was echoed by all participants, except for the Musina ones. To them, at the centre the performers pass each other. Their version is contrary to the general belief that in *tshifasi*, the boy and the girl hug each other, after which the boy takes the girl to his side to indicate marriage. Based on these contradictory versions, one may say that *tshifasi* was played differently from place to place. Such dichotomous narration of how *tshifasi* is performed is more prevalent in Musina. At this stage, it was difficult to ascertain why people in this municipality perform *tshifasi* differently from other municipalities.

In Vhavanḁa culture, a boy is not supposed to touch a girl's more intimate body parts. This was to prevent the two from ending up doing prohibited activities such as sex; but in this special game, they hugged each other to indicate their love. This was done when the performance was at its peak. The Musina issue should be understood in the context of the area being a mixture of cultures, and hence their *tshifasi* performance is slightly different from that in other municipalities. This assertion is shown to be true by the difficulties the researcher experienced in finding prospective participants who were knowledgeable in *tshifasi*.

It should be noted that *tshifasi* is known by different names in the Vhembe District, depending on where one is in the district. Those in Nzhelele (Vhalovhedzi) and Lwamondo call it *tshinzerere*. Those in Hatshikonelo know it as *tshinombelo*, as they are next to where Batsonga live.

In Haxigalo, they call it *xinombelo*. Meanwhile, the Ha-Matsa, Nzhelele and Makhado residents combine *tsingannededede* (one of the indigenous games for children) and *tshifasi*. It is believed that this was meant to enhance the value of these two performances to children. In view of the different names ascribed to *tshifasi*, it must be understood that this has nothing to do with its performance. The performance remains the same. This means that its value and purpose in society is the same throughout. Another bone of contention arises when it comes to the origins of *tshifasi*. People from Makhado see *tshifasi* as having its roots in *tsingannededede*. This is the same *tshifasi*, but referred to by different names. An explanation for this might be that Vhavanḁa live side by side with Batsonga and Basotho people, thus there is cultural fusion. This also obtains with other cultures where they use certain Tshivendanḁ words, music, songs and games to boost the quality of their indigenous forms of entertainment.

#### 5.1.5. *Tshifasi* attire

According to the data collected from Lwamondo, the boys wore *tsindi*, and girls had *shedo*, *nwenda*, *mapala* or *vhulungu*, *vhukunda*, *thahula*, and *tshirivha*. These were traditional clothes that were used for dancing. Nonetheless, *tshifasi*'s dance attire nowadays is different from the one used then. Today, when children perform *tshifasi*, the boys put on long jackets.

This was corroborated by the participants from Thulamela, who indicated that there is no specific uniform designed for *tshifasi*. They indicated that the *tshifasi* uniform is crucial if the performance is to have flavour. Generally, *tshifasi* does not have a specific uniform. Children perform in their own clothes. This is because they perform it alone, out of sight of the elders. It could be argued that those who claim the use of uniforms here base their claims on *tshifasi* being performed on special occasions to entertain guests. This then is different from when *tshifasi* is performed by children as a leisurely night game. In this case, there is no justification for uniforms. Although it is true that uniforms make a group unique and presentable for any performance, in the case of children socialising on their own at night under the bright moonlight, a uniform is irrelevant. In short, *tshifasi* is an indigenous performance for socialising boys and girls (Mashianoke, 2013), so there is no need for uniforms.

#### 5.1.6. *Tshifasi* instruments

It should be repeated, though, that the *tshifasi* instruments are hands, feet and mouths. That is how we identify the creativity of the Vhavanḁa. Also, other songs mentioned herein use body parts such as fingers as well. *Mirumba* and *ngoma* instruments are used in this contemporary world as improvisation. It was not only *mirumba* and *ngoma* that are used, but also *zwikotikoti* and *magokoko*. However, these instruments were not originally used during the *tshifasi* performance.

### 5.1.7. *Tshifasi* and *malende*

*Tshifasi* was as popular as *malende* back then. This was raised by one informant, who indicated that another Tshivenda indigenous performance that counted amongst the major performances was *malende*. Vhavenḁa have had diverse indigenous and cultural music to suit their lifestyles at any given time. For example, *malende* music was specifically performed by people during beer drinking parties, as pointed out by the participants. This shows that special occasions called for special and particular types of music. Blacking (1962), Mugovhani (2016) and Ramaite-Mafadza (2016) discuss this music genre in detail, where they indicate that it was performed by anyone in happy times.

## 5.2. AGENTS' ROLES IN THE MAKING OF *TSHIFASI*

The Thulamela participants asserted that traditional leaders, civic structures, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, and elderly people should be involved to sustain *tshifasi*. In doing so, they would help encourage the children to revive Tshivenda culture and tradition. Singo (2018) and Tshikovhi (2017) added that parents, including mothers, play an important role in the community. A mother is responsible for caring for the whole family as she is endowed with natural skills for that. One of the participants said that children learn *tshifasi* from each other, and on their own. The role of elders is to make sure that *tshifasi* is practised by children from different places. The Dzwerani participants pointed out that the role players in the courting dance then were elderly women (grannies).

It is imperative to note that Makhado's and Musina's respondents provided the same explanation as that given by Thulamela participants – that the *tshifasi* could be resuscitated



through *mahosi* (Chiefs), *misanda* and elders. In their presentations, these respondents failed to recognise the role universities could play in all this. This, despite the fact that there is a university in Thohoyandou. Their shortsightedness over this underlines the fact that universities are detached from the communities they are supposed to serve, yet they have what are termed “Community Engagement Programmes”. The failure to resuscitate *tshifasi* has inevitably led to its death in places such as Makhado. This was confirmed by some participants who said that the *tshifasi* music genre is no longer performed in their localities. They attributed this non-existence of the genre to the fading away of our cultural values and aspirations. In other words, *tshifasi*’s disappearance in the Makhado area would culminate in the history of Vhavenḁa being forgotten. Another supposedly contributing factor here is that the *misanda* and other traditional leaders no longer encourage *tshifasi* in their communities. In short, elderly people are the right agents for children’s proper upbringing. That said, they should fully play their part here. Almost all the participants agreed that *tshifasi* could be sustained only if all the structures above could be involved.

In LIM 345, the participants stated that children learn *tshifasi* from each other as they play on their own. This is contrary to what those in Thulamela, Musina and Makhado said about how children learn *tshifasi*. The argument given by the LIM 345 informants was that making adults teach children *tshifasi* was totally wrong as some of these so-called adult experts were no experts at all. The observations we made in Musina corroborated the LIM 345 fears. We observed one of the local schoolteachers training learners in indigenous music in Musina.

The so-called “instructor” was wrongly demonstrating the performance as there were no elderly people to assist her. Musanda Vho Mmbi from Ha Tshikonelo admitted that anyone who has the skills could teach *tshifasi*, but not unskilled ones.

### **5.3. THE SOCIOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF *TSHIFASI***

The participants from Thulamela, Makhado, Musina and LIM 345 provided similar views on their understanding of the actions and functions of *tshifasi*. Back then, girls were not allowed to stand; they knelt as a sign of respect. Dima and Makaulula (2017) from LIM 345 and another participant from Thulamela had the same explanation: that *tshifasi* is associated with what *mukukulume* (the male chicken) and *phambo* (the female chicken) do as they court each other. Here, boys and girls sang *tshifasi* songs, dancing and clapping. The above actions had meanings in that they impacted positively on the children’s lives. According to the participants, this is how children were socialised in Tshivenda. Their socialisation incorporated learning good moral values such as respect and humanity (*Ubuntu*), and at the same time gained the skills to do multiple tasks in their future lives. Thus, socialisation was very significant for children as they would grow to meet and live with other people from different tribal backgrounds. Children who did not participate in all this were recognised through their wayward lifestyles and disrespect for humankind. This means that such children’s social development was adversely affected.

## 5.4. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### 5.4.1. The origin of *tshifasi*

Like most African cultures, Tshivenda music plays a role in different context. There are genres such as *tshikona*, *tshigombela*, *malende* and *tshifasi* just to mention a few. In addition, Vhavana have their social practices associated with rituals and socialisation processes (Magidi, 2021). For example, to avoid conflict in the family, Vhavana women sing songs or chants such as *mafhuwe* and *malende* (Sengani, 2011 & Ramaite-Mafadza, 2016). This happens when a woman with concern wakes up very early in the morning while others are still asleep and starts a song while pounding maize. The message of a song is directed to the members of the family, especially the in-laws. Also, there are lullabies to comfort children when mothers are far away, *lili nwananwananga* is fully explained in chapter two is one of the songs which is sung by *tshixele*, a baby sitter. Clearly, the indigenous music of Vhavana is functional.

Vhavana reflect their way of living through song and dance. This means, Tshivenda history is preserved through musical performances. *Nyimbo dza zwidade* (folk songs) are derived from old stories (Mugovhani, 2011). From the focus group discussions, it emerged that music-making occur naturally when people gather in one place. Often, a composition would start from nowhere simply by considering the prevailing situation (Magidi, 2021). According to Dima (2021) Tshivenda songs emerge from the events such ceremonies, and socialising events. Many of Tshivenda indigenous song composition are aligned with Vhavana daily life experiences.

It is important to trace the sociological foundation of *tshifasi* to address one of the key objectives, which was to trace the origin of the genre. *Tshifasi* is a valued genre in the Vhavenda society. Other authors such as Emberly and Davhula (2016) state that the knowledge of *tshifasi* is transferred from one generation to the other. The origin of *tshifasi* music is derived from the way on how it is performed (Netshivhulana, 2021). Whereas Dima (2021) says that the term *tshifasi* comes from *u tseda* to jump slightly high with all legs at the same time. Meaning that one leg is a little bit higher. It is clear that knowledge holder view the origin of *tshifasi* from different angles. It is safe to say *tshifasi* is an old tradition handed down from one generation to the next.

Additionally, two words are used for an explanation of the *tshifasi* foundation. For instance, the word *tserere* or *u suvha* slide, are characters of the *tshifasi*, one of the elements that define it (Mamatsharaga, 2017). This is how it is performed; all legs move side to side at the same time. During the process, a boy moves from his side to pick a girl. He dances and slides from right to left, the same applies to the other side. After that, a girl acts the same after *u losha* as a symbol to say 'yes' (Dima, 2021). Magaba (2021) puts it differently, when a boy is strolling with a girl on the street, it is called *o fasa* refers to a boy or *o fasiwa* denotes to a girl. *U fasa* is when a boy holds a girl with a hand or on her waist to symbolise a romantic relationship (Nepfumbada, 2017) declares. When two people of the opposite sex are hugging, dancing or holding each other, are set to have been (*gevas* in Afrikaans) which is acculturated to mean *tshifasi*. *Tshifasi*'s origin is associated with affection through actions.

Not only is *tshifasi* found among Vhavenda. It is practised by Vhavenda who are mixed with Vatsonga, and also by Vatsonga on their own version. For instance, Simango (2021) argues that *Xifasi* is Xitsonga cultural dance. "During the early years Vhavenda used to stay together with Vatsonga, presenting their own cultural activities" (Simango, 2021). This confluence of culture is normal. Other neighbouring cultures have more or less the same indigenous practises for both boys and girls even though these may go by different titles or names. Khosa (2021) explains; the word *xifasi* derives from *kufaya*, means *u kwasha*. To stomp the ground with energy. *Ba tzhina ba kaya fayetela* (they dancing by way of stomping the ground (Khosa, 2021). From the dance point of view *xifasi* of Xitsonga and that of Tshivenda differ.

Another difference is performance of *xifasi* does not involve clapping as is the case with the Vhavenda practice (Mathebula, 2021). These are some of the differences that distinguishes *xifasi xa* Vatsonga from that of Vhavenda. Vatsonga also dance using their waist like in the *xibelane* music genre. The focus is not on the waist but on how a waist goes together with legs that are hitting the ground. While the legs hit the ground, you will find that the waist is shaking from side to side (Simango,2021). Here in this genre, the foot becomes very important whereas in Tshivenda, there is no *tshifasi* genre in the absence of hand clapping. Khosa (2021) indicates that this performance is currently practised in very few villages but the area except in Ha Xigamane. Despite the different performance nuances, almost all African communities have similar socialisation processes for boys and girls.

#### 5.4.2. *Tshifasi* differs from other Tshivenda music performances

Another setback here is that we cannot make a connection with other Tshivenda music performances such as *tshikona*, *tshigombela*, and *malende*. Nonetheless, the participants indicated that *tshifasi* differs from other Tshivenda music performances as it is unique. Its uniqueness is recognised by its tempo, which is faster than in other performances. For example, *tshigombela* is generally performed only by women, whereas *tshifasi* is performed by boys and girls. Data showed that currently, *tshifasi* and other Tshivenda indigenous music is not performed the way it was done in the past. This illustrates that the *tshifasi* genre and its characteristics are different from Tshivenda performances (Mugovhani, 2014). Authors such as Mashianoke (2013), Mugovhani (2014), Emberly and Davhula (2016), and Ramaite-Mafadza (2016) provided insights about *tshifasi*, which, however, are not enough to make us fully understand it.

#### 5.4.3. Who performs *tshifasi*, and how?

The focus group discussants in Makhado stated that there is no age limit for who should perform *tshifasi*. To them, there were no prearrangements made as to which boy would start dancing with a girl. The one who started went like *u dzedzeleka* to the one he loved. The girl then bowed (*u losha*), a sign that she wanted to dance with him. A boy so accepted did not just perform; he gave that girl a gift (*nyanisi*) as a sign of love. The girl bowed back in response. After that, they both moved to the centre (*luvhandeni*) to perform together, while others sang and clapped their hands. Sometimes two boys would fight for one girl, or vice versa. This mostly happened when two boys showed their interest in one girl. They would

fight until one won the right to pick that girl. When everyone else was done, there would often be one girl left without a suitor. Under such circumstances, the girl's parents would be involved, when they would consult *vhomaine*. They would want to know how best their child could be assisted. This fits in well with what was said by individuals who were interviewed.

In contrast, however, the Musina discussants could not explain the origins of *tshifasi*. Another hiccup was their equal failure to demonstrate how *tshifasi* is done. This, however, should be attributed to their old age. Some of the participants were unable to demonstrate how *tshifasi* was performed during their time. Be that as it may, the most important issue is that the discussants were conversant with how they used to perform *tshifasi*. This played into the expectations of this study as it succeeded in obtaining detailed information to this effect. Added to this was the ability of the Makhado discussants who actively demonstrated how they used to do *tshifasi*. The researcher discovered that elderly people were very interested in demonstrating how *tshifasi* is performed, but their old age could not allow them to. This brings us to the point that some of the Tshivenda cultural performances were known as *vhushaedzi*, a corruption of *tshifasi*. But since those performances were not well documented, it was difficult for the researcher to authenticate this assertion.

Of importance to note here, though, is the fact that the LIM 345 discussants corroborated what was said by those in Makhado on how *tshifasi* is performed. They demonstrated the clapping of hands in tandem with the stomping of feet, which makes the *tshifasi* unique. Based on what these discussants said and did, it seems as if *tshifasi* is properly performed nowadays. It was also realised that clapping plays an important role in *tshifasi* music



performance (Dima, 2017). Here, the discussants emphasised that without clapping, there is no *tshifasi*. This is to say that clapping motivates the performers. Motivated individuals make *tshifasi* interesting.

The Thulamela discussants echoed what was said by those in Makhado and LIM 345. They, however, added that it is a form of playful flirtation amongst children as they socialise in groups where they establish relationships, modify their discipline and develop respect for each other as peers. One can also add that good leadership is also nurtured through this dance. Picked out was the fact that older teens were not allowed to play as they had gone through the traditional rites of passage that made them men and women. This meant that at their age, it was no longer advisable to do *tshifasi* as it would be meaningless to them.

#### 5.4.4. Attire



Figure 9: The type of a performance can also be identified by the attire, captured at Lwamondo Zwavhavhili. Source: Madzivhandila, M., 2019.



In years past, boys used to wear *tsindi*, and girls *shedo*. Nowadays, the attire has changed. Boys wear coats and girls dress anyhow in order to act out scenes similar to *malende*. This is according to the Thulamela discussants. Those from Makhado, as observed during fieldwork, danced wearing *makunda*, *minwenda* and *malungu*, which contradicted what was worn back then. The *tshifasi* dress code did not include overalls, funny hats, big tummies and so on. What makes performers dress funnily is the element of competition that has been introduced in *tshifasi*. Children are now decorated, and a lot of improvisation is practised to accumulate marks. In contrast, Vhavenḁa children used to wear indigenous clothes (*nwenda*), a small piece of cloth. This was so because *tshifasi* was not meant for competition then, as opposed to now. What was worn were traditional clothes such as *minwenda*, *misisi*, *makunda*, *malungu*, *thavhula* (towels) and *zwickipa* (t-shirts). This was confirmed by the Musina and LIM 345 focus group discussants. Khosa (2017) confirms that attire is crucial as it provides shape and identity. Similarly, people who perform wearing uniforms look attractive to the audience and the details are above.

#### 5.4.5. Instruments

With *tshifasi*, children perform energetically, clapping hands to produce big sound. This was said in all focus group discussions held in the district. What makes *tshifasi* unique is that there is no ululation as children are not yet used to it. However, they clap and perform rhythmically to produce a very interesting system to watch. The LIM 345 discussants disagreed on the issue of ululating. They pointed out that it works when the performance is at its peak, to motivate the performer. To this end, the LIM 345 said they used *zwickotikoti* or *gokoko* (empty tins); but *gokoko* is the latest invention for and introduction to the game.

Hands and mouths are the inherited instruments that were and are used to produce sound for *tshifasi*. These are the first instruments that a human being uses in musical performances such as *tshifasi*. Through such natural instruments, one can feel the beauty of music, which is not mixed with secondary instrumentation. Secondary instruments here were *magokoko*, which were used to produce a variety of sounds. Performers now use *mirumba*, as indicated by the discussants. Some artists now produce music in *tshifasi*, which is mixed with modern instruments such as piano, lead guitar, drums and bass guitar. This happens as changes come owing to the need to market and sell one's music (Madzivhandila, 2017).

The Thulamela focus group discussants also acknowledged that traditional leaders, civic structures, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, and elderly people should be involved in sustaining *tshifasi*. To them, these structures should organise practices to encourage youth to revive Tshivenda cultural values. Parents as well as mothers play an important part in the community. One of the participants indicated that children learnt *tshifasi* from one another. Makhado and Musina gave the same explanation as that provided by the Thulamela participants, that *tshifasi* music performance can be brought back through *mahosi* (Chiefs), *misanda*, civic structures or stakeholders. Again, universities were not declared as part of this supposed *tshifasi* revival. The participants pointed out that the *tshifasi* music genre is no longer performed in their area. This led to the point that *tshifasi* music performance has vanished in the Makhado area, to the detriment of the history of Vhavenda. It seems as if the *misanda* and other traditional leaders no longer encourage the current generation to practise *tshifasi*. Elderly people were the right agents for children's proper upbringing.

According to LIM 345 participants, children learnt *tshifasi* from each other, and on their own, contrary to what the participants in Thulamela, Musina and Makhado indicated. Only if our government encourages us to preach this gospel in the media and in our communities can *tshifasi* be revived.

### **5.5. TSHIFASI A SOCIALISATION PERFORMANCE**

Generally, *tshifasi* is the name which is familiar to many people in Venda. The game's aim is to culturally prepare girls and boys for marriage. Young girls are taught that a man takes care of his wife by providing for the family. On the other hand, boys are socialised to regard girls as their sisters, and girls to respect boys as their brothers. Thus, *tshifasi* was used as a vehicle to educate the youth about life. Its songs and dance tackled social issues such as working hard and being a responsible parent. One can say that *tshifasi* taught boys that one day, they would marry and become fathers.

Although this might have been the case, the Makhado discussants stated that boys were not allowed to marry a girl they saw during *tshinombelo* or *tshifasi*. In other words, what happened during *tshifasi* in this area had no future bearing to children. The truth is that *tshifasi*, whether performed in Makhado or elsewhere, meant to guide children to grow up as responsible citizens. For instance, one hardly heard of children committing immoral acts (*aswi chabisa*). Children were trained to abstain from sex. It thus became hard for them to lust for each other as they performed *tshifasi*.

In support of what the Thulamela discussants said, those in Musina admitted that boys were given guidance towards good behaviour. Children who practised *tshifasi* could not indulge in sexual matters (Masango, 2017). Shaping young people's lives in this way assured the society of well-behaved and responsible future citizens. The lack of *tshifasi* nowadays has resulted in the high rate of crimes committed by underaged children. *Tshifasi* is informative, educative, provides some entertainment for children, and if resuscitated it can easily prevent the disappearance of our culture and Tshivenda indigenous knowledge.

The participants from LIM 345 indicated that when children met in *tshifasi*, this promoted love and the acceptance of each other. For social cohesion, the main purpose of *tshifasi* was to entertain children, thereby encouraging good relationships amongst them. At the same time, such relationships were expected to lead to marriage. This is contrary to the Makhado custom, which held that children were not allowed to date each other after a *tshifasi* performance. Here, the purpose was to build a good relationship between males and females, through which children were taught how to interact with those of the opposite sex. Basically, the idea was to help boys learn how to cope with girls since it was not usual for them to play together in that way, according to Vhavana culture. They were taught how to complement each other in marriage. In the final analysis, boys respected girls. Thus, *tshifasi*'s uniqueness helped children to be comfortable in expressing love for each other. The more boys and girls socialise on their own, the more they grow in confidence (Taber, 2011). Through the descriptive examination of *tshifasi*, it is apparent that boys and girls learn the values of their culture, and these should be passed from generation to generation. Below are some of *tshifasi* songs for the performance.

### 5.5.1. *Tshifasi* songs

*Tshifasi* songs cannot be left out in this study as they form part of the performance. During data collection, the researcher managed to write some of the songs from individual participants and focus group discussions as indicated. The songs were divided into two categories: songs for boys and girls of a suitable age for the *tshifasi* performance, and those for the little kids. Other *tshifasi* songs were summarised in the chapter 4 data presentation, whereas here they are explained in detail. As a result, all these songs are for the *tshifasi* genre.

#### **Liduna**

*Liduna la u vhifha, ebo!*

*Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.*

*Liduna la u vhifha khe!o!*

*Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.*

*Liduna la u vhifha, ebo!*

*Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.*

*Liduna la u vhifha khe!o!*

*Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.*

*Liduna la u vhifha mianga wee!*

*Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.*

*Liduna la u vhifha khe!o!*

*Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.*

*Liduna la u vhifha mianga wee.*

*Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.*

*Liduna la u vhifha khe!o!*

*Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.*

*Liduna la u vhifha mianga wee!*

No to the ugly man, no!

Can you see the ugly man?

There is the ugly man!

Can you see the ugly man?

No to the ugly man, no!

Can you see the ugly man?

There is the ugly man!

Can you see the ugly man!

An ugly man, mother”.

Can you see the ugly man?

There is the ugly man!

Can you see the ugly man?

“An ugly man, mother”.

Can you see the ugly man!

There is the ugly man!

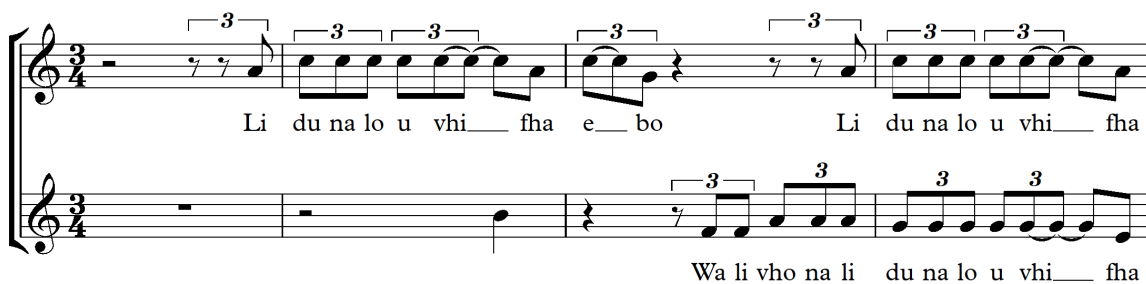
Can you see the ugly man?

An ugly man, mother!

*Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.  
Liduna la u vhifha khe!o!  
Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.  
Liduna la madumbudumbu, ebo!  
Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.  
Liduna la u vhifha khe!o!  
Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.  
Liduna la madumbudumbu, ebo!  
Wa li vhona liduna la u vhifha.  
Liduna la u vhifha khe!o.*

Can you see the ugly man?  
There is the ugly man!  
Can you see the ugly man?  
A man with a big belly, no!  
Can you see the ugly man?  
There, is the ugly man!  
Can you see the ugly man?  
A man of big belly, no!  
Can you see the ugly man?  
The ugly man, there he is!

## Liduna



Li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha e\_\_ bo      Li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha

Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha



5  
khe lo      Li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha e\_\_ bo      Li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha

Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha      Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha



9  
khe lo      Li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha mi a nga we      Li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha

Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha      Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha



13  
khe lo      Li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha mi a nga we      Li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha

Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha      Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi\_\_ fha

2

17

khe lo Li du na lo u vhi fha mi a nga we Li du na lo u vhi fha

Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi fha Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi fha

21

khe lo Li du na lo u vhi fha khe lo Li

Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi fha Wa li vho na li

24

du na la ma du mbu du mbu e bo Li du na lo u vhi fha

du na lo u vhi fha Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi fha

27

khe lo Li du na la ma du mbu du mbu

Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi fha

29

e bo du na lo u vhi fha khe lo

Wa li vho na li du na lo u vhi fha Wa li vho na li

Figure 10: Miniscore of Liduna, transcribed and notated by Dr HA Khosa, 2021.



The lead vocalist plays the most imperative character in a song. Most of the songs in *tshifasi* are directed by the lead singers throughout. *Liduna* composition is led by the soprano part in the first bar. The choir is silent in the beginning and then later the backings support the lead vocalist. Even though the song has many bars, the singers have a great chance to repeat from the beginning. The piece has a time signature the same as other songs notated here in this study together with triplets, quavers, and rests.

Mostly, this song is performed when some of the boys are wearing torn clothes as indicated in the picture. For entertainment, the performers have big tummies made with pillows, painted faces, beards on their chins, and old hats with oversize coats, just to mention a few disguises. In this song, a girl refuses *liduna la u vhfha*, an ugly man. She refuses to dance with this man during the performance. When she sees an ugly man coming, she indicates by raising *lukuḁavhavha*, an elbow to ignore him.

*Ebo* is a Tshivenda word, a sign to disagree on something. When children are dancing this song, they indicate by bending elbows, moving up and down, meaning that the girl is refusing to dance with a proposed love, denying to dance with this ugly man. In normal circumstances, no one is comfortable with being called ugly; and so this boy, if a girl is refusing to dance with him, obviously he becomes angry. Additionally, some of the words in Tshivenda say *munna ha naki hu naka wa musadzi*, a man is ugly, a woman is beautiful. A lesson in this song is that some people fall in love with the man who is looking good outside, only to find that he is like a lion in a sheep skin.

In contrast, the message of a Venda song by makhadzi says; *munna ha naki, hu naka tshikwama*. It means that a man's beauty is not defined by his looks, but his pocket means a lot more than his outward appearance. *Basotho bare, monna ke tshwene, oba pila ka matsoho ahae*, a man is a baboon, his beauty is seen from his hands. Vhavanḁa also believe that a man is loved because of the work of his hands. In some cases, there are good-looking men with sweet words, but they have ugly and bitter hearts, full of abuse for women.

### Nzeke- nzeke-nzeke

<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Vha I thavha yo la ni?</i>	You slaughtered it.
	What did he eat?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Yo la muri wa tshikhuwa.</i>	He ate a western tree.
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse. tree?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Vha I thavha yo la ni?</i>	You are slaughtering him, what did he do?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Yo la nzere dza tshikhuwa.</i>	He ate a western tree.
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>A vha vhoni, yo la nzere dza tshikhuwa.</i>	Can't you see, he ate a western
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.

### Another version

<i>A i thavha yo la ni?</i>	You slaughtered it, what has she done?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>A hee! A i thavha yo la mini?</i>	You slaughtered it, what has she eaten?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Vho- Mutshekwa Vho la ni?</i>	What did Mutshekwa eat?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Nandi! Vho- Mutshekwa Vho la mini?</i>	Hey! What has Mutshekwa eaten?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Vho la muri wa tshikhuwa.</i>	She ate a western tree.

<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Vho ɓa muri wa tshikhuwa.</i>	She ate western tree.
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Ai ɓhavha yo ɓa ni?</i>	You slaughtered it, what did she eat?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>A hee! Ai ɓhavha yo ɓa ni?</i>	You slaughtered it, what has she eaten?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Refuse, refuse, refuse.</i>	You slaughtered it, what has she eaten?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>Vha sa ɓanza vha ɓo fa.</i>	If you don't vomit, you will die.
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.
<i>A i ɓhavha yo ɓa mini?</i>	You slaughtered it, what has she eaten?
<i>Nzeke-nzeke- nzeke.</i>	Refuse, refuse, refuse.

*Nzenkeze nzeke-nzeke, Ai ɓhavha yo ɓa ni? Vho- Mutshekwa Vho ɓa ni? Vho ɓa muri wa tshikhuwa. Vha sa ɓanza vha ɓo fa.* If someone eats one of the trees called *mutumbula*, he or she has to vomit after eating to avoid death. This simply means that there are some dangerous indigenous trees that are not allowed to be eaten.

This song is typically sung by a woman as a complainant, a song of concern to her husband. In other words, it is about telling of a problem in the family that arises from nowhere. A man was no longer faithful to his wife at home. It seems her husband was having an affair outside because he was no longer sexually active. Every time his wife needed him, he always refused, and was no longer interested in her. That is why the song is *nzeke- nzeke- nzeke*, meaning refuse, refuse, refuse. A husband was always dodging his wife; in Tshivenda they say *u thivha thumbu nga maɓamu, u tinya tinya*, to protect his stomach by the breast.

Vhavenḁa use songs as a tool to communicate, instead of arguing. This woman reported this case to the in-laws, *vho-makhadzi* and *Vho-malume* after she realised that her husband was no longer faithful. This is another method that was by Vhavenḁa to solve problems. In this song, this women used the right procedures of communication to report the problem to the elders.

### Ari eḁeli

<i>A ri eḁeli wee!</i>	We don't sleep, hey.
<i>A ri eḁeli.</i>	We don't sleep.
<i>Aa! A ri eḁeli.</i>	We don't sleep.
<i>Aa! A ri eḁeli.</i>	We don't sleep.
<i>Ḳokovhela</i>	In the evening,
<i>A ri dzibonyi.</i>	We don't sleep a wink.
<i>A ri dzibonyi.</i>	We don't sleep a wink.
<i>Aa! A ri dzibonyi.</i>	We don't sleep a wink.
<i>Aa! A ri dzibonyi.</i>	Hey! We don't sleep a wink.

*A ri eḁeli* is a motivational *tshifasi* song, it is all about boys and girls coming from their homes to gather. In other words, it's like a call song for dancing in the evening, indicating that they are not going to sleep, but will spend the night dancing. It is an energetic kind of song in which one cannot avoid moving the body, including the audience. It is included in celebrations and community events such as birthday parties and weddings in the community.

However, some of the lyrics here are *mato*, improvisation by the lead vocalist, lyrics such as *a ri dzibonyi*. A lead vocalist can add some words that make the music sound nice to the listeners, as long as they are relevant to the content of the song.

*Ari edeli* is a song with the purpose of calling each other from different areas. Those who are too lazy to come become encouraged by the sound of voices singing loudly, calling each other from home to home to prepare themselves to meet at the playground. In other words, they are promising each other that they are going to enjoy the whole night. Performances are going to continue from now until dawn. Children mostly sing this song when they are collecting each other to play in the playground. In school competitions, children usually use this song as an entrance before the performance. Boys and girls approach the stage by singing *A ri edeli* while they are still being mixed without any lines formed. After that they separate themselves into two lines, boys on one side and girls on the other side.

### **Farelela**

<i>Farelela mudavhu wanga.</i>	Hold on my darling.
<i>Farelela hanefho,</i>	Just hold there,
<i>Farelela.</i>	Hold on.
<i>Farelela mudavhu wanga.</i>	Hold on my darling.
<i>Farelela hanefho,</i>	Just hold on there,
<i>Farelela.</i>	Hold on.

**The modern version is,**

<i>Vunḁelela Cherry yanga.</i>	Break it down, my darling.
<i>Vunḁelela heneḁho,</i>	Just break it over there.
<i>Vunḁelela.Break it!</i>	The modern version is,
<i>Vunḁelela Cherry yanga.</i>	Break it down, my darling.
<i>Vunḁelela heneḁho,</i>	Just break it down there.
<i>Vunḁelela.</i>	Break it!

*Farelela* is a boy or a girl singing the song to indicate that he/she will hold on to love his/her darling. He/she takes this decision of loving her/him extremely for he/she realises that if someone does not care about the relationship, it vanishes. The words that he/she expresses here, indicates that he/she finds a respectable girl/boy that he/she doesn't want to drop – girl or boy with virtuous morals such as kindness, loyalty, and honesty. The purpose of *tshifasi* is to train young children with good morals and values. However, it is an educational genre.

With the second version, *vunḁelela*, it is not easy for elderly people to understand the message the way it is presented, especially the term *cherry yanga* a girlfriend. It is a modern word which is currently used. The moment it is sung, it drives someone to have a wrong perspective that children are misled in this song. However, *farelela* is a song during the performance of *tshifasi* in which a boy or a girl demonstrates his/her real love to protect their love affair until they reach the point of being parents.

*Tshilangano Tshilangano a hee, Tshilangan’*  
*Jojo!*

Tshilangano hey, Tshilangan’  
Jojo!

*Tshilangano a hee, Tshilangan’*

Tshilangano hey, Tshilangan’

*Jojo!*  
*Tshilangano Vho mu ruma U ya vhurwa.*

Jojo!  
Tshilangano has been sent to western.

*Jojo!*  
*U ya vhurwa.*

Jojo!  
Tshilangano has been sent to western.

*Jojo!*  
*A vhuya na kusidzana*

Jojo!  
He came with beautiful girl from western.

*Jojo!*  
*Kusidzana kutswuku, kutambatuwa.*

Jojo!  
A beautiful girl, cute and light in complexion.

*Jojo!*  
*Tshilangano a hee, Tshilangan’*

Jojo!  
Tshilangano hey, Tshilangan’

*Jojo!*

Jojo!

#### Another version

*Tshilangano a hee, Tshilangan’*  
*Jojo!*

Tshilangano hey, Tshilangan’

*Tshilangano, Vho mu ruma ha Raḽiwei.*

Jojo!  
He has been sent to Raḽiwei.

*Jojo!*  
*Ha Raḽiwei a vhuya na kusidzana.*

Jojo!  
He came back with a beautiful girl.

*Jojo!*  
*Kusidzana kutswuku ku tambatuwa.*

Jojo!  
A beautiful girl, cute and white in complexion.

*Jojo!*  
*Kwa ipfi ḽi ngaho musevhe.*

Jojo!  
With a nice voice like an arrow.

*Wa ku ruma vhurwa ḽi a ya haa!*

Jojo!  
Which can reach west.

*Jojo!*

Ahee! Ahee! Tshilangan’

Jojo!

Jojo!

Tshilangano hey, Tshilangan’

Jojo!

Tshilangano a hee, Tshilangan’

Tshilangano hey, Tshilangan’

*Jojo!*

Jojo!

*Tshilangano* is a *tshifasi* song which is sung to make an agreement of love between a boy and a girl. Children make a promise that they are going to marry each other. In this performance, it is the place where young people propose to each other for marriage, equal importance for entertainment purposes. In this song, a boy starts to sing to a girl he promises to stay with, saying that *mudavhu wanga*, my darling is Takalani. Boys and girls practise this performance while they are still *u davhulana*, courting, not yet married. This is when children are given the opportunity by their parents to teach each other various aspects of good behaviour such as love, and discipline, amongst others. Boys and girls acquire social skills through performing these songs.

Furthermore, every song in the performance contains a relevant message for children. Nevertheless, *Tshilangano* lyrics are put in a way that do not sound good to elderly people; for example, *cherry yanga*. *Cherry yanga* is a modern word which sends the wrong message to listeners, especially to people who know the Tshivenda language. Listeners interpret the whole song wrongly. They conclude that the boys and girls are doing immoral things during the performance, resulting in pregnancy.



This is presented differently when it goes further. For instance, someone says *Ndo muruma ha Raliwei*. The original words are *ndo muruma a ya vhurwa*, the participant says. It is also giving us the impression of looking at the past when the expression *vhurwa* is used. The contemporary presentation that children bring, provide different concepts. This is because *tshifasi* songs are not yet documented for preservation as heritage. The *tshifasi* genre needs further observation.

*Tshifasi* songs like *tshilangano* have lessons that boys and girls acquire from them. In the old days a girl was not allowed to spend her time in the evening away from home. She was overprotected by her parents, a girl is the one who is going to be pregnant, and caring for a baby later, which is a great responsibility. *Tshilangano* and other types of song were for children trying to mould their lives. Boys were responsible for looking after the cattle, and then they sometimes came home late, so there was no way to avoid their late return. Therefore, it was difficult for boys and girls to meet. This is the reason why Vhavenda arranged this platform. Generally, *tshifasi* songs are related with love.

### Tshilangano\_3

Alto

Tshi la nga no a he Tshi la ngan' Tshi la nga no a he Tshi la ngan'

Jo Tshilangano Jo jo

5

A. Tshi la nga no ndo mu ru ma u ya vhu rwa u ya vhu rwa a vhu ya na ku

Jo jo

8

A. si dza na ku si dza na ku tswu ku ku ta mba tuw' Tshi la nga no a he

Jo jo Jo jo

12

A. Tshi la ngan' Tshi la nga no a he Tshi la ngan' Tshi la nga no a he

Jo jo Jo Tshilangano

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2

16

A. Tshi la ngan' Tshi la nga no ndo mu ru ma u ya vhu rwa u

Jo jo Jo jo

19

A. ya vhu rwa a vhu ya na ku si dza na ku si dza na ku tswu ku ku

Jo jo

22

A. ta mba tuw' Tshi la nga no a he Tshi la ngan'

Jo jo Jo jo

Figure 11: The mini score of Tshilangano, transcribed and notated by Dr HA Khosa, 2021.

*Tshilangano* is a song of two versions as shown above. A call and respond composition, a lead singer says, *Tshilangano a hee! Tshilangan'*. Most of the African songs are characterised by elision. The lyrics, for instance, *Tshilangan'* "o" vowel are omitted when the singer sings. It sounds beautiful when it is applied during the performance. The time signature is three pulse measures which makes the music different and fascinating to the listeners and viewers. The lead voice starts the song on a strong beat and ends on the upbeat of the first beat in the second bar. The lead voice repeats the song the same way it is on the first bar but sometimes adds *mato* some extra words for improvisation's sake. Then the choir in unison starts to join on the second bar, say, Jojo! Most of the songs in the *tshifasi* genre are sung in unison. It is hard to discover the composition of *tshifasi* in harmony. Most of the note values and quivers are triples here. This song is sung repeatedly until all they feel like starting another song. The song goes with the actions as it is a dramatic performance. For example, a boy wears an old hat, an old funny lady wig bears on his chin, a big overall, oversize pair of shoes borrowed from his grandfather, a hat with a big tummy made by a pillow or he put many clothes on his tummy.

## Muṭhāv'hela

*Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Sibasa wee!*

*Heḽeḽe! Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Sibasa wee!*

*Heḽeḽe! Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Ha Gireme wee!*

*Heḽeḽe! Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Ha Gireme wee!*

*Heḽeḽe! Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Rine ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Ha Vho- Simba wee!*

*Heḽeḽe! ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Ha Vho- Simba wee!*

*We are going to buy muṭhāv'hela*

*Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Ha Abu wee!*

*Heḽeḽe! Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Ha Abu wee!*

*Heḽeḽe! Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Nne ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Sibasa wee!*

*Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

*Sibasa wee!*

*Heḽeḽe! Ri yo renga muṭhāv'hela.*

We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*.

Hey Sibasa!

Look here! We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*

Sibasa hey!

We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*.

We are going to buy *muthāv'hela*.

To Gireme.

Look! We are going to buy *muthāv'hela*

To Gireme.

Hey Look! We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*

We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*.

At Simba's place

We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*.

At Simba's Place.

We are going to buy *muthāv'hela*.

To Abu's place.

Look! We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*

To Abu's place

Look! We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*.

We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*.

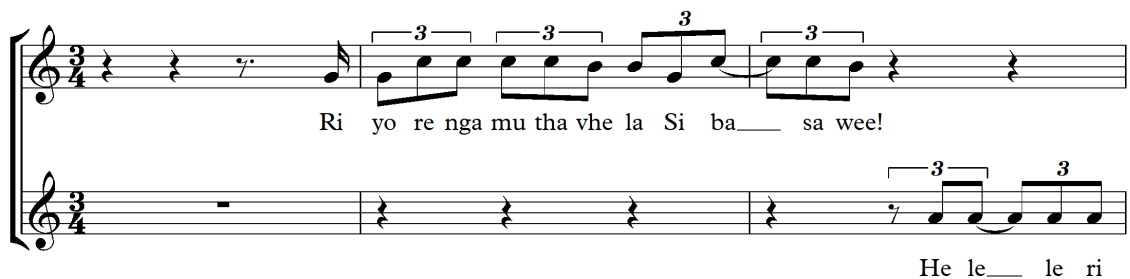
Sibasa.Heḽeḽe!

Look! We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*.

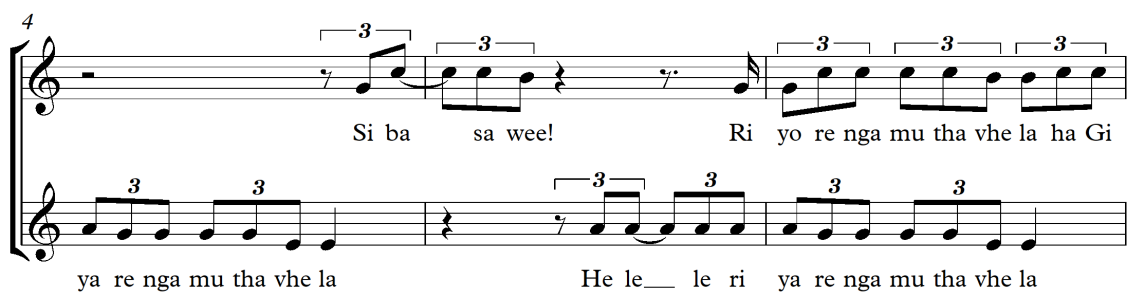
Sibasa hey!

Look! We are going to buy *muṭhāv'hela*.

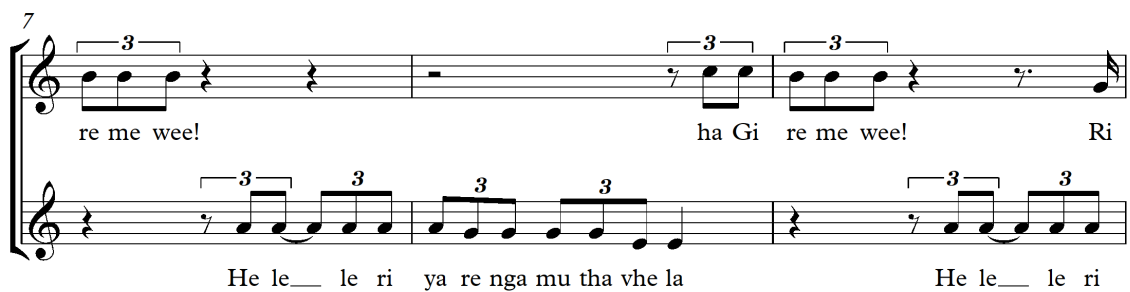
## Muthavhela



Ri yo re nga mu tha vhe la Si ba\_\_ sa wee!  
He le\_\_ le ri



Si ba sa wee! Ri yo re nga mu tha vhe la ha Gi  
ya re nga mu tha vhe la He le\_\_ le ri ya re nga mu tha vhe la



re me wee! ha Gi re me wee! Ri  
He le\_\_ le ri ya re nga mu tha vhe la He le\_\_ le ri



yo re nga mu tha vhe la ha Vho Si mba wee! Ha Vho  
ya re nga mu tha vhe la He le\_\_ le ri ya re nga mu tha vhe la

2

13

Si mba wee! Ri yo re nga mu tha vhe la ha A\_\_\_ bu wee!

He le\_\_\_ le ri ya re nga mu tha vhe la He le\_\_\_ le ri

16

Ha A bu wee! Ri yo re nga mu tha vhe la Si ba

ya re nga mu tha vhe la He le\_\_\_ le ri ya re nga mu tha vhe la

19

sa wee! Si ba

He le\_\_\_ le ri ya re nga mu tha vhe la

21

sa wee!

He le\_\_\_ le ri ya re nga mu tha vhe la



The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment line on a bass clef staff. The lyrics are written below the notes. The score includes triplet markings (indicated by a '3' above a bracket) and rests. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the final system.

Figure 12: The mini score of Muthavhela. Transcribed and notated by Dr HA Khosa, 2021.

African songs are considered difficult. *Muthavhela* is a piece that is characterised by 3 pulse measures that are difficult to dance while singing for the novice. The lead singer starts to sing on the last part of the first bar, which is semi-quaver. The score is comprised of two voices which are soprano and alto part only. It is very much interesting to listen to as it harmonises. Most of the *tshifasi* songs are composed of unison but this one is unique. The alto part sings immediately after the solo part finishes. In the final part of a song we only find the backing vocals but is also allow the singes to repeat the song from the beginning. When the song continues, the lead singer improvises, for example, *rine ri yo renga muthavhela* on the transcribed song which is not indicated on the notated score. The same applies also to other *tshifasi* songs.

The song *muthavhela* is for *u kwasha tshitolo*. *U kwasha tshitolo* is to break the shop. Remember that some Tshivenda words are difficult to translate into other languages. *Muthavhela* is one of Vhavana women's indigenous clothes. Interestingly, there is exceptional news in this song. When a Venda girl is married, the in-laws make it a point to spoil her. The parents make an arrangement *u kwasha tshitolo*, during, before or after marriage.

The above discussion shows that Vhavana have their own way of receiving a new bride. After her husband gets a salary, the in-laws talk to *muselwa*, a newly married girl, about shopping. In other words, they spend her husband's cash to buy important items for her and the family. They buy her items such as *mutuli na musu* a mortar and pestle, *lanzani* (a lamp), *nwenda* (traditional clothes for ladies), *luselo* (a traditional tray used to sift the maize meal

or nuts, *lufo* (a large spoon to cook made from a piece of an indigenous tree), *lufheto* (a dry piece from an indigenous tree which is wired around for mixing porridge), *bodo* (a cooking pan), and *ndilo* (a traditional plate). *Vhakwasha*, the husband's in-laws, try by all means for her to wear new clothes rather than old clothes, those she came with. Different places to buy *muthavhela* are mentioned in verses of the song. These were some of the well-known shops which supplied the citizens. In past years, a boy was prohibited from choosing girl a to marry; parents decided for him for exceptional reasons. Some of Vhavenḁa family history are which craft and accusations.

*Ntshavheni!*

*Ntshavheni wee!*

*Ntshavheni! Vhonani vha khou mu kolela,*

*Ntshavheni wee!*

*Vhatuka vha khoni fara maḁamu,*

*Nandi, Ntshavheni!*

*Vhonani vha khou mu kolela,*

*Ntshavheni wee!*

*Vhatuka vha khoni fara maḁamu,*

Witchcraft and accusations

Others are amusing you.

Ntshavheni!

Boys are tempering with your breasts.

Ntshavheni!

Others are amusing you.

Ntshavheni!

Boys are tempering with your breasts.

In the past, girls were not allowed to play with boys. They were prohibited to be touched on the breast by the boys if they were playing with them. The reason was that girls had to stay virgins until they get married as a way of promoting their culture. This song is about Ntshavheni, whose breasts are being touched by the boys, and the other children are laughing at her. So, this song simply teaches us that if something unusual happens, others who care will rectify you. So here the children indicate that by accusing Ntshavheni. They don't just leave it as if it is normal. This situation makes someone quickly realise her offence, and repent to save her life. *Tshifasi* songs teach children to know their morals and values.



## Nyawasedza

*Vho- Nyamukamadi wee!*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

*Vho- Nyamukamadi!*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

*Vha songo ka madi wee!*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

*Nga tshanda tsha monde wee!*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

*Ñwana ndi mutuku wee!*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

*A hee! Nyawase.*

*Vho- Nyamukamadi wee!*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

*Nyamukamadi!*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

*Vha songo ka madi wee!*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

*Nga tshanda tsha monde wee!*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

*Ñwana ndi mutuku wee!*

*A hee! Nyawase.*

*Nyawasedza.*

*Nyamukamadi!*

*A hee! Nyawasedza.*

Nyamukamadi!

Hey, Nyawasedza

Nyamukamadi!

Hey, Nyawasedza

Don't fetch the water.

Hey, Nyawasedza

By the left-hand.

Hey, Nyawasedza

The baby is still young.

Hey, Nyawasedza

Hey, Nyawasedza

Hey, Nyawasedza

Nyamukamadi!

Vho- Nyamukamadi!

Nyamukamadi!

Hey, Nyawasedza

Don't fetch the water.

Hey, Nyawasedza

By the left-hand.

Hey, Nyawasedza

The baby is still young.

Hey, Nyawasedza

Nyawasedza.

Nyamukamadi!

Hey, Nyawasedza

The soloist starts the song and other voices respond on the second note from the second bar on the score. The backing vocals use the same technique until the end of the song. The song *muthavhela* is three pulse measures and the note values used here are triplets, quavers, rests, and crotchets which make the music feel good. The piece repeats until the performers feel like they need to rest.

## Nyawasedza



Vho Nya mu ka ma di wee! Vho Nya mu ka ma  
A hee! Nya wa se\_\_ dza

4  
di wee! Vha so ngo ka ma di wee!  
A hee! Nya wa se\_\_ dza A hee!

7  
Nga tsha nda tsha mo\_\_ nde wee! Nwa na ndi mu tu  
Nya wa se\_\_ dza A hee! Nya wa se\_\_ dza

10  
\_\_ku wee! A hee! Nya wa se  
A hee! Nya wa se\_\_ dza A hee! Nya wa se\_\_ dza

Figure 13: Miniscore of Nyawasedza, transcribed and notated by Dr HA Khosa, 2021.

The song is about a newlywed who is acquiring *ndayo* from elderly people. In fact, it is connected with the previous song, *Nyawasedza*. The time she was in pain of birth, she obtained advice from *vhomakhulu* that she must not use her left-hand to fetch water. In other words, she is advised to avoid sexual intercourse with her husband currently. The reason is that her present child was still too young to have another one. She would be very likely to become pregnant if she went to bed with a man. This is another method of Vhavenda for doing family planning which is done naturally. Tshivenda performances let children acquire knowledge through music.

### Vho-Nyabele

*Ee! Ee!*

Yes! Yes!

*Vho- Nyabele vha khou nkhanikha*

Nyabele is hurting me.

*Gidimani ni ye thavhani.*

Run to the mountain.

*Thavhani hu nukha mishonga.*

There is a smell of medicine on the mountain.

*Ee! Ee!*

Yes! Yes!

*Vho- Nyabele vha khou nkhanikha*

Nyabele is hurting me.

*Gidimani ni ye thavhani.*

Run to the mountain.

*Thavhani hu nukha mishonga.*

There is a smell of medicine on the mountain.

The other version is;

*Ee! Ee!*

*Vho- Nyabele vha khou nkhanikha.*

*Gidimani ni ye Nzhelele,*

*Nzhelele hu nukha mishonga.*

*Ee! Ee!*

*Vho- Nyabele vha khou nkhanikha.*

*Gidimani ni ye Nzhelele,*

*Nzhelele hu nukha mishonga.*

Yes! Yes!

Nyabele is hurting me.

Go to Nzhelele.

There is a smell of medicine at Nzhelele.

Yes! Yes!

Nyabele is hurting me.

Go to Nzhelele.

There is a smell of medicine at Nzhelele.

There is an advantage to living with the elderly people in the family. Some of their work is seen when they pass on the information of the past. For instance, the above song has got a few *mato*, added words. The song is straightforward as the narrator discloses everything in it. In other words, a *mazwale*, mother-in-law, is having a dialogue with the *muselwa* bride. The bride asked *mazwale* to go fetch the indigenous medicine on the mountain *thavhani* after she complained of pain which was caused by her in-law when she, the in-law, was assisting her to clean a wound. It means that after this young lady gave birth by operation, the wound becomes painful when Nyabele assists her during bath time. The other version indicated that she would get the medicine at Nzhelele. Young people learn to have a good connection with their in-laws to get valuable advice.

## Ginḁa

<i>Nḁe a vha ri swaḁhi.</i>	They don't want to play with us.
<i>Ginḁa.</i>	Ginḁa.
<i>Vhari ri na maduda.</i>	They say we have mucus.
<i>Ginḁa.</i>	Ginḁa.
<i>Kudzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu!</i>	Kudzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu!
<i>Tshiḁukuḁuku tsha ḁwana</i>	A little of a baby
<i>Ginḁa.</i>	Ginḁa.
<i>Ahee!</i>	Yeah!
<i>Nḁe a vha ri swaḁhi</i>	They don't want to play with us.
<i>Ginḁa.</i>	Ginḁa.
<i>Vhari ri na maduda.</i>	They say we have mucus.
<i>Ginḁa.</i>	Ginḁa.
<i>Kudzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu!</i>	Kudzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu! Dzhu!
<i>Tshiḁukuḁuku tsha ḁwana</i>	A little of a baby
<i>Ginḁa.</i>	Ginḁa.
<i>Ahee!</i>	Yeah!

In this song, there are two lines, one for small boys and another one for girls. None of them are fit yet to perform *tshifasi*. Children who are not yet fit to perform *tshifasi* are upset and they respond by singing this phrase. They are still too young for love affairs; this genre is all about preparing for marriage. There are few words to say about this song, although young ones who are not yet mature are concerned in it. Those who are older, fit to perform *tshifasi*, are excluding them from the performance. The words of the song have a good message as the older boys would not attempt to physically abuse those little children. In the Tshivenda language, *they say u vhea maḁanzu*, prevent by putting down branches of a trees. In other words, to avoid something happen. The following song, *tshidula* relates to the above song.

## Tshidula

<i>Tshidula tsha mutsinga de!</i>	A frog of a rare neck!
<i>Vhakoma vha tshi ya Dzaṭa.</i>	The headman is going to Dzaṭa.
<i>Vha fhirisa muḍinda phanda.</i>	They send a delegate forward.
<i>Muḍinda wa u fhunga ṅwando.</i>	A delegate to prepare the pathway
<i>Ku hii! Ku hii! Ku hii!</i>	Ku hii! Ku hii! Ku hii!
<i>Ee! Ee! Tshidula tsha mutsinga de!</i>	A frog of a rare neck!
<i>Vhakoma vha tshi ya Dzaṭa.</i>	The headman is going to Dzaṭa.
<i>Vha fhirisa muḍinda phanda.</i>	They send a delegate forward.
<i>Muḍinda wa u fhunga ṅwando.</i>	A delegate to prepare the pathway
<i>Ku hii! Ku hii! Ku hii!</i>	Ku hii! Ku hii! Ku hii!

Little children sing and perform this type of song, *tshidula*, imitating how the frog jumps. The way it is performed needs a strong body since it stretches the muscles. To those who are artists and contemporary dancers, they say is more or less like *vosho*, which will not be explained in this study. In this case, the frog is playing an important part in protecting the leader, *vhakoma*. Being a leader is a crucial task in society because leaders depend on the strength and ability of their security. In other words, the safety of the leaders is in the delegate's hands, *u fhunga ṅwando*. The above translation indicated the song very clearly, that when leaders travel, they send the delegates, *vhaḍinda*, just to see if there are any enemies before the leaders approach that area. In general, this song relates to the song *Ginda* as it is sung by little children.

This research is an Ordinary African musicological study, as shown in the songs above. During data collection of the songs, there was no need for translation into another language since elderly people used their home language. In other words, songs from the focus groups were transcribed from data gathered, translated, and explained to understand the connotations of the Tshivenda language. The above list of *tshifasi* songs comprised the songs composed for young boys and girls who are suitable for the performance, and those are not yet fit to participate. The focus of this study was to describe and analyse the *tshifasi* genre.

## **5.6. CONCLUSION**

Chapter five is composed of three themes, which this study used in its attempt to answer the research questions. The research questions were in the form of themes related to the origins and foundation of *tshifasi*. This study sought to trace the sociological foundation of *tshifasi*, its agents and their roles in its making.



## CHAPTER SIX

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous Chapter analysed and interpreted data as presented and discussed in Chapter

Four. Such data was obtained through individual interviews and focus group discussions. The data was thematically analysed from the data collected orally and integrated with that from secondary sources. This informed the conclusions and recommendations that appear in this chapter. This study's findings, conclusions and recommendations follow below. But, before these are outlined, it is worthwhile to first provide an overview of this study so that we understand the former.

#### 6.2. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study thematically analysed the cultural performance of *tshifasi* genre as described by the participants. It looked at the origin of *tshifasi* music through individual interviews and focus group discussions, where the researcher purposefully selected the participants from four different municipalities within the Vhembe District. In these municipalities, indigenous knowledge holders such as indigenous musicians and traditional leaders explained the agents that could help sustain *tshifasi*, and their roles. In this way, the researcher managed to ascertain the functions of *tshifasi* music in the society. The following are this study's findings, and they are thematically presented. First to be presented are those from face to face semi-structured interviews.

### 6.3. THE ORIGINS OF *TSHIFASI* MUSIC

During individual interviews, the researcher discovered that *tshifasi* is one of the Tshivenda indigenous music performances for boys and girls. It was performed for entertainment, in addition to being an educative medium for children to learn good moral values as they practise it. This study found out that this genre is called by different names in the Vhembe District. Names such as *tshinombelo*, *tshinzerere* and *tshifasi* came to light. The name *tshifasi*, however, is the most common amongst those given.

This study also found out that this indigenous music genre was originally for boys and girls who were still virgins, aged between 12 and 16 years. Also discovered was the fact that the *tshifasi* music is different from other Tshivenda indigenous performances due it being practised by both sexes, and was mainly performed in the evenings under moonlight. Of note here is that elderly people were not involved in the *tshifasi* performance.

It was also discovered that years back, children practised *tshifasi* wearing *luvhemba lwanwenda* (girls) and *shedo, tsindi* (boys). This, however, is no longer the case as children now perform this genre putting on *minwenda, misisi, makunda, malungu, thavhula* and *zwickhipha*.

### 6.4. AGENTS AND THEIR ROLES IN THE MAKING OF *TSHIFASI*

The traditional leaders' focus group discussion, which included *mahosi*, listed the agents for *tshifasi* as the civic structures and the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture. This study noted that the involvement of elderly people would encourage children to perform *tshifasi*, thereby helping resuscitate it.

## 6.5. THE FUNCTION OF *TSHIFASI* IN OUR SOCIETY

This study found out that boys and girls learnt good manners as they performed *tshifasi*. Another advantage of playing *tshifasi* was that children learnt to be loyal to their future partners through it. That is, they practised family matters in disguise. Also discovered was the fact that songs and dances tackled social issues such as working hard and being a responsible parent, an indication that *tshifasi* taught young boys that a woman is to be married and treated with respect. Most importantly, the study discovered, children were trained to abstain from sex until marriage. In addition, they were taught never to eat from their parents' (*ndongwana*) plates.

## 6.6. FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS: THE ORIGIN OF *TSHIFASI* MUSIC

Through the focus group discussions, this study discovered that *tshifasi* is one of the indigenous music performances for Vhavenda boys and girls as they entertained themselves. The discussants also revealed that through performing *tshifasi*, children learnt good moral values. This genre is called by different names in the Vhembe District, vis; *tshinombelo*, *tshinzerere*, or *tshifasi*, depending on one's geographical location. *Tshifasi* is an eminent name amongst other names. The music was originally designed for boys and girls who are still virgins, aged between 12 and 16 years.

The study found out that *tshifasi* music is different from other cultural practices of Vhavenda since it includes both sexes. It is usually performed in the evenings when there is moonlight. Interestingly, elders did not involve themselves with such children's game. The idea was for children to discover life issues on their own. In the past, children performed *tshifasi* music

while wearing their casual clothes such as *luvhemba lwa nwenda* or *shedo* for girls, and *tsindi* for boys. *Minwenda*, *misisi*, *makunda*, *malungu*, *thavhula*, *zwickapa* are the modern attire. In fact, Vhavanḁa used to wear *mikuba* (animal skins) before the arrival of *minwenda*. Another finding is that the *tshifasi* music is now performed wearing funny clothes or stuffing one's stomach with cloths to produce a big belly. This is arranged for competition purposes at school. This researcher also found out that hands, feet and sometimes ululating systematically produced beautiful music that was used when doing *tshifasi* music genre. *Zwikotikoti* or *gokoko* (empty tins) were later added to make the music more interesting, and to enhance its entertainment value.

#### **6.7. AGENTS AND THEIR ROLES IN THE MAKING OF *TSHIFASI***

During the focus group discussions, it was found out that traditional leaders such as *mahosi* and civic structures should network with parents and, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (school competitions) in order to resuscitate *tshifasi*. The involvement of elderly people in inspiring children through language (in songs and proverb clarifications) practice would certainly keep this genre alive. The government, on its part, should help through advertising in both print and electronic media, the importance of culture and tradition in our society.

#### **6.8. THE FUNCTION OF *TSHIFASI* IN OUR SOCIETY**

*Tshifasi* is part of entertainment on one hand, and a performance for boys and girls for socialisation purposes on the other. The discussants revealed that children practised family matters in disguise. It was also found out that *tshifasi* aims at culturally training girls and

boys for future marriage. Their songs and dance tackled social issues such as working hard and being a responsible parent, indicating that *tshifasi* taught young boys that a woman is to be married and she should be treated with respect as the mother of the family. Aspects discussed revealed that children were trained to abstain from sex. The study established that boys and girls learnt good behaviour as they socialised with each other. For example, they were not allowed to eat from their parents' (*ndongwana*) plates.

## 6.9. CONCLUSIONS

This section concludes the descriptive analysis of *tshifasi* music genre, an entertainment performance for boys and girls. This study integrated the data from the literature review and that collected from individuals and focus groups discussion. The sections above outlined this study's findings. This brings us to this study's conclusions.

In this study, it is indicated that *tshifasi* is a deceased indigenous music of the Vhavenda. Dead in the context that *tshifasi* is no longer done in our communities. Be that as it may, the people who were interviewed revealed their wishes to have *tshifasi* resuscitated. To them, the way children currently behave is due to that *tshifasi* has been neglected.

Consequently, the young ones have lost track of our culture and tradition.

This study discovered that *tshifasi* is connected with children's daily lives. That is, boys and girls learn cultural values as they perform *tshifasi*, and at the same time they are trained in upholding good moral values. For instance, to socialise, respect and discipline. The study managed to determine the sociological function of *tshifasi*, where the Tshivenda music play

an important role. This study also discovered that *tshifasi* is a good tool for a traditional conversation between a boy and a girl. Those who participate in *tshifasi* grow up responsible and are respectful of others.

The agents that may play important roles in sustaining *tshifasi* were also identified since the collaboration of parents, the whole society and the government could help preserve Vhavenda heritage through music. The knowledge that is hidden in *tshifasi* could be explored for the benefit of our society. This could contribute to the body of knowledge in this field of study. The African approach was utilised since the study gathered data from indigenous knowledge holders, traditional leaders and indigenous musicians who explained the *tshifasi* music from an informed perspective. This also enabled them to express themselves through the Tshivenda language.

However, it was difficult to determine how *tshifasi* originated since there is no written documents to this effect so far. Compounding this was the issue of the participants who also expressed their ignorance over its origins. That is, this study revealed that the *tshifasi* origins are less known. Even though *tshifasi* is known by different names, its common name is *tshifasi*, specifically for boys and girls of 11 to 16 years. Also, *tshifasi* performance has been altered because of the contemporary changes, and has thus lost its originality and identity. To reach the point of saturation, data collected from Vhavenda and Vhavenda who are mixed with Vatsonga clarified the origin of *tshifasi* in chapter five.

## 6.10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on Chapters Four and Five, this study recommends the following:

The researcher recommends that indigenous music should be included in the Department of Basic Education's curricula as a major subject to promote the South African indigenous music. If this is considered at primary level, it would go a long way in making the current generation appreciate Vhavanḁa heritage. Also, this would help children understand *tshifasi*. Thus, it is recommended that *tshifasi* be taught from lower primary school upwards.

The researcher also recommends that indigenous music should be part of historical studies at universities since it was very difficult to obtain historical data about *tshifasi*. In addition, this would help preserve the history of Tshivenḁa music. In other words, children should learn their culture while still young. The history of Tshivenḁa music has disappeared due to its exclusion from the curriculum. It is hoped that these recommendations would go a long way in making *tshifasi* a vibrant music performance in Venda if they are acted on.

This study also discovered that there is more to *tshifasi* than meet the eye that need to be explored. Therefore, *tshifasi* songs should be documented and preserved as they are rich, educative, informative and most of all, they are motivational to young people.

Another research related with the Tshivenḁa music for children and indigenous games needs to be done before we lose the originality of Tshivenḁa music for the up-coming generations. From this study, it would be worthwhile for the current generation to practice and perverse

our traditional music in order to promote our culture and heritage. This would in turn encourage young people to become active participants in indigenous music.

An interesting study like *tshifasi* would undoubtedly benefit the African languages, tertiary institutions and government departments, as well as to dispel cultural and religious myths regarding musicology. It is recommended, therefore, that *tshifasi* be included in the school as a stand-alone subject.



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## APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

1. What is *tshifasi*, and how does it differ from other Tshivenda music performances?
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2. Where does this performance originate, why is it referred as *tshifasi*?
3. Who performs *tshifasi* why and how?
4. What is the function of *tshifasi* in our society?
5. Who takes part in the sustenance of the *tshifasi*?
6. Where and when is *tshifasi* performed?
7. Explain the meaning of *tshifasi* actions.
8. What are the instruments used during the performance and how are they played?
9. Why is *tshifasi* not popular compared with other Vhavana performances?
10. What is the attire of this performance and why?
11. What are their emotions when children perform *tshifasi* and why?
12. Is *tshifasi* currently being performed the same way as in the past, how and why?

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSION

1. What is *tshifasi* and how does it differ from other Tshivenda music performances?
2. Where does this performance originate, why do they refer to *tshifasi*?
3. Who performs *tshifasi*, why, and how?
4. What is the function of *tshifasi* in our society?
5. Who takes part in the sustenance of the *tshifasi*?

6. Where and when is *tshifasi* performed?
7. Explain the meaning of *tshifasi* actions.
8. What are the instruments used during the performance and how are they played?
9. Why is *tshifasi* not popular the same way as other Vhavenda performances?
10. What is the attire of this performance and why?
11. What is performers' emotions when they perform it, and why?
12. Is *tshifasi* currently being performed as in the past, how and why?