Women's participation in cattle farming at Ha- Luvhimbi Village, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

by

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Declaration

I, Rialivhuwa Tertia Netshithothole, student number 19007536, affirm that this research for a degree in Master of Arts in Gender Studies, within the Department of Youth in Development Studies at the University of Venda, is a submission made solely by me and has not been presented for a degree at this or any other institution before. I also confirm that this work is my own in terms of both design and implementation, and that all sources used have been properly cited and acknowledged.

Signature:  Date: 23 May 2025

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my son, Mulweli Paul Netshithothole, my mother, Vho-Azwinndini Grace Netshithothole, and my brother, Ronewa Netshithothole.

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Acknowledgement

I would like to express my gratitude to God Almighty for His grace and support in starting and concluding this study. I acknowledge my funders, the Water Research Council through the Project Leader, Prof. AE Nesamvuni, GreenMatter Fellowship, and the Margaret McNamara Education Grants (MMEG) for making it possible for me to complete this study without any financial struggles.I am also thankful to my wonderful supervisors: Prof. T. D. Thobejane, Dr. TP Mulaudzi and for their guidance. I appreciate my family and friends for their encouragement and support.

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Abstract

Livestock holds immense importance in the lives of rural households in developing countries, serving as a crucial source of agricultural income for generations. This qualitative research study delves into the factors that hinder women's participation in cattle farming practices at Ha-Luvhimbi, a Village located in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa. Guided by the social justice theory and the feminist standpoint theory, the research aimed to explore how gender shapes knowledge, access to resources, farming methods, and the difficulties encountered within the community. The study population comprised the residents of Ha-Luvhimbi village who are involved in cattle farming practices. Purposive sampling procedure, specifically the non-probability sampling method, was used in this study. The sample size was determined by data saturation. As a result, the researcher interviewed eight participants.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews based on the five domains of the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI), and thematic data analysis was used to uncover significant findings related to gender disparities in cattle access and ownership, traditional gender roles, and the sociocultural norms that influence farming practices. The research underscores the necessity for a gender-sensitive approach in addressing challenges faced by women in cattle farming, emphasising the need for policies and community development initiatives that promote gender equity and sustainable farming practices.

Key concepts*: Cattle farming, Gender roles, Gender inequalities, Livestock, Sociocultural factors, Women Empowerment in Agriculture*.

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Acronyms

FST- Feminist Standpoint Theory

GDP- Gross Domestic Product

ICC- International Criminal Court

SCs- Scheduled Castes

SDG- Sustainable Development Goals

SJT – Social Justice Theory

UN- United Nations

UNHRC- United Nations Human Rights Council

WEAI- Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This chapter entails an introduction and background of the study, followed by the problem statement, research aim and objectives, research questions, significance of the study, as well as the definitions of key concepts.

1.1 Introduction and background

Despite years of gender sensitisation in many institutions, the role of women in livestock production and the marketing of animals and their products continues to be underestimated. Lovarelli, Bacenetti and Guarino (2020) posit that some encouraging initiatives are focusing on women livestock keepers, but most projects still tend to assume that men are the major actors in livestock production. A study by Mehrabi, Gill, Wijk, Herrero, and Ramankutty (2022) recognised that livestock farming can contribute to one key objective of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 1 (No Poverty) by providing food, income, transport, insurance, and other services to households. Empowerment of women in livestock such as cattle farming offers opportunities for women not only to increase household income but also to control a larger portion of it, thus reducing gender inequality, which addresses the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Mehrabi et al, 2022). Lovarelli *et al* (2020) assert that increased livestock production for both home consumption and the market, diversification in income sources from livestock, and women's stronger positions as livestock owners—all these factors help reduce their families' vulnerability to hunger, poverty, and dependence on their male counterparts. Recognition of these links between livestock production and tackling hunger, gender inequality, and vulnerability has helped turn the development spotlight on women and livestock.

In rural agricultural contexts, Makate (2020) mentions that gender dynamics play an integral role in determining who gets what with respect to livestock ownership, decision-making, and distribution of associated profits. Gender roles often dictate who is responsible for specific tasks in cattle farming. Factors such as traditional taboos, inheritance laws, and gender knowledge gap limit women's participation in cattle farming in indigenous communities such as Ha-Luvhimbi Village. The status of women in Ha-Luvhimbi village is influenced by the community, tradition, culture, household incomes, and living patterns. For instance, there are traditional and cultural customs in Tshivenda culture that are deeply rooted in the social and spiritual fabric of the Vhavenda people that limit or prevent women from entering cattle kraals.

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A gender role is a set of socially accepted behaviours and attitudes deemed appropriate or desirable for individuals based on being a male or a female(Bravo-Baumann, 2020). In cattle communal farming, Obosha (2020) argues that men primarily focus on activities like herding, breeding, grazing management, and marketing, while women may be more involved in tasks such as milking, calf care, and fodder collection. This division results in unequal knowledge acquisition and decision-making powers. Gender relations thus define the roles, rights, obligations, and identities of men and women within a culture or society (Bravo-Baumann, 2020). These relationships often manifest as hierarchical power dynamics that generally disadvantage women. These hierarchies are viewed as natural and evolve over time. They are evident in various gendered behaviours such as the division of labour and control over resources, as well as gendered beliefs about appropriate conduct for men and women (Obosha, 2020).

In rural areas, where most people are smallholder farmers, gender relations impact the production and consumption of agricultural goods like crops, livestock, and farmed fish (Sesay, 2023). Gender relations also influence power dynamics across social groups, including gender roles and how women and men navigate these roles Dzuvichu, 2020). In rural agricultural settings, gender dynamics are crucial in determining livestock ownership, decision-making, and profit distribution (Singh et al., 2016; Galiè et al., 2019). Research indicates that livestock husbandry tasks are typically divided between men and women, though the extent of involvement varies by culture (Bonis-Profumo *et al*., 2022). Research on livestock and development projects should incorporate gender analysis because women make significant contributions to livestock rearing and should benefit from such labours.

Livestock has great significance in the livelihoods of most rural households in developing countries and has always played a historical role as a major source of agricultural income for generations. The multiple roles of livestock production include food provision, as a store of wealth, bride price, use of animal products, and the commercial sale of animals (Obosha, 2020). Livestock is also one of the important options for landless and small-scale farmers and for rural women, who represent 70% of the world's poor (FAO, 2019). In South Africa, livestock is also an important livelihood mechanism. Given the large number of livestock owned by rural communities, even access and ownership could contribute greatly to food security and

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poverty reduction. A report by the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform, and Rural Development states that in 2022, the total income from animals in South Africa stood at over 95 billion South African rands (around 51.45 billion U.S. dollars). Cattle contributed the majority of the generated income, at almost 54 billion South African rands (around 2.88 billion U.S. dollars). Live chickens and sheep followed with a sales value of about 15.8 billion South African rands (about 1.22 billion U.S. dollars) and about 8.3 billion South African rands (around 467 million U.S. dollars).

Gender equity in the ownership of productive resources such as livestock is considered key to improving agricultural productivity, food security, and livelihoods of the rural poor (Harris-Fry, Nur, Shankar, Zanello, Srinivasan & Kadiyala, 2020). add that, however, ownership of such important assets is tilted in favour of men. Empowering women with high-value assets, such as cattle, has proved to have positive outcomes, not only for women but also for entire households (Anderson, Reynolds, Biscaye, Patwardhan, & Schmidt, 2021)

According to Farnworth, Ravichandran, and Galiè (2023), the livestock sector plays a significant role in the welfare of India's rural population. In India, livestock is one of the sectors where women's participation is relatively higher compared to men. Women are often actively involved in day-to-day management tasks related to livestock, including feeding, watering, cleaning, and milking (Farnworth *et al.,* 2022). They have essential roles in ensuring the health and well-being of animals within households. However, women commonly own and manage small livestock units, such as goats, sheep, or backyard poultry, which are important for household nutrition and supplementary income as compared to men who own and manage big livestock such as cattle.

Studies reveal that access to livestock resources is often gendered within Scheduled Castes (SCs) systems in Indian households (Farnworth, *et al.,* 2023). Women-headed households or households where women play a primary role encounter additional barriers in accessing and owning livestock compared to male-headed households. This disparity reflects broader gender norms and inequalities within caste-based systems. Anderson *et al* (2021) state that ownership and control over livestock within SCs households are influenced by gender dynamics. Men have greater decision-making power and control over larger livestock assets, while women are often restricted to smaller animals or limited involvement in livestock management. Gender intersects with caste systems in shaping market access for livestock products. Dalit

women in India, in particular, may face compounded discrimination when attempting to sell dairy products or other livestock goods due to both caste and gender biases. This can further limit their economic agency, further exacerbating poverty levels.

Women in SCs' households are often disproportionately responsible for unpaid labour related to livestock care, such as milking, feeding, and cleaning, without commensurate control or decision-making powers over income generated from these activities (Farnworth *et al.,* 2022). This perpetuates gendered economic disparities within the caste system's hierarchy. Limited access to education, especially for Dalit girls, further reinforces gender inequalities within SCs communities. Educational attainment significantly impacts opportunities for economic mobility and diversification into non-traditional livelihoods, including livestock activities.

Agriculture is also a primary industry in Pakistan, which is divided into a number of subsectors, including livestock, agricultural production, forestry, and fisheries. Livestock production contributes more to agriculture overall than any other sub-sector (Qureshi & Perry, 2021). The production of livestock accounts for 58.55% of agricultural output and 11.61% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Although the agricultural sector's share has decreased by 0.19% over the past few years, the livestock industry is booming, growing at a rate of 3.63%. Keeping in mind the significance of the livestock sector, this study was conducted in 2023 with a focus on the contribution of Pakistani female farmers to the production of animals. In many nations, including Pakistan, women are essential to the care of cattle. Liu et al (2020) argue that in many nations, including Pakistan, women are essential to the care of cattle. They carry out a variety of livestock management tasks, such as cutting fodder, watering and feeding animals, cleaning animal pens, and milking.

Women are actively involved in the production of livestock in the majority of Pakistan's rural areas. Data analysis reveals that rural women's involvement in tasks such as animal care, herd size determination, animal purchasing, sale of animal products, and animal feeding was quite high (Habib et al., 2022). However, they didn't participate all that much in high-level activities like raising livestock, breeding animals, selling them, growing fodder, and building animal barns. As part of their domestic duties, women play an important role in handling livestock. Despite their important contribution to many tasks inside and outside the home, women in Pakistan are not given much consideration when it comes to making important family decisions. Most activities

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related to farm, poultry, and livestock management are considered part of household activities.

Factors such as socioeconomic status, agro-ecological conditions, ethnicity, and religion influence women's participation in livestock production (Sesay, 2023). For example, in the Ethiopian highlands, men are in charge of feeding oxen and seeking veterinary care, while women clean cowsheds, milk cows, care for calves and sick animals, cut grass, supervise feeding and grazing, make dung cakes, butter, and cheese, and sell these products weekly (Obosha, 2020). Generally, men handle herd care, while women manage calves, clean sheds, and spread manure on crops.

In the Kilimanjaro region of northern Tanzania in eastern Africa, Chagga women and girls are responsible for all forms of livestock care, including milking, shed cleaning, collecting feed, providing food and drink, and bedding for zero-grazed animals, whereas men cut banana trees for feed (Bonis-Profumo et al., 2022). Both men and women prepare fodder, with boys assisting their fathers and girls their mothers. In Egypt, in northern Africa, women build coops, milk cattle, and process milk into cheese and butter while also handling much of the marketing of these products (Sesay, 2023). Men and women collaborate in food collection and transporting animals to the field. Obosha (2020) reveals that women and girls bear the brunt of managing livestock in their intensive crop-livestock farming system in western Kenya, East Africa. Women perform 70% of the work in livestock production and 40% in daily livestock management.

In other developing countries such as South Africa, women's asset ownership has proven to increase their role in household decision making, bargaining power, allocation, and spending on children's health and education (Dzuvichu, 2020). However, women's access to and ownership of cattle has been limited by the historical formulation and implementation of patriarchal laws that limit women's asset inheritance (Bonis-Profumo et al., 2022).

Men's livestock ownership rights are guaranteed by a near-universal set of inheritance rules that are gender biased and rooted in local systems (Maunatlala and Maimela 2020). In general, women usually own small stock, such as sheep, goats, and poultry, and men own large stock, such as cattle. One of the reasons is that livestock ownership patterns are linked to social class, religious systems, and paternalistic

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cultures. This means women have weaker ownership rights than men, especially in times of stress (Obosha, 2020). Rural development strategies focusing on women, assets, and other environmental linkages are a step in the right direction because most South African women and children reside in rural areas (Dzuvichu, 2020). This also applies to the African continent, where, more broadly, the majority of African women in rural areas are often impoverished, constitute an important source of the agricultural labour force, and produce 60-80% of the food consumed by households (FAO, 2019).

Regarding cattle inheritance, Maunatlala and Maimela (2020) assert that the inheritance customs described among indigenous tribes in South Africa illustrate a system deeply entrenched in patriarchal norms, where women are notably excluded from direct consideration in inheritance matters. Focusing exclusively on male descendants, particularly sons and grandsons, highlighting a societal structure that prioritises male lineage and perpetuates gender gaps (Malepe & Odeku, 2023). The tradition of inheritance typically follows the principle of primogeniture, where the oldest son inherits the father's property. Malepe and Odeku (2023) define primogeniture as a traditional system of inheritance in which the eldest son inherits all of his parents' property upon death, excluding younger siblings, especially females.

Bhalotra, Brulé and Roy (2020) emphasise that these practices are deeply rooted in the historical and cultural context, reflecting patriarchal values and the desire to consolidate family wealth and power in a single lineage. Therefore, this practice inherently excludes daughters and other female relatives from succession, regardless of their relationship to the deceased. If the oldest son is deceased or has no male offspring, the inheritance then passes to the oldest surviving grandson, continuing the pattern of prioritising male descendants. This exclusion of female relatives, such as daughters or granddaughters, underscores the entrenched gender bias within the inheritance structure (Maunatlala & Maimela, 2020).

Furthermore, in cases where the eldest son has no sons, the inheritance proceeds to the father's second son, if he exists, and potentially further down the line through other male descendants. This pattern highlights a clear preference for male heirs over female ones, even when direct male descendants are unavailable. The absence of consideration for women in this inheritance system reflects broader societal norms that devalue women's contributions and rights within family and community dynamics

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(Bhalotra, Brulé & Roy, 2020). By prioritising male heirs based solely on lineage, these customs reinforce traditional gender roles and hierarchies that disadvantage women.

While much of the earlier research on rural livestock farming centred on scientific and technical aspects such as disease epidemiology, outbreaks and control, animal movements and trans boundary diseases, attention is now increasingly turning to the human and social dimensions of rural livestock production. Studies that have looked at the human and social dimension of livestock farming have primarily focused on the potential benefits of livestock farming and the gendered roles involved (Njuki & Mburu, 2013). Various studies, such as that of Liu et al (2020), have also examined the relationship between gender and poverty in South Africa. However, there is a dearth of studies and literature investigating the gender knowledge gap in communal cattle farmers in South Africa. This is the major gap identified in both the research and literature that this study aims to fill.

1.2 Problem statement

Livestock plays a critical role in the livelihoods of rural households in developing countries, serving as a major source of agricultural income for generations. In Ha-Luvhimbi Village, the status of women is influenced by community, tradition, culture, household incomes, and living patterns. In cattle farming, these women often face isolation and exclusion due to socio-cultural norms of patriarchy, which limit their access to development and empowerment opportunities. Inheritance customs among indigenous tribes in South Africa are deeply entrenched in patriarchal norms, often excluding women from direct consideration in inheritance matters. Typically, the tradition of inheritance follows the principle of primogeniture, where the oldest son inherits the father's property. Women involved in cattle farming usually gain access and ownership of cattle after their husbands' passing, or through market purchases. The exclusive focus on male descendants, particularly sons and grandsons, highlights a societal structure that prioritises male lineage and perpetuates gender gaps.

The study is based on the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by eliminating discrimination, ensuring equal rights to economic resources, and promoting leadership opportunities for women in agriculture. On the other hand, SDG 10 highlights the necessity of empowering women through equitable access to resources, opportunities, and

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support systems in rural agriculture. Addressing factors limiting women's participation in cattle farming not only contributes to achieving gender equality (SDG 5) but can also reduce inequalities (SDG 10), ultimately fostering sustainable development outcomes.

Despite the centrality of cattle farming to local economies, cultural taboos that limit women's participation in cattle farming, gender knowledge gap, and resource access remain underexplored. Due to cultural considerations and taboos in indigenous communities, women are not allowed to enter a kraal, including when they are mourning the passing of their husbands, which further limits their interest in cattle farming because they are considered as being disrespectful towards their culture. In addition, grazing areas in these communities are too far from home, and women do not feel safe while looking after their animals. As a result, they are more vulnerable to stock theft, isolation, and violence. Therefore, addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort towards empowering women, promoting gender equity, and ensuring their safety and access to resources like smart fodder bank technology. By doing so, more inclusive rural development will be fostered, to optimise agricultural productivity, and uplift the livelihoods of entire rural communities.

1.3 Research aim and objectives

The aim of the study is to explore factors limiting women's participation in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi Village, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives were formulated:

- To identify how men and women obtain access and ownership of cattle in indigenous farming practices.
- To explore how traditional gender roles influence the participation of women in cattle farming practices.
- To assess how the empowerment of women farmers can contribute to household food security and economic development
- To develop strategies to promote gender equality in Indigenous cattle farming practices.

1.4 Research questions

- How do men and women in indigenous farming communities acquire access to and ownership of cattle?

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- How do traditional gender roles influence the participation of women in cattle farming practices?
- How can the empowerment of women farmers contribute to household food security and economic development?
- Which strategies can be developed to promote gender equality in Indigenous cattle farming practices?

1.5 Significance of the study

The study's significance lies in its comprehensive examination of how innovative solutions, such as smart fodder bank technology, can mitigate the risks faced by women farmers, including stock theft and violence in unsafe grazing areas, thus creating a safer working environment. By addressing barriers to women's participation in cattle farming, the study aims to enhance household incomes and empower women within this sector, ultimately leading to increased productivity and economic stability for their households.

Furthermore, the study provides valuable insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by women in cattle farming, serving as a basis for the development of targeted policies and programs. These initiatives could lead to more effective governance in the agricultural sector by promoting gender equity, which is essential for sustainable development. Empowering women farmers is essential for enhancing agricultural productivity, a key component of rural development and food security.

The study further emphasises the importance of removing socio-cultural barriers and promoting gender-sensitive agricultural policies, aiming for more equitable and inclusive growth. It underscores the potential for smart technologies and culturally sensitive approaches to improve safety, productivity, and acceptance among women in agriculture, aligning with broader governmental objectives of reducing gender disparities and fostering social cohesion. Ultimately, the study highlights the transformative potential of recognising and addressing gender dynamics in agricultural policy and practice, aiming for a more sustainable and equitable future.

1.6 Definition of concepts

Cattle farming

Cattle farming is the practice of raising cattle for various purposes, such as for meat, milk, and as draft animals (Lovarelli *et al,* 2020). According to this study, cattle farming

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involves a community collectively managing and utilising cattle and related resources, emphasising shared decision-making, labour, and benefits distribution. Cattle, grazing land, water sources, and veterinary services are owned and managed by the communities. Decisions are made collectively, often through regular community meetings, and practices focus on sustainable grazing and conserving water resources for long-term viability.

Gender inequality

Gender inequality refers to the unequal or differential treatment, opportunities, and outcomes between individuals of different genders, typically favouring one gender at the expense of the other (Dickin, Bisung, Nansi, & Charles, 2021). According to this study, these disparities manifest in various aspects of life, including access to and ownership of cattle, as well as the distribution of resources and power. Gender disparities often result from deeply ingrained societal norms, expectations, and prejudices, and are a significant concern for achieving gender equality and promoting social justice. Differences in access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power based on an individual's gender, therefore, result in gender inequality.

Gender roles

Gender roles, as described by Eisend (2019), refer to the societal and cultural expectations, behaviours, and activities considered suitable for individuals based on their gender. These roles encompass a wide range of norms and responsibilities that influence how people interact and participate in various aspects of life, including family, work, and society. Gender roles in indigenous cattle farming practices involve men overseeing ownership and control of cattle, while women take care of daily cattle tasks and support men's activities. These roles can vary between communities.

Women's empowerment in agriculture

The empowerment of women in agriculture, according to Anderson *et al* (2021), involves enhancing their capacity, opportunities, and rights within the sector, providing resources, knowledge, and authority for them to fully participate and improve their socio-economic status. In cattle farming, it means enabling women to make life choices, enhancing their access to resources and opportunities, and ensuring support for improved livelihoods, gender equality, and community development. Key elements include secure land rights, access to financial services, livestock management and

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business skills training, and involving the community in supporting women's roles for economic growth and sustainability.

Socio-cultural factors

Socio-cultural factors refer to the elements within a society and its culture that influence and shape the behaviour, belief systems, values, and interactions of individuals and groups (Turaev, 2020). This study recognises cultural norms and values, which are the shared beliefs, customs, and practices of the Vhavenda culture, that have an impact on how people behave and make decisions. Social norms are the unwritten rules and expectations governing appropriate behaviour within a society, which guide individual and group actions.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter entailed the introduction and background of the study, followed by the problem statement, research aim and objectives, research questions, significance of the study, and lastly, the definitions of key concepts.

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CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Indigenous farming practices are deeply rooted in cultural traditions and have sustained communities for generations. Within these practices, cattle farming plays a vital role in the livelihoods of many rural households. However, gender dynamics significantly influence access, ownership, decision-making, and economic contributions within these systems. This literature review aims to explore these dynamics through four key objectives: access and ownership of cattle by gender, traditional gender roles and decision-making, the impact of women's empowerment on household food security and economic development, and strategies for promoting gender equality in indigenous cattle farming.

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1 Access and Ownership of Cattle by Gender

Inheritance customs among indigenous tribes of South Africa, according to Gluckman (2022), are deeply entrenched in patriarchal norms, often excluding women from direct consideration in inheritance matters. Preston-Whyte (2024), in addition, argues that the tradition of inheritance follows the principle of primogeniture, where the oldest son inherits the father's property. Also, Bhalotra, Brulé, and Roy (2020) maintain that women involved in cattle farming usually gain access to and ownership of cattle after their husbands' passing, or through market purchases. These exclusionary practices also have long-term economic impacts on female farmers. Therefore, the historically accepted ways that women enter livestock farming leave them particularly vulnerable as it reduces their authority and power in the farming practices, undermines their ability to become primary producers, and places them in compromised positions where quitting could have negative social and economic consequences.

Bhalotra *et al's* (2020) arguments are supported in Wilson and Thompson (2022), who state that indigenous women often enter cattle farming through marriages, and cases of divorce mean walking away from all that they have invested their labour in. Wilson and Thompson (2022) further observe that when these women do inherit cattle, they often do so later in life. They inherit from husbands, rather than fathers, so divorce can also preclude this return on their labour investment. Such inheritance practices not only function as barriers to women's entry into the agricultural profession but also

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reduce women's ability to thrive economically. While cattle farming is becoming more inclusive, it is important, therefore, to note that traditional practices and cultural narratives can still have lifelong impacts on women's agency and economic stability and thriving.

Sansom (2024) argues that in South African customs, when a woman's husband passes away, her brothers-in-law typically come to claim the livestock she has farmed for decades and still depends on. Women may take such cases to the legal system, but typically they appeal to their local chief under the traditional justice system. It is not uncommon for the chief to decide that the woman has the right to farm the land until her natural death (Wilson &Thompson, 2022). However, this creates uncertainty as it means that the woman's fate depends on the vagaries of individual choice and how much the chief can be relied upon. Additionally, it leaves her children, especially the daughters, in a difficult situation when the mother passes away because they no longer have access to cattle. Their involvement in cattle farming would therefore forfeit to unpaid labour, ending in dependency on the goodwill of others. A woman, as further elaborated in Sansom (2024), can also lose access to cattle if the husband or another family member, due to the husband's passing, and decides to sell without her knowledge or consent.

The challenges that rural women encounter in obtaining resources are primarily attributed not to their gender *per se*. Instead, these hurdles stem from a wide array of socioeconomic factors (Becker, Cordeiro, Poudel, Sibiya, Sayer & Sibeko, 2020). According to these authors, the socioeconomic factors include limited access to education, financial resources, and healthcare, as well as entrenched social norms and practices that disproportionately affect women. In addition, Afshan, Shahid, and Tunio (2021) agree with Becker *et al* (2020) in expressing that addressing these challenges faced by rural women requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond gender considerations to tackle the root causes of inequality in rural settings. Access to and ownership of cattle in indigenous farming practices often reflect broader societal norms and cultural values, argues Afshan *et al* (2021). Therefore, men still traditionally hold primary access and ownership of cattle, with cattle serving as a symbol of wealth and social status.

2.2.2 Traditional Gender Roles and Decision-Making in Cattle Farming

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Ball (2020) argues that gender roles are determined by how men and women are supposed to act based on an understanding of femininity and masculinity. The traditional gender roles for women emphasise traits such as helpfulness, passivity, and kindness, while men are expected to embody characteristics of dominance, assertiveness, and strength. Typically, women have been assigned roles as caregivers, nurturers, homemakers, and helpers, while men have been assigned roles as breadwinners, leaders, and protectors. These gender roles are based on outdated ideas about gender and perpetuate a social hierarchy where men hold power over women in both public and private settings. By socialising men and women into these roles, we perpetuate power dynamics that contribute to gender inequality and discrimination.

Traditional gender roles significantly influence participation in cattle farming. Men typically engage in tasks such as herding, breeding, and marketing of cattle, while women are more involved in supportive roles such as milking, cleaning, and feeding (Flintan, 2008). This division of labour often excludes women from critical decision-making processes related to cattle management and sales.

Cultural norms and practices frequently restrict women's involvement in decision-making. For example, in numerous pastoralist communities, men predominantly control decisions concerning cattle sales, breeding, and resource allocation (Flintan, 2008). Women's contributions are often not fully appreciated, and their voices are marginalised in community gatherings and household conversations.

Saxena (2020) argues that women often find livestock to be productive assets that are relatively easy to own due to the lack of complex property rights. Despite this, Obosha, (2020) notes that women may acquire livestock through markets or inheritance, either before or during marriage, yet they often lack decision-making authority over such assets. The informal nature of livestock property rights can be a disadvantage for women, especially when their ownership is contested (Obosha 2020). Moreover, the assets that women own tend to be of significantly lower value compared to those owned by men. Nonetheless, research on livestock innovations, social norms, and women's empowerment in the global south by authors Galiè, Najjar, Petesch, Badstue and Farnworth in 2022, indicates that when women control assets, it enhances their bargaining power, increases their involvement in household decision-making, and boosts spending on children's education and health. The traditional gender roles

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significantly influence decision-making in cattle farming while further creating barriers that hinder women's participation in these practices.

2.3 Barriers to Women's Participation in Cattle Farming Practices

2.3.1 Cultural and Traditional Beliefs

Rola-Rubzen, Paris, Hawkins and Sapkota (2020) argue that in various indigenous communities, it is a cultural norm that women are barred from entering cattle kraals. Across South African cultures, the researcher observed that cattle symbolise wealth and authority, traditionally under male management. A study by Glazebrook, Noll, and Opoku (2020) elaborates that the exclusion of women from these roles stems from deep-seated patriarchal norms. Rola-Rubzen *et al* (2020) argue that specific cultural beliefs or taboos that restrict women from entering cattle kraals are often linked to ideas of purity, ritual, or gender roles. For example, Vhavenda women of childbearing age are prohibited from entering the cattle kraal, unlike men who can enter at any age. Young girls who have not started their menstrual period and elderly women are exceptions to this rule. This restriction is based on the cultural assumption that women of childbearing age are always unclean, which is believed to impact the cattle's well-being (Catholic & Green, 2020). Further, the cattle kraal is revered as a sacred space housing ancestral spirits and serves as a venue for rituals and ceremonies that honour ancestors and seek their blessings. Therefore, major life events like births, marriages, and deaths are commemorated in or around the kraal, making it a focal point for community gatherings and spiritual activities. These cultural and traditional practices not only restrict women's physical access to cattle but also limit their roles in cattle herding, a crucial aspect of cattle farming.

2.3.2 Cattle herding

Meurs, Amartuvshin, Banzragch, Boldbaatar, and Poyatzis (2022) posit that herding cattle in the bush is a challenging and demanding task that often involves traditional practices passed down through generations. In many indigenous cultures, men traditionally take the lead in herding cattle (Lubungu & Birner, 2021). Meurs *et al* (2022) support by adding that men guide the cattle through the bush, protect them from predators, and locate suitable grazing areas. Lubungu and Birner (2021) further explain that women have supporting roles such as preparing food for the herders, caring for calves, or handling smaller livestock. However, due to traditional gender

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roles, women have limited herding time and face dangers. Therefore, their involvement is restricted, and they are vulnerable to theft in the grazing areas. Furthermore, women who herd cattle often encounter societal stigmatisation, as they are perceived as performing men's duties. This limited involvement in herding, combined with the risks faced by women in isolated grazing areas, exposes them to greater dangers, including gender-based violence, a significant barrier to their active participation in cattle farming practices.

2.3.3 Gender-based violence

Women involved in cattle herding are also at risk of gender-based violence (Ndlovu & Mjimba, 2021). The authors argue that the isolated grazing areas are far from the households, exposing women to danger. Additionally, Atim and Gbamwuan (2022) argue that when women are alone in the bush, they easily become targets for sexual assault, attack, or kidnapping. Perpetrators may even resort to violence, resulting in harm to the women and theft of their livestock (Ndlovu & Mjimba, 2021). Therefore, encouraging group herding, where men and women work together in larger groups, can help enhance safety and provide mutual protection against threats. In addition, establishing community support systems to report gender-based violence and seek protection is crucial. Furthermore, training for women in herding techniques, animal husbandry, and bushcraft should be provided to empower them and increase their involvement in cattle farming. Encouraging women to assume leadership roles within herding communities can also help change traditional gender dynamics.

2.4 Empowerment of women farmers and its impact on household food security and economic development

In terms of food security, women significantly influence food availability, access, and use, making their empowerment a crucial factor in enhancing household food security. According to Anderson *et al*. (2020), empowering women farmers, particularly in livestock and cattle farming, is essential for improving household food security. Food security, as defined at the 1996 World Food Summit, is the condition in which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life. In rural economies, women play multiple roles as producers, consumers, homemakers, and social agents. Therefore, empowerment can take place in any of

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these areas. Therefore, the empowerment of women farmers has an impact on household food security and economic development.

2.4.1 Household Food Security

Sekaran, Lai, Ussiri, Kumar and Clay (2021) argue that cattle farming plays a crucial role in providing essential and nutritious food such as milk, meat, and dairy, which significantly contributes to improving the overall dietary diversity and nutritional intake of households. When women are equipped with the necessary skills in cattle farming, they can effectively ensure a consistent and reliable supply of food products, thus reducing the likelihood of food shortages and enhancing overall food security within their communities. Additionally, indigenous women often possess valuable traditional knowledge and expertise in sustainable livestock management practices. Empowering these women can lead to the adoption of improved grazing techniques, enhanced animal health, and the sustainable use of resources, ultimately contributing to long-term food security (Sekaran *et al.,* 2021). Furthermore, women are more likely than men to involve all family members in cattle farming activities, thereby distributing the labour more equitably and fostering a collective effort in food production, which ultimately strengthens overall household resilience. This collective effort not only strengthens household resilience but also paves the way for economic development by turning cattle farming into a profitable source of income.

2.4.2 Economic Development

Cattle farming has the potential to be a profitable source of income. Musagaliev and Shodiev (2023) state that with sufficient resource provision, women can sell milk, meat, and dairy products in local markets, thereby increasing household income and promoting economic stability. In agreement, Lovarelli, Bacenetti, and Guarino (2020) argue that if these indigenous women are exposed access to training and resources, they would be better equipped to navigate markets, negotiate prices, and access improved opportunities for selling their cattle products, therefore contributing to economic development. Empowering women to engage in value-added activities, such as processing milk into cheese or yogurt, enhances economic returns and creates additional income streams. Successful cattle farming can generate employment opportunities within the community, spanning from herding to processing and selling products, thereby stimulating local economies and reducing poverty

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(Lovarelli *et al.,* 2020). Therefore, increased income from cattle farming enables families to invest in their children's education and health, ultimately leading to a more skilled and healthier workforce for future economic growth. Beyond these economic and health benefits, empowering women in cattle farming also encompasses significant social and cultural benefits, which contribute to a more balanced and inclusive community development.

2.4.3 Social and Cultural Benefits

Makate (2020) posits that empowering indigenous women in cattle farming practices helps preserve and promote Indigenous knowledge and practices related to cattle farming, which are often sustainable and environmentally friendly. Brondízio *et al* (2021) elaborate that empowerment initiatives promote gender equality by recognising and valuing the contributions of women in cattle farming, leading to more inclusive and balanced community development. Additionally, when women are empowered, they tend to take on leadership roles within their communities, advocating for better policies and resources for cattle farming, which can lead to broader economic and social benefits.

2.5 Theoretical framework

Throughout the course of human history, individuals have been driven by an innate curiosity to seek explanations and gain deeper insights into the world that surrounds them. The role of theory in the research process cannot be overstated, as it serves to enhance overall understanding, provide direction for inquiry, forecast potential outcomes, identify areas for further exploration, and establish connections between abstract concepts and practical real-world applications. This study was underpinned by the principles of Social Justice theory and the feminist Standpoint theory, both of which offer valuable perspectives for examining and addressing societal issues.

2.4.1 Social Justice Theory

The social justice theory was developed by John Rawls (b. 1921, d. 2002), who was an American political philosopher in the liberal tradition. His theory of justice as fairness describes a society of free citizens holding equal basic rights and cooperating within an egalitarian economic system. The concept of social justice originated in the 19th century during the Industrial Revolution. It emerged as a response to the need for more equal societies and the reduction of exploitation among marginalised groups

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due to the significant disparity between the rich and the poor. Initially, social justice focused on the distribution of capital, property, and wealth to address the extreme levels of inequality and economic distress prevalent in European social class structures at that time.

In contemporary society, Wang (2018) states that social justice emphasises human rights and improving the lives of disadvantaged and marginalised groups who have historically faced discrimination. These groups often experience discrimination based on factors such as gender, age, wealth, ethnicity, heritage, social status, and religion. Social justice efforts today frequently involve redistributing wealth and providing support in the form of income, jobs, and educational opportunities to disadvantaged groups. Hytten and Bettez (2011) believe that understanding social justice involves five main principles, which are access to resources, equity, participation, diversity, and human rights.

Access to resources refers to the extent to which different socioeconomic groups have equal access to essential resources like healthcare, food, shelter, education, and recreational opportunities (Broido & Reason, 2005). Inequitable access to these resources perpetuates social and economic disadvantages, especially for women. Exploring factors limiting women's participation in cattle farming includes assessing how women in Ha-Luvhimbi Village access resources like land, capital, and training compared to men, and also identifying barriers that limit their access and proposing equitable solutions.

Equity involves providing individuals with the tools specific to their needs and socioeconomic status to achieve similar outcomes. Unlike equality, which offers the same resources to everyone, equity according to Wang (2018) recognises that some individuals and groups require more support to overcome systemic barriers. This theory was chosen as it allows the researcher to assess the specific needs of women in cattle farming and develop targeted interventions to support them. This could include providing tailored training programs, financial support, and access to markets.

Participation ensures that everyone in society has a voice in decision-making processes that affect their livelihoods and standard of living. Social injustice occurs when decision-making is concentrated in the hands of a few, silencing the voices of the broader population. Broido and Reason (2005) mention that empowering the level

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of women's involvement in decision-making processes related to cattle farming at both household and community levels is necessary, as it also helps when proposing initiatives to enhance their participation and ensure their voices are heard.

Valuing diversity means recognising and appreciating cultural differences (Hjerm, Eger, Bohman & Connolly 2020). Effective policy-making should consider the unique challenges faced by different societal groups. Policies that counter discriminatory practices in employment and other areas are crucial for fostering diversity. Social justice theory helps explore how cultural norms and societal attitudes towards gender impact women's participation in cattle farming. The theory advocates for cultural change and policies that recognise and value women's contributions.

Hjerm et al (2020) believe that human rights are fundamental to social justice, encompassing civil, economic, political, cultural, and legal rights. Ensuring these rights is essential for a just society, and violations must be addressed by governments, organisations, and individuals. International institutions like the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) play vital roles in upholding human rights and assist in the consideration on whether women's rights to property, inheritance, and economic participation are upheld in cattle farming. These institutions further assist in recommending legal and policy reforms to protect and promote these rights.

2.4.2 The feminist standpoint theory

A paper titled "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism" (1987) by social scientist Nancy Hartsock was the influential and pioneering work that introduced the concept of standpoint theory (Schraner & Ho, 2004). However, American Feminist theorist Sandra Harding is credited with coining standpoint theory to classify epistemologies prioritising women's knowledge. The theory gained recognition in the mid-1980s as a feminist analytical approach. The original feminist standpoint theory was rooted in materialism and is commonly traced back to the master-slave relationship in Hegel's reflections and Marxist theory (Harding, 1997), where men replace the bourgeoisie and women replace the proletariat. Nancy Hartsock views Hegel's master-slave relationship as the basis for gender relations, with women inherently oppressed as the master is always a man (Changfoot, 2004). In the 1970s and early 1980s, sociologist Dorothy Smith

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and philosopher Nancy Hartsock developed the core principles of feminist standpoint theory. The emergence of feminist standpoint theories across various social scientific fields can be attributed to Marxist feminist and feminist critical theoretical approaches. Consequently, these theories offer methodological and epistemological approaches specific to different disciplinary frameworks, while all share a commitment to acknowledging, evaluating, and leveraging the connections between power and knowledge, as well as striving to bring about change that promotes more just societies.

Masculine notions were spread in societies where male knowledge, experiences, and interests were favoured prior to the dawn of feminism, which also looks at the interests, experiences, and social roles of women to comprehend the nature of gender inequality. Men in patriarchal societies hold all power as they are the decision-makers. This is also the case when it comes to Indigenous cattle farming practices, where men's knowledge and perspectives are viewed as superior and dominant, and women's perspectives and interests are always belittled, marginalised, and excluded.

Harding (2004) argues that no individual's viewpoint or knowledge should be elevated above that of others. The theory recognises that people's perspectives and knowledge are influenced by their social positions and experiences. When applying this theory to analyse women's involvement in cattle farming, it becomes apparent which individuals historically had their perspectives and experiences respected and which individuals were marginalised. Standpoint feminist theory investigates the specific positions and experiences of women and men and the impact of gender processes on both genders.

2.4.3 Justification for using these theories

Feminist Standpoint Theory (FST) emphasises the importance of women's lived experiences, providing insights into how gender dynamics affect their cattle farming roles (Hartsock, 2019). By integrating Social Justice Theory (SJT), which focuses on broader systemic inequalities, the research can explore how intersecting factors such as class, ethnicity, and economic status further limit women's participation (Crenshaw, 2020). Therefore, this dual approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding women's marginalisation in agriculture.

Both frameworks emphasise elevating marginalised voices. Smith (2021) suggests that FST focuses on generating knowledge from the perspective of the oppressed, while SJT, as described by Collins (2022), centres on promoting social equity and

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justice. In merging these viewpoints, this study aims to enable women at Ha-Luvhimbi Village to voice their experiences and obstacles, thereby enriching our comprehension of agricultural practices inclusively. Davis (2020) points out that SJT often adopts an intersectional approach, acknowledging the interconnected nature of various oppressions. This complementarity with FST sheds light on how diverse identities, such as gender, race, and economic status, interact to influence women's experiences in cattle farming, a point further elaborated by Hill Collins and Bilge (2023). Through intersectional analysis, more nuanced and effective strategies can be devised to tackle the multifaceted disadvantages faced.

By combining insights from both theories, policymakers can develop strategies to increase women's involvement in cattle farming (Mackenzie & Stoljar, 2019). According to Young (2021), FST offers a framework for understanding the specific challenges women encounter, while SJT emphasizes the necessity of systemic changes to address these challenges at a broader level. This integrated approach ensures that recommendations are based on individual experiences and also take into account structural inequalities. Both theories promote critical self-reflection among researchers regarding their own perspectives and biases. This self-reflection is crucial for ensuring the ethical conduct of research and for genuinely capturing the viewpoints of the participants. By acknowledging power dynamics and striving for "strong objectivity," researchers can generate findings that more accurately represent the realities of women in cattle farming (Harding, 2020; Finley, 2022).

Incorporating both Feminist Standpoint Theory and Social Justice Theory into the research on women's participation in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi Village enriches the analysis by providing a multifaceted perspective on marginalisation and empowerment. This comprehensive approach not only highlights individual experiences but also situates them within larger social structures, ultimately contributing to more equitable agricultural practices and policies.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the literature review and the theoretical frameworks. The literature emphasises the intricate relationship between gender and cattle farming in indigenous communities. Resolving gender gaps in access, ownership, and decision-making calls for a comprehensive approach involving legal reforms, community

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engagement, and capacity-building programs. Empowering women in cattle farming not only enhances household food security and economic growth but also fosters greater gender equality and societal change. Furthermore, by anchoring this study in the frameworks of social justice theory and Feminist Standpoint theory, the researcher gained critical insights into societal dynamics and challenges. These theories not only illuminate the intricacies of power dynamics and privileges but also empower marginalised voices, fostering a more equitable understanding of social issues. Ultimately, this research contributes to a broader dialogue that champions inclusivity and justice, reinforcing the vital role of theoretical frameworks in driving meaningful change.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section provides research methods and the data collection techniques employed in the study. The chapter section starts with outlining the research paradigm, followed by the nature of the study, the research approach, and the data collection methods used to gather data for the study. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations, and measures that will be used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

3.2 Research paradigm

A research paradigm encompasses a set of beliefs, assumptions, theories, and methodologies that guide researchers in approaching the investigation and understanding of a particular topic or phenomenon (Muzari, Shava, & Shonhiwa, 2022). Khatri (2020) further explains that research paradigms provide a framework for researchers to conceptualise their study, collect data, analyse findings, and interpret results. Research paradigms can vary across disciplines and research traditions, significantly influencing the direction and focus of research inquiries. This study adopted a constructivist paradigm, which asserts that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals based on their experiences and interactions, to explore factors limiting women's participation in cattle farming practices within their community.

Justification of the constructivism paradigm

According to Muzari et al. (2022), using the constructivism research paradigm to explore factors limiting women's participation in cattle farming practices in a rural community involves understanding how individuals obtain access to cattle, ownership, and decision-making regarding cattle farming within the context of gender roles, norms, and power dynamics. From a constructivist viewpoint, Khatri (2020) states that reality is seen as socially constructed, meaning that individuals interpret and understand their world based on their experiences and interactions. In the context of indigenous cattle farming practices, this entails recognizing that people's perceptions of access to and ownership of cattle are shaped by their social and cultural contexts (Muzari *et al*., 2022).

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3.3 Research methodology

Research methodology refers to the range of approaches used in research to gather data, used as a foundation for interpretation, explanation and prediction (Pandey & Pandey(2021). Newman and Gough (2020) defineresearch methodology as the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a topic.

3.3.1 Nature of study

This study adopted the qualitative research approach to capture expressive information about factors limiting women's participation in cattle farming practices. Rezigalla (2020) states that a research approach refers to the overall strategy or plan that a researcher adopts to conduct a study and achieve specific objectives. It outlines the methodological framework and procedures that guide the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data in a systematic and organised manner. Qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand phenomena in-depth by examining people's experiences, perspectives, and behaviours within their natural context. According to Bhandari (2023), qualitative research promotes dialogue and offers greater flexibility. This study preferred a qualitative research approach in its emphasis on capturing the richness and complexity of human experiences through non-numeric data such as words, images, and observations (Rezigalla, 2020).

3.3.2 Description of the study area

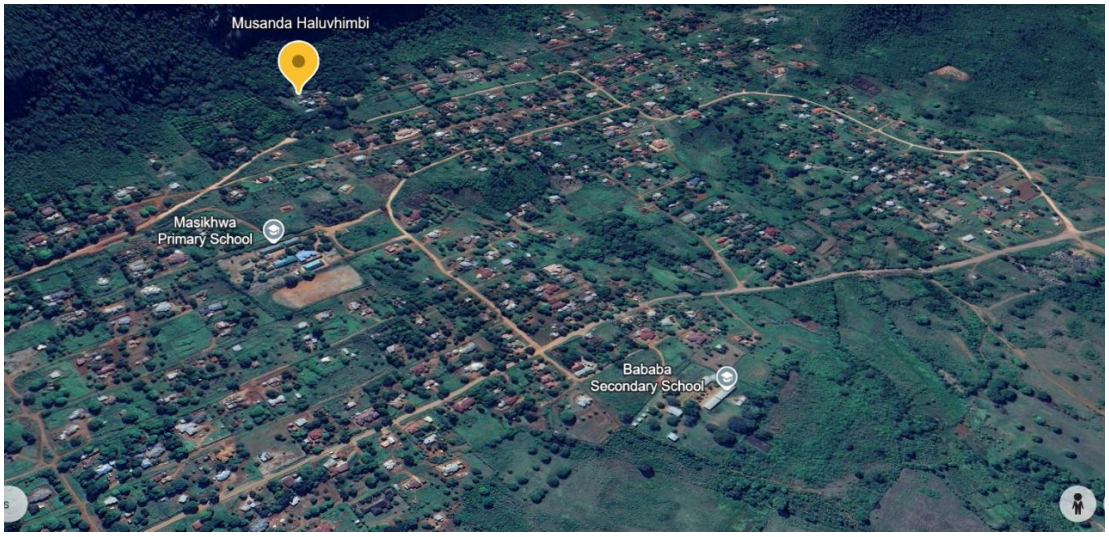


Figure 1: Study Location

A study location encompasses the physical location where the study is being conducted. As shown on figure 1 above, this study was conducted at Ha-Luvhimbi village, in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa.

3.3.3 Study population

Stratton (2021) defines population as the collective number of whatever fits the description and specification of the participants and objects studied. It is the total group of objects, individuals, or events that the research engages (Camacho, 2020). Stratton (2021) describes population as the target set of individuals that the researcher seeks to make generalisations on. These were, according to this study, the residents of Ha-Luvhimbi village involved in cattle farming practices.

3.3.4 Sampling methods and techniques

Rahman (2023) defines sampling methods as the strategies and techniques used by researchers to select participants or cases for inclusion in qualitative studies. In a qualitative study, sampling focuses on selecting participants who can provide rich and in-depth insights into the research phenomenon. Qualitative sampling methods aim to ensure that the selected participants offer diverse perspectives, experiences, and insights relevant to the research question (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Based on the nature of the study, the participants were selected in consideration of the aim of the study because they are the relevant sources to provide data, and thus, the study adopted the non-probability sampling method.

Non-probability sampling is a method of selecting units from a population using a subjective method (Rahman 2023). Mahmud *et al* (2020) emphasise that since non-probability sampling does not require a complete survey frame, it is a fast, easy and inexpensive way of obtaining data. Purposive sampling procedures were used as a sampling procedure in this study. Mohajan (2018) states that purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling procedure in which the researcher uses a wide range of methods to locate all possible cases of a highly specific population (Mahmud *et al.,* 2020). Furthermore, the purposive sampling procedure depends on the judgment of an expert or researcher in selecting cases, or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind, knowing that they are informative.

Based on the study's objectives, the number of participants during data collection from Ha-Luvhimbi village residence was determined by data saturation. However, the

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researcher interviewed eight (8) participants, including four (4) female participants involved in cattle farming, and two (2) female participants who are interested in joining cattle farming practices. Additionally, two (2) male participants who recognise the importance of involving women in cattle farming practices were also included in the study.

3.3.5 Data collection methods

In a qualitative study, Mazhar, Anjum, Anwar, and Khan (2021) define data collection methods as techniques used by researchers to gather non-numeric data that provide insight into people's experiences, behaviours, perspectives, and interactions within their natural context. These methods are designed to capture the richness and complexity of qualitative data, such as narratives, opinions, observations, and images. Semi-structured interviews were employed as a data collection method in this study.

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection method where the interviewer prepares a set of predetermined questions but maintains the flexibility to explore topics that arise naturally during the conversation (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). This type of interview strikes a balance between structured and unstructured interviews. An interview guide with a list of open-ended questions was used to ensure that key topics were covered during the interviews.

Open-ended questions are inquiries that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. According to Clandinin, Cave, and Berendonk (2019), the advantages of open-ended questions include requiring the participant to provide more detailed and elaborate responses, asking for explanations, descriptions, opinions, or experiences, having no single correct answer, and requiring the respondent to think and reflect before answering.

An interview guide is defined in Clandinin *et al* (2019) as a structured framework or outline used by interviewers to conduct interviews, particularly in qualitative research. It consists of a list of questions and topics that the interviewer plans to cover during the interview. During the interviews, the researcher could deviate from the interview guide to follow interesting leads, clarify responses, allow for deeper exploration of the respondent's thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and rephrase or elaborate upon questions based on the respondent's answers. This is supported in Stewart (2023), wherein it is highlighted that the interview becomes a two-way conversation, promoting

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rapport and engagement with the interviewee. The researcher engaged with the participants, which allowed them to provide more information.

3.3.6 Data analysis

Howitt (2019) defines data analysis in a qualitative study as the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to a mass of data. According to Lokshina, Lanting, and Durkin (2020), data analysis involves inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modelling data to discover useful information, draw conclusions, and support decision-making. The analysis of qualitative data involved using Thematic Network Analysis (TNA). This method is well-suited for exploring issues related to individuals' perceptions, opinions, and experiences by identifying recurring themes such as topics, ideas, and patterns within a dataset (Lochmiller, 2020). After collecting data, the researchers employed thematic data analysis to generate themes and subthemes in order to provide a detailed data analysis and discussion, whilst linking the participants' perspectives and experiences with the literature and theoretical frameworks.

3.3.7 Ethical Consideration

Research cannot simply be conducted by anyone and anywhere (Alderson & Morrow, 2020). Suri (2020) states that it is essential that researchers obtain permission from the participants and the relevant authorities before conducting any form of research. Ethical consideration refers to an accumulation of values and principles that address questions of what is good or bad in human affairs (Coghlan, Miller & Paterson, 2020).

The study sought approval from the University of Venda Research Ethics Committee (UNIVEN REC) for its inclusion of both human and animal subjects. The UNIVEN REC meticulously reviewed the proposed methodologies to ensure the safety and well-being of the subjects. Additionally, the UNIVEN REC certificate was utilised to obtain permission from the responsible authorities in the selected villages, with a thorough explanation of the study's purpose provided to each. Following permission, participants were invited to voluntarily join the study and provide informed consent. Throughout data collection, utmost care was taken to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants' views, ensuring that no harm came to them. Furthermore, participants' anonymity was rigorously maintained, with no names linked to their responses. Flexibility was offered to participants, allowing them to withdraw from the study at any point during data collection if they so deemed it appropriate.

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3.5 Conclusion

In this Chapter, research methods and the data collection techniques employed in the study were provided in detail. The chapter started with the outlining of the research paradigm, followed by the nature of the study, the research approach, and the data collection methods used to gather data for this study. The chapter ends with ethical considerations and measures that were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

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CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study in line with the study's main objective, which was to explore factors limiting women's participation in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi Village, in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The demographic information and composition, such as age, education level, and occupation of the participants, have been used to preface the chapter.

4.2. Demographic information

The study consists of a sample size of eight residents of Ha-Luvhimbi village with an age group ranging from 18 to over 60 years old. The participants' level of education, employment status, and marital status are indicated in their profiles presented in the table below. Additionally, the detailed demographic information of the participants is elaborated in the charts and graphs.

	Gender	**Age**	**Level of education**	**Employment status**	**Marital status**
1.	Female	36-59	Secondary	Self-employed	Single
2.	Female	36-59	Tertiary	Employed	Married
3.	Female	60+	No education	Unemployed	Widow
4.	Female	60+	Primary	Self-employed	Widow
5.	Male	60+	Secondary	Retired	Married
6.	Male	60+	Tertiary	Retired	Married
7.	Female	18-35	Tertiary	Employed	Single
8.	Female	18-35	Tertiary	Employed	Single

Table 1: Demographic Information of the participants

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4.2.1 Participant's Gender

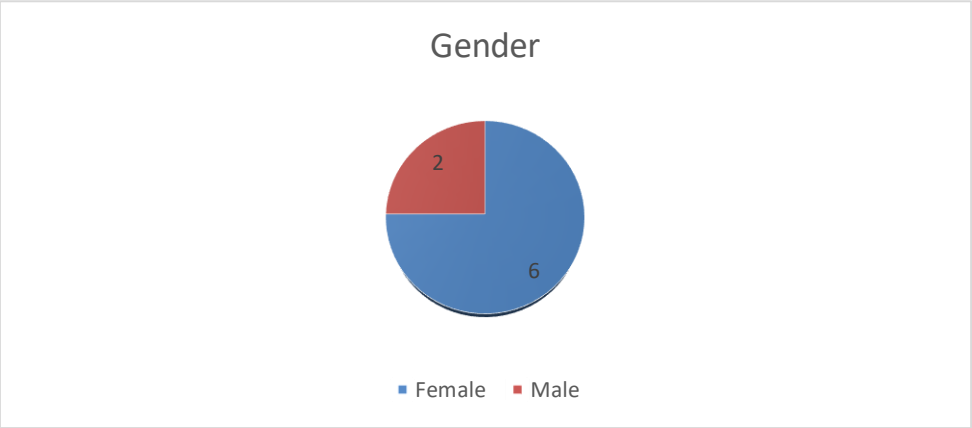


Figure 2: Participants' gender

Figure 4.1 above illustrates the participant's gender. In this study, a total of eight(8) participants were involved, comprising six(6) females and two(2) males. The decision to include a higher number of females reflects the study's focus on understanding issues that particularly affect women, such as cattle access and ownership, barriers to participating in cattle farming, gender inequalities, and challenges they face in cattle farming practices. By prioritising female participants, the research, as supported by the feminist standpoint theory, aimed to prioritise women as they hold epistemic knowledge regarding experiences and needs shaped by their social identities and positions within the study location. This intentional selection allows for a deeper exploration of females' specific challenges and perspectives, ensuring that the findings will contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge.

4.2.2 Participants' Age

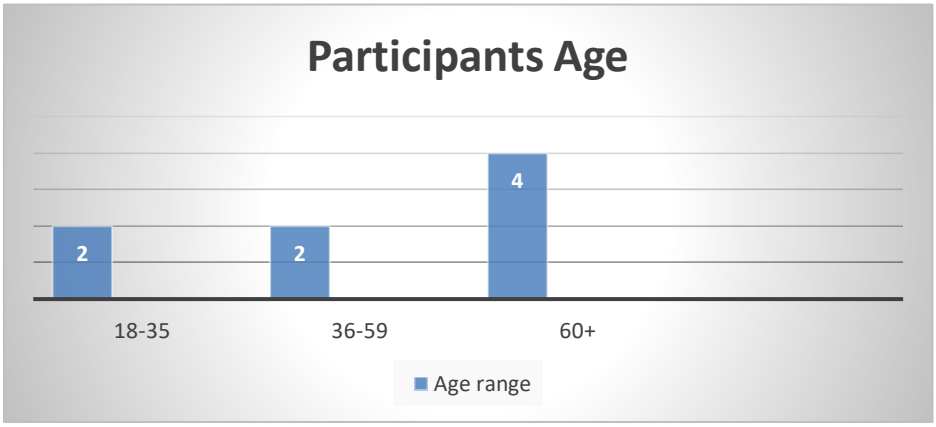


Figure 3: Participants' Age

Figure 4.2 above illustrates the participants' age. The majority of participants (four) are above 60 years, two are between 36 and 59, and two are between 18 and 35 years old. This illustration shows that there are people, through inheritance or market purchase, who have developed an interest in cattle farming and continue to practice cattle farming as it benefits them as well as their families. In addition, cattle farming is used as a household income generation practice that even the youth (18-35) wish to participate in to escape poverty.

4.2.3 Participant's Marital Status

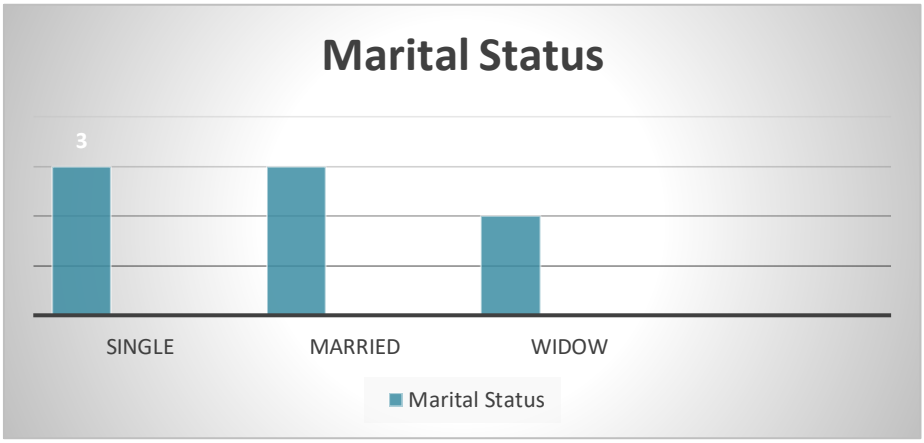
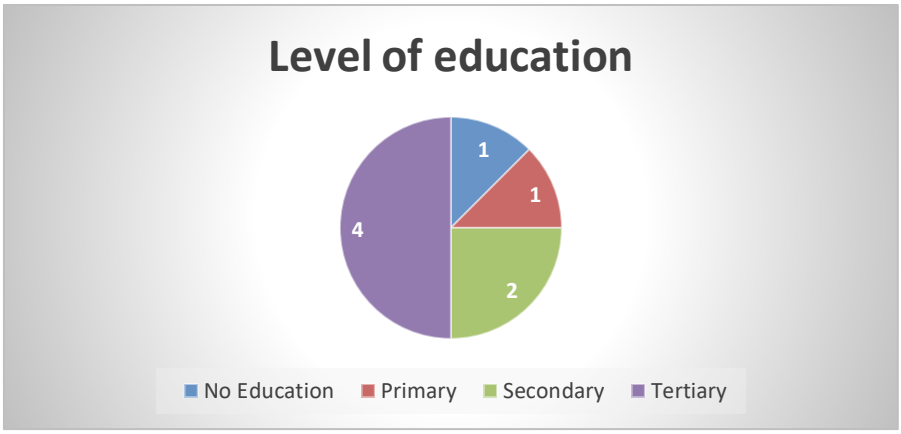


Figure 4: Participant's Marital status

Figure 4.3 illustrates the marital status of the participants. Out of a total of eight participants, three are single, three are married, and two are widows. The married participants actively engage in cattle farming as a means of generating inheritance for future generations. Additionally, the interest of female participants in cattle farming suggests that, despite societal views on women and their marital status, some women are determined to pursue opportunities in this field.

4.2.4 Participants' level of education



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Figure 5: Participants level of education

Figure 4.4 above illustrates the distribution of participants according to their highest level of education. The largest segment represents those with tertiary education, accounting for four individuals, which is half of the total population. The secondary education group follows with two individuals, making up a quarter of the population. The smallest segments, each representing one participant, correspond to those with no education and those with primary education, respectively. This distribution highlights that the majority of the participants have attained at least secondary education, with a significant portion having completed higher education, indicating a relatively well-educated population overall.

4.2.5. Participants' Employment Status



Figure 6: Participants' Employment Status

Figure 4.5 above illustrates the participant's employment status. Of all eight participants, three are employed, two are retired, another two are self-employed, and one is unemployed. This suggests that both employed and self-employed participants are passionate about cattle farming, viewing it as a means of generating income and reducing poverty. In addition, the retired participants engage in cattle farming mainly out of interest, as it provides them with a fulfilling activity to keep them occupied while spending time at home.

4.3. Data Presentation

This section presents the themes and the sub-themes that emerged from the data collected. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews guided by the interview guide. The thematic data analysis was employed to analyse the data. These themes

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and sub-themes were generated based on the research objectives. The research objectives are as follows:

- To identify how men and women obtain access and ownership of cattle in indigenous farming practices.
- To explore how traditional gender roles influence the participation of women in decision-making related to cattle farming practices.
- To assess how empowerment of women farmers can contribute to household food security and economic development
- To develop strategies to promote gender equality in Indigenous cattle farming practices.

Identified themes and subthemes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Understanding of the concept of Cattle Farming	
2. Access and ownership of cattle in indigenous farming practices.	Inheritance from parents. Inheritance from the husband. Market purchase.
3. Barriers to women participation in cattle farming.	Cultural and traditional beliefs. Inheritance laws. The cattle herding practice. Gender-based violence.
4. Existing gender inequalities in Indigenous cattle farming practices	Ownership and control Decision-making power Limited access to resources and services
5. Empowerment of women farmers and its impact on household food security and economic development	Household Food Security Economic Development

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6. The role of the community support system in enhancing the empowerment of women farmers	

Table 2: Identified themes and subthemes

4.3.1 Understanding of the concept of cattle farming

The majority of participants understand the concept of cattle farming, defining it as the practice of raising cattle for agricultural purposes. Data collected indicated that cattle farming in rural areas is viewed as a source of income, which is often used for children's education, healthcare, and other household necessities. Cattle also serve a cultural purpose, providing meat for rituals and ceremonies.

In this regard, participant A said the following:

> *"Cattle farming is a process that involves managing livestock through breeding, feeding, and husbandry techniques to optimise production while maintaining animal welfare and environmental sustainability."*

Participants C, D, and H echoed the same sentiment by saying that:

> *"It is a traditional practice passed down from generation to generation wherein cattle are used for different purposes such as ploughing the field, selling for financial benefits, and lobola for marriage."*
>
> *"My view of cattle farming is managing and multiplying cattle to supplement income for essential expenses such as school fees and housing materials."*
>
> *"Cattle farming has proven to enhance household food security through increased crop yields (via manure), and income from selling cattle."*

Cattle farming, as defined by Lovarelli *et al* (2020), encompasses the practice of raising cattle for a variety of purposes, including the production of meat, milk, and the use of these animals as draft power. This multifaceted approach to cattle farming highlights its significance in agricultural systems. Furthermore, Sennott, Madhavan, and Nam (2021) emphasise that in South Africa, cattle hold cultural significance beyond their agricultural utility; they play

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a crucial role in traditional marriage customs, where they are often employed as part of the Lobola, or bride price, reflecting the deep-rooted traditions and social structures within communities.

4.3.2 Access to cattle

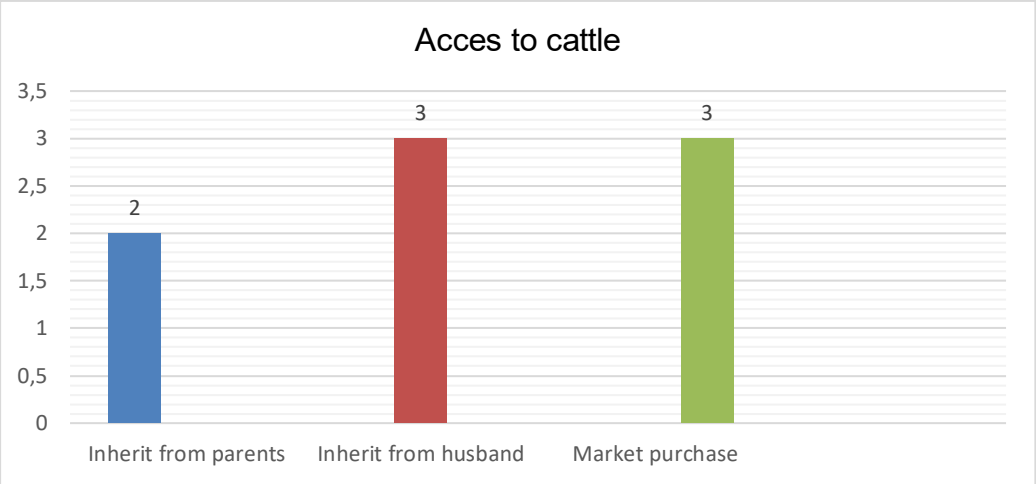


Figure 7: Access to cattle

Figure 4.2 above provides a detailed illustration of the various ways participants acquire cattle. This includes inheritance from parents, inheritance from the husband, and through market purchase.

4.3.2.1 Inheritance from parents

Information gathered during the interviews indicated that inheritance customs are profoundly influenced by traditional patriarchal norms that predominantly favour men over women. This long-standing system reflects culturally embedded beliefs and practices that reinforce gender disparities, significantly impacting the roles and rights of individuals within the community. As a result, sons often inherit property and assets, while daughters find themselves at a disadvantage in terms of inheritance opportunities. To support this, all male participants shared that they have inherited their cattle from their deceased parents. In this regard, participant E stated that:

> *"I inherited two cattle when my father passed in 1995. My father had seven sons and four daughters, but the cattle were divided among the sons."*

Participant F echoed the same sentiments:

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"When both my parents passed on, I was the one who was in charge of the maintenance of the kraal. I made sure that I grew it as it was my father's will for me to inherit the cattle."

The male participants expressed a strong belief that cattle should be inherited primarily by male children rather than females. This perspective is deeply rooted in the idea that males are seen as the bearers of the family legacy and heritage. They argued that since males are expected to remain within the family unit and continue the lineage, it is only fitting that they inherit important assets like cattle. In contrast, data collected revealed the view that females were individuals who would eventually marry and become part of other families, which further reinforces the notion that they should not inherit family property. In line with what the male participants said, Gluckman (2022) concurs that inheritance customs among indigenous tribes of South Africa are deeply entrenched in patriarchal norms, often excluding women from direct consideration in inheritance matters. This cultural understanding reflects broader societal norms regarding gender roles and family dynamics, indicating a tradition of passing down livestock through family lines.

4.3.2.2 Inheritance from husbands

The majority of participants show that women usually inherit cattle from their husbands rather than their fathers. This was indicated by three female participants who reported inheriting their cattle from their deceased husbands. Regarding this, participant D had the following to say:

"I did not have the opportunity for an education, just as my late husband had not. After his passing, he left me with a sincere promise that echoed his deep concern for our future. He entrusted me with the responsibility of protecting our cattle, knowing they were vital for funding our children's schooling. He feared that if I allowed other family members to take the cattle, it would jeopardise our children's chance to acquire education and a better life."

Participants B and C shared the same views and added that:

"Although my late husband made it clear that the cattle should be inherited by me as his wife, the family members tried by all means to

take them away from me. They believed that as a woman, I am not allowed to inherit cattle."

"My father had a big kraal, but all seven daughters never inherited any cattle. They were all divided among the male children. I inherited my cattle from my late husband, and I had to fight for these cattle as my husband's younger brothers wanted to own them."

4.3.2.3. Market purchase

In contrast to inheriting cattle, individuals can own cattle by buying them from the market. This was shown by two participants who were eager to start their own cattle farming ventures, expressed plans to purchase cattle from the local market, seeking to establish their herds. These were young women who seemed passionate about cattle farming:

"The unemployment rate keeps rising in South Africa, and one should think of other means of making a living. I see an opportunity to bridge that gap by getting involved in cattle farming. My parents do not own a kraal, so I plan to raise funds and purchase cattle from those who are selling," Participant H.

Participant G echoed the same sentiment:

"My family has no history of cattle ownership, so I want to be the first one to own cattle. I have saved enough money to purchase a few and I have started growing my kraal."

These female participants illustrated that their interest in cattle farming started when they were studying toward agricultural-related degrees at the university and watching television programs that show how the cattle farming industry is growing economically. In addition to this, one female participant, Participant A indicated that she had successfully purchased cattle on the market and was in the process of establishing a big kraal. During the interview, she already had many cattle:

"I started by buying two cattle, male and female, and that was the start of my cattle farming business," Participant A.

Data shows that Participant A took a proactive step toward building her farming endeavors regardless of her cattle farming background or inheritance.

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The perspectives of the female participants are reinforced by the findings of Bhalotra, Brulé, and Roy (2020), who elaborate on the significant role of women in cattle farming. They explain that, more often than not, women acquire access to and ownership of cattle only after the death of their husbands, rather than inheriting them from their parents. This highlights a critical aspect of the transition of cattle ownership within familial structures, revealing how the passing of a male spouse often reshapes the agricultural landscape for women.

These findings contradict the feminist standpoint theory, which, according to Poornima *et.al* (2024), emphasises that marginalised groups, such as women in patriarchal agricultural systems, possess unique insights into power dynamics. The study's findings show that women often gain cattle ownership only after their husbands' deaths, rather than through inheritance, which reflects their socially constructed position. Therefore, this delayed access underscores how patriarchal norms exclude women from decision-making roles during their spouses' lifetimes, limiting their agency.

In addition, these findings are supported in Bashardost and Taheri (2025), highlighting that, according to the social justice theory, the unequal distribution of resources violates principles of fairness in resource allocation. Women's reliance on widowhood for ownership highlights intergenerational and intra-familial disparities, as assets are disproportionately allocated to men during their lifetimes. Inheritance practices often lack transparency and reinforce gender biases, and even when women legally own cattle, cultural norms usually prevent meaningful empowerment.

4.3.3 Traditional gender roles as barriers to women's participation in cattle farming

4.3.3.1 Cultural and traditional beliefs

The majority of participants indicated that the cultural taboos restricting free access to the cattle kraal are deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and practices. The cultural and traditional practices of the Vhavenda people in South Africa include specific restrictions related to the cattle kraal, which is regarded as a revered and sacred space. This space is not only used for housing cattle but also serves as a venue for rituals and ceremonies to honour ancestors and seek their blessings. To support this, a participant shared the following:

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> *"Women who are of childbearing age are prohibited from entering the cattle kraal. This prohibition is based on the cultural belief that these women are considered unclean due to their menstrual cycles, which are believed to potentially harm the cattle or disrupt the spiritual balance of the kraal,"* Participant F.

> *"It is known that only young girls who have not yet started menstruating and elderly women are considered clean and allowed to enter the kraal without restrictions,"* Participant D.

The cattle kraal is viewed as a sacred space where ancestral spirits reside. It is a place of spiritual significance where rituals and ceremonies are conducted not only to honour these ancestors but also to seek their blessings. The kraal is thus used for various rituals, including those related to marriages, births, and deaths. For example, cattle are often used in rituals to appease ancestors or to mark important life events (Van der Vliet, 2024).

Participant A explained:

> *"Men, regardless of age, are allowed to enter the cattle kraal. They are responsible for managing the livestock and ensuring the well-being of the cattle, which are crucial for both economic and cultural reasons."*

These restrictions reflect broader cultural beliefs about purity, spirituality, and gender roles within the Vhavenda community. They highlight the importance of maintaining spiritual harmony and respecting ancestral traditions. These findings are supported by Rola-Rubzen, Paris, Hawkins, and Sapkota (2020), who argue that in various Indigenous communities, it is a cultural norm that women are barred from entering cattle kraals. Therefore, the prohibition on women of childbearing age entering the cattle kraal is part of a complex cultural system that emphasises spiritual purity and respect for ancestral traditions. This system is deeply intertwined with the community's beliefs about gender roles and spiritual practices. The feminist standpoint theory further supports this assertion that marginalised groups, such as women barred from kraals, possess unique insights into power structures due to their oppressed position. The Vhavenda practice reflects patriarchal norms that equate women's fertility with spiritual "impurity," relegating them to peripheral roles in cattle management. This

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exclusion denies women access to knowledge about livestock, which is a critical economic resource, reinforcing their dependence on male relatives.

4.3.3.2 Inheritance laws

When questioned about the inheritance laws, the majority of the participants indicated that in terms of cattle, these laws favour male beneficiaries over females. This theme was centred on cultural inheritance laws that are skewed in favour of men. The inheritance law in South Africa is defined in Maunatlala and Maimela (2020) as the distribution of assets determined by whether the deceased left behind a valid will or any other legitimate document containing testamentary provisions. If a person dies without leaving a will or a valid document containing testamentary provisions, which is common in rural areas, the assets are distributed among the heirs in a specific order of preference, as defined by the Intestate Succession Act of 1987. To support this statement. Participant F stated that:

> *"Men are prioritised in cattle or livestock inheritance because they are viewed as the providers, and women are expected to marry and carry another man's legacy."*

Participant H added that:

> *"Growing up, it was common for females not to inherit any livestock from their fathers. Women were usually married by the time their fathers passed away, as they tended to marry at a young age."*

The participants indicated that women usually inherit cattle from their husbands when they pass away, and their children are still young. It was elaborated during the interviews that other family members, such as uncles and aunts, contest the wife inheriting livestock from her husband's passing, especially in situations when the husband dies without leaving a will or a valid document containing testamentary provisions. Participant C explained:

> *"After my husband passed away, I faced challenges in getting permission to own the cattle. The younger uncles wanted to divide the livestock among themselves, arguing that I should receive nothing because they believed I would remarry, and another man would take ownership of my cattle."*

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Additionally, participant E stated that:

> *"When I inherited these cattle from my father, they were divided among my three brothers, as my two sisters were not considered due to their marriages. I have never seen a woman inherit cattle, even in other families in this community."*

Data indicates that the customs surrounding cattle inheritance among the Vhavenda people, as outlined by Maunatlala and Maimela (2020), reveal a complex system steeped in patriarchal values. Within this framework, women are significantly marginalised, often excluded from any direct involvement or consideration in matters of inheritance. This exclusion highlights the broader implications of gender roles in the community, underscoring a tradition that prioritises male authority and lineage over equitable rights for women in the inheritance process. This is also in line with the standpoint of feminist theory, which states that the patriarchal system favours men. In this system, masculine notions were spread in societies where male knowledge, experiences, and interests were favoured prior to the dawn of feminism, which also looks at the interests, experiences, and social roles of women to comprehend the nature of gender inequality

4.3.3.3 The cattle herding practices

All participants indicated that grass and fodder are the primary components of pasture-based feeding. Cattle herding is defined as a process involving cattle management and care rooted in traditional agricultural systems, typically in open fields (Maunatlala and Maimela, 2020). This theme illustrates the cattle herding practices and challenges faced in cattle herding. Participant G stated that:

> *"My cattle feed on the grass in the open fields."*

Of all eight participants, only one male and one female were directly involved in cattle herding. The majority of female participants indicated that they hired other people to herd their cattle. One reason stated was that they do not have enough time to balance cattle herding with the other productive and reproductive duties. To support this statement, participant A explained:

> *"I am self-employed. I own other livestock such as poultry, sheep, and goats. I also do all the reproductive work at home, so there is no time for cattle herding. I have hired a herder from Zimbabwe."*

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In addition, male participants mentioned that they hired local men as their cattle herders as a form of generating employment. Participant E mentioned that:

> *"As a retiree, I saw it fit to employ someone to herd my cattle because I can afford to pay him. This way, he is also able to maintain his family as the head of the house."*

Participant F added:

> *"Ever since I inherited these cattle from my late father, I have never herded them myself. There is always someone who is responsible for that."*

In support of the data collected, research conducted by Lubungu and Birner (2021) reveals that in numerous indigenous cultures, the role of men as primary cattle herders is deeply entrenched in tradition. This practice results in a system where cattle owners often employ other men to assist with herding duties, creating a network of male herders. According to Meurs *et al* (2022), these men are responsible for guiding the cattle through the rugged bush, ensuring their safety from predators, and meticulously scouting for areas with abundant grazing opportunities. As opposed to women, their knowledge of the land and its hazards is crucial for the well-being of the herds they manage.

4.3.3.4 Gender-based violence

The collected data shows that women involved in cattle farming are at risk of gender-based violence. The UN Declaration on Elimination of Violence against Women defines gender-based violence as any act of violence that is most likely to result in physical, sexual, and psychological harm to individuals based on their gender (Tihnje *et al.,* 2023). The majority of participants indicated a common understanding of gender-based violence. Participant A defined it as:

> *"Gender-based violence is any act of harm towards an individual based on their gender."*

In terms of cattle farming, some participants indicated that women experience emotional abuse in the form of discrimination, especially when it comes to access and ownership of cattle. Participant F explained:

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> *"The notion that women are deemed incapable of inheriting cattle solely based on their gender constitutes a profound injustice and a form of discrimination. This unfair practice not only undermines women's rights but also perpetuates a cycle of inequality and marginalisation within society."*

Other participants, such as participant E, indicated that women are just trying by all means to compete with men. He stated that:

> *"I know that women are trying to be independent, but somehow I view it as them being in competition with men. Why would a woman inherit cattle when she is going to marry another man?"*

All the female participants expressed a feeling of societal judgment as women who own and wish to own cattle and participate in cattle farming. Some of these female participants indicated that they do not have full support from their partners and family members. Participant B expressed that:

> *"My brothers did not support me when I was fighting with the uncles after my husband died. They even convinced me to marry one of my husband's young brothers so that I could keep the cattle within their homestead."*

In addition, participant G stated that:

> *"My fiancé and I always fight when discussing my idea of being a cattle farmer. He even suggests that I should consider selling clothes and pieces of jewelry if I wish to be a businesswoman."*

Data shows that women involved in cattle farming are viewed as if they are forcing themselves into a male-dominated industry that they will never survive in. To support this, participant D stated that:

> *"People around my neighborhood used to judge me when I herded my cattle. They would call me names and suspect me of planning to steal their men in the grazing areas."*

Both male participants stated that the grazing areas are far away from the households and not safe for women. Participant E explained:

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"The isolated grazing areas are far from the households, exposing women to danger."

The research conducted by Ndlovu and Mjimba (2021) highlights a troubling reality that women engaged in cattle herding are increasingly vulnerable to gender-based violence. Their studies reveal that these women often find themselves isolated in remote areas, where the risks they face multiply. Similarly, Atim and Gbamwuan (2022) emphasise the dangers that arise when women venture alone into the bush; in such secluded settings, they can easily become victims of sexual assault, violent attacks, or even abduction. The implications are dire, as aggressors may resort to brutal violence, inflicting physical harm on these women while also stealing their livestock, which represents not only a loss of property but also a significant blow to their livelihoods. Furthermore, the social justice theory buttresses this point by emphasising the need to address structural inequalities that systematically disadvantage certain groups, particularly rural women. The isolation of women in remote areas, limited access to police, shelters, and healthcare, and the dominance of patriarchal cultural norms all represent forms of structural violence that perpetuate GBV and limit women's ability to seek justice or protection. The theft of livestock, as highlighted by the participants, is not only a loss of property but also a direct attack on women's economic independence and survival. Social justice theory recognises economic justice as integral to overall justice; when women lose their means of livelihood due to violence, their vulnerability increases, and their ability to escape abusive situations diminishes. This cycle of poverty and violence is a core concern of social justice advocates.

4.3.4. Existing gender inequalities in Indigenous cattle farming practices

This theme concentrated on the existing gender inequalities in cattle farming practices at Ha-Livhimbi village. Gender inequality refers to unequal treatment, access to resources, rights, or opportunities based on gender that is often rooted in cultural norms, power structures, and discriminatory practices (Dickin, Bisung, Nansi, & Charles, 2021). Participants' responses to existing gender inequalities in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi village highlighted issues such as ownership and control, decision-making power, and limited access to resources and services.

4.3.4.1 Ownership and control

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The majority of participants indicated that there is gender inequality when it comes to cattle ownership and control. Women may own cattle, but they do not have complete control over the day-to-day maintenance of the cattle. Regarding this, participant A stated that:

> *"I am the proud owner of a herd of cattle. However, for the day-to-day operations of my kraal, I depend on a man who oversees the tasks in my absence. Due to cultural traditions, I am unable to enter the kraal myself, as societal norms dictate that women refrain from such activities."*
>
> *"As the owner, although I hired someone to look after my cattle, I control everything that has to do with them. I know how to nurse them when they are wounded, and I also control the sales,"* Participant G.
>
> *"Yes, I do own cattle, but I do not have control over their diet, medical needs, and sustainability. I have hired someone to take care of such. The control that I have is for when I need to sell. Although I decide which one to sell and how much it will cost, I get advised by men on which one to slaughter when there are funerals and ceremonies,"* Participant D added.
>
> *As children, we have no control in deciding how parents with to distribute their assets when they pass. In this way, I do not see how women can be empowered in such a way that they can fight the existing inheritance laws that are deeply rooted in patriarchy,* Participant C.

The participants' perspectives and experience of gender inequality in cattle ownership and control are in line with Habib *et al* (2022) who reveals that although rural women's involvement in tasks such animal care, herd size determination, animal purchasing, sale of animal products, and animal feeding was relatively high, they didn't participate all that much in activities like raising livestock, breeding animals, selling them, growing fodder, and building animal barns. This is supported by the social justice theory, which emphasises human rights and improving the lives of disadvantaged and marginalised groups who have historically faced discrimination. In this study, these are women who often experience discrimination based on their gender. Social justice efforts today

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frequently involve redistributing wealth and providing support in the form of income, jobs, and educational opportunities to disadvantaged groups.

4.3.4.2 Decision-making

The majority of participants indicated that women in rural areas still lack decision-making powers concerning cattle farming. Although Indigenous women are classified as the Indigenous knowledge holders, they are still marginalised and not entirely consulted in decision-making. To support this, the female participants mentioned that:

> *"As women, we may be involved in cattle farming, but we do not entirely make decisions regarding the running and management of the kraal,"* Participant C.

Participant B added that:

> *"It is hard for people to understand when I sometimes decide to sell a cow for financial reasons. I am even judged for it."*

In addition to the female participants' views, the male participants shared their perspectives.

> *"If women had to decide on how things are done, not much could be achieved. Women's knowledge and skills in cattle farming are very limited and insufficient. The knowledge and skills men hold were passed down from our forefathers*," Participant E.

Participants F shared the same sentiment and said:

> *"Cattle farming is for men, and women are just infusing themselves into it. I would not be advised by a woman in terms of cattle farming and I will not support the decisions made by a woman."*

The various viewpoints expressed by participants reveal a persistent trend of marginalising women's decision-making roles in the realm of cattle farming. This observation aligns with the findings of Obosha (2020), who points out that while women may obtain livestock through purchasing in markets or receiving inheritances, they frequently find themselves stripped of the authority to make decisions regarding these valuable assets. This phenomenon can be understood through the lenses of the feminist standpoint theory, which emphasises that marginalised groups, particularly women, possess unique insights and understanding shaped by their lived

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experiences. The theory advocates for recognising these perspectives as crucial in challenging the existing power dynamics that limit women's influence in agricultural practices. By incorporating women's voices and experiences, we can highlight the inequities in decision-making and work towards empowering women in cattle farming and beyond.

4.3.4.3 Limited access to resources and services

When responding to the question of existing gender inequalities in terms of limited access to resources and services, the majority of participants indicated a persistent gender knowledge gap in livestock production and animal health, partly because women are less likely to receive training or extension support. To support this, participant B stated that:

> *" Community meetings are often scheduled during times when women are heavily engaged in their reproductive responsibilities, typically early in the morning or later in the evening. This scheduling poses a challenge, as it often overlaps with their daily duties. Furthermore, these gatherings frequently overlook the valuable insights and contributions of women, particularly in discussions related to livestock production, a field where their expertise and experiences are often underrepresented."*

Participant H echoed the same sentiment by saying:

> *"Sometimes I hear from other community members that there were people from some governmental department who came to meet with farmers, and only men were able to attend. This means only men who attended will benefit from the services that such a department offered."*

Participant F added that:

> *"When we go for a meeting regarding cattle farming, the majority of people who attend are men. Only a few women attend, and we do not view this as an issue because we believe that cattle farming is for men, not women."*

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Other participants, such as participants A, G, and H, share the view that lack of technical knowledge reduces their confidence and ability to participate in or influence key decisions. Participant H said that:

> *"I depend heavily on a variety of sources, including the vast knowledge available on the internet, insightful books, and informative television documentaries, to educate myself about cattle farming. However, there are times when I seek advice from others, only to be met with skepticism. Many dismiss my efforts, suggesting that I lack the necessary understanding and skill in this field*."

Participant D highlighted that many rural women only become actively involved in cattle management after becoming widowed, by which time, they lack the necessary experience or support.

> *"I do hear about different meetings regarding cattle farming, but I do not attend. Sometimes it is a matter of not being able to travel to the meeting venue or being undermined by men in discussions. The language can also be a problem because they usually bring people who speak English, not Tshivenda."*

The factors contributing to limited access to resources and services, as highlighted by the participants, are supported by Becker *et al* (2020), who illustrate that there are socioeconomic factors, including limited access to resources and services, as well as entrenched social norms and practices that disproportionately affect women. Furthermore, this view is supported by the Standpoint theory that advocates a bottom-up approach to empowerment and development. This implies that the distribution of services or resources should start by prioritising the lives and experiences of marginalised groups. By doing so, we can cultivate a deeper understanding of societal dynamics, ultimately leading to knowledge that is more inclusive and less biased. Emphasising the voices and realities of those who have been historically overlooked ensures a more accurate and holistic perspective on the complexities of social systems.

4.3.5 Empowerment of women farmers and its impact on household food security and economic development

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4.3.5.1 Household Food Security

When questioned about the empowerment of women farmers, the majority of the participants highlighted that empowering women farmers, especially in livestock and cattle farming, plays a pivotal role in improving household food security. Food security, according to the definition established at the 1996 World Food Summit, is a state in which all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. In support of the definition, participants A, B, and F shared their thoughts that when women gain skills and resources that can benefit them in cattle farming, they can provide a steady supply of nutritious food for their families. Participant A echoed that:

> *"I always look for additional skills and resources that can enhance my ability to economically benefit from cattle farming so that I can be able to ensure that my children always have food at home."*
>
> *"When a cow is sold, I get enough money to stockpile on groceries and other household maintenance. I prioritize food because it is essential and should be available at all times,"* Participant B.

In addition, participant F stated that:

> *"I believe that if I succeed in cattle farming, I will be able to provide food and other essentials at home. My family would not suffer the way I did when growing up eating only one decent meal per day."*

Participants' perspectives show that women's empowerment in agriculture leads to improved food security for women, children, and entire households. This is supported in Sekaran *et al's* (2021) elaboration that indigenous women often possess traditional knowledge in sustainable livestock management, and empowering them can result in better grazing practices and animal health, supporting long-term food security. Moreover, women tend to involve all family members in farming activities, distributing labour more equitably and building collective resilience against food shortages.

4.3.5.2 Economic Development

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The majority of participants indicated that women's empowerment in cattle farming drives economic development. The female participants highlighted that with access to training and resources, women can sell dairy and meat products in local markets, increasing household income and promoting economic stability. To support this, participant H states that:

> *"When given an opportunity to access resources and training, women can improve their selling skills and gain more knowledge about where and how to sell products in local supermarkets."*

Participants A and G shared the same sentiment by saying that:

> *"Because I am involved in other farming practices, I have more knowledge and skills on how to sell my products. I wish to gain more knowledge and do the same with the cattle, other than only selling to people who want to provide beef meat for weddings and funerals,"* Participant A.
>
> "*From my perspective, empowered women are better equipped to navigate markets, negotiate prices, and engage in value-added activities like processing milk into cheese or yogurt, which creates additional income streams and employment opportunities within communities,"* Participant G.

The perspectives of these female participants indicate that the increased income that can be generated from selling can allow families to invest in education and health, building a more skilled and healthier workforce for future growth. In line with the participants ' perspectives, Anderson et al (2021) stated that women empowerment in agriculture involves enhancing their capacity, opportunities, and rights within the sector, providing resources, knowledge, and authority for them to fully participate and improve their socio-economic status. In cattle farming, it means enabling women to make life choices, enhancing their access to resources and opportunities, and ensuring support for improved livelihoods, gender equality, and community development. These economic benefits ripple out, reducing poverty and stimulating local economies.

4.3.6 The role of the community support system in enhancing the empowerment of women farmers.

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When answering a question on the role of community support in enhancing the empowerment of women farmers, the majority of participants addressed factors such as access to resources, knowledge and skills development, market access and financial support, leadership and decision-making roles, and social and cultural barriers.

> *"I believe that community support systems facilitated through collaborative efforts with government institutions and private organisations that advocate for women's rights can help women farmers gain access to essential resources".* Participant F

> *"As a woman who wishes to participate in cattle farming, I think conducting knowledge sharing and skills development workshops and mentorship programs that enhance agricultural skills and knowledge can provide women farmers with opportunities for training and education as well as enabling them to make informed decisions about their farming practices,"* Participant H.

In terms of market access and financial support, the majority of participants echoed that community networks can assist women farmers in accessing markets and securing financial support. Participant A stated that:

> *"If our community leaders can connect farmers, regardless of their gender, with buyers such as the local market, as is done with fruits and vegetables, it can be a great initiative for farmers by providing market research and facilitating access to credit and other financial services*."

Data collected also indicated the importance of leadership and decision-making roles. Community support systems can empower women to take on leadership roles within their communities. This involves recognising and promoting women's participation in decision-making processes related to agriculture and rural development, as emphasised by the social justice theory.

Participant H:

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"In rural communities such as Ha-Luvhimbi village, cultural barriers limit women's participation in cattle farming. Community leaders and residents of Ha-Luvhimbi village can work together as a collective to address these barriers by promoting gender equality and challenging traditional norms that restrict women's access to resources and opportunities."

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter meticulously details the findings of the research, aligning with the primary aim of the study: to investigate the various factors that impede women's involvement in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi Village, located in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa. To set the stage for our analysis, an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants, including their age, education levels, and occupational backgrounds, was provided. Following this introductory context, a comprehensive and detailed discussion of the data collected was presented, delving into the nuances and insights revealed throughout the study.

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CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on the presentation, analysis, and discussion of the collected data. This chapter discusses the findings of the study on the participation of women in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi village in collaboration with previous studies and theories. The limitations of the study, recommendations of the study, and conclusions are also articulated. The idea of the chapter is to discuss the findings in such a way that they address the research aim, objectives, and answer the research questions.

5.2. Overview of the findings

The aim of this study was to explore factors limiting women's participation in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi Village, in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province in South Africa.

To achieve the aim of the study, the following objectives were formulated:

- To identify how men and women obtain access and ownership of cattle in indigenous farming practices.
- To explore how traditional gender roles influence the participation of women in cattle farming practices.
- To assess how the empowerment of women farmers can contribute to household food security and economic development
- To develop strategies to promote gender equality in Indigenous cattle farming practices.

Derived from the research objectives, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- How do men and women in indigenous farming communities acquire access to and ownership of cattle?
- How do traditional gender roles influence the participation of women in cattle farming practices?

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- How can the empowerment of women farmers contribute to household food security and economic development?
- Which strategies can be developed to promote gender equality in Indigenous cattle farming practices?

5.2.1 How do men and women in indigenous farming communities acquire access to and ownership of cattle?

This question sought to find out how men and women involved in cattle farming in Ha-Luvhimbi village acquire access to and ownership of cattle. The study findings showed different ways in which male and female individuals acquire access to and ownership of cattle. It was indicated that men acquire access to cattle through inheritance from their parents, and women, on the other hand, either inherit from their late husbands or acquire access and ownership of cattle through market purchase. The findings indicate that women who inherit cattle after the passing of their husbands tend to be cattle owners when they are older in life, which limits them from fully participating in cattle farming practices during their active years.

It was also indicated that either through inheritance or market purchase, women are still marginalised and discriminated against in cattle farming, as it is still a male-dominated industry. It was also brought to light that the tradition of inheritance still follows the principle of primogeniture, where the oldest son inherits the father's property. This was supported by male participants who still want their sons to inherit their livestock when they pass, rather than their daughters.

5.2.2 How do traditional gender roles influence the participation of women in cattle farming practices?

This question sought to find out how traditional gender roles play a part in hindering the participation of women in cattle farming. The findings of the study brought to light the view that the participation of women in cattle farming within the Vhavenda community of South Africa is shaped by a complex interplay of cultural and social factors. This question answered how traditional gender roles, inheritance laws, herding practices, and gender-based violence collectively hinder women's involvement in cattle farming practices.

The Influence of Cultural and Traditional Beliefs

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The findings of the study indicate that a significant barrier to women's participation in cattle farming is the deeply rooted cultural and traditional beliefs surrounding the cattle kraal. The kraal is not only a physical space for livestock but also a sacred site for ancestral rituals. As highlighted by participants, women of childbearing age are prohibited from entering the kraal due to beliefs about menstrual impurity, which is thought to disrupt spiritual harmony and endanger the cattle.

This exclusion is not unique to the Vhavenda, as Rola-Rubzen *et al* (2020) note similar practices in other Indigenous communities of Africa and Asia. The feminist standpoint theory underscores that such marginalisation provides women with unique insights into the power structures that oppress them, while simultaneously reinforcing patriarchal control over vital economic resources.

Inheritance Laws and Gender Inequality

Based on the study findings, inheritance laws further entrench gender disparities. The Intestate Succession Act of 1987, often applied in rural areas where formal wills are rare, typically favours male heirs in the distribution of cattle and livestock. Women are often excluded on the assumption that they will marry and contribute to another man's legacy. This practice is reinforced by radical feminist theory, which argues that patriarchal systems systematically privilege male experiences and interests. Women's exclusion from inheritance not only limits their economic independence but also perpetuates their dependence on male relatives.

Cattle Herding Practices and Gendered Labor

It was brought to light that traditional cattle herding practices also reflect and reinforce gender roles. As highlighted by most participants, men or hired male herders manage the cattle, while women, burdened with other productive and reproductive duties, are less involved in direct herding. Lubungu and Birner (2021) support these findings, noting that in many indigenous cultures, men are the primary cattle herders. This division of labour not only sustains traditional gender roles but also limits women's access to knowledge and skills critical for cattle management.

Gender-Based Violence and Social Exclusion

Women who attempt to break into cattle farming face not only social stigma but also the threat of gender-based violence (GBV). Emotional abuse, discrimination, and lack of familial support are common experiences, as described by several participants.

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Physical risks are also pronounced, especially in remote grazing areas where women are vulnerable to assault, kidnapping, and theft of their livestock. Research by Ndlovu and Mjimba (2021) and Atim and Gbamwuan (2022) highlights the dangers women face in isolated cattle herding settings, where women exacerbate their vulnerability by being at risk of stock theft, sexual assault, and women trafficking. In addition, the social justice theory emphasises that such structural inequalities, rooted in patriarchal norms and limited access to resources, perpetuate cycles of poverty and violence. When women lose livestock due to violence, their economic independence and ability to escape abusive situations are further diminished.

The following insights were shared when the researcher explored the persistent gender inequalities in cattle farming at Ha-Livhimbi village, focusing on ownership and control, decision-making, and access to resources and services.

Ownership and Control

Despite some women owning cattle, the study findings show that cultural norms often prevent them from having full control over their livestock. Women may delegate daily cattle management to men due to traditions restricting their direct involvement, especially in tasks like entering kraals. It was revealed that even when women make sales decisions, their choices are influenced by male advice or community expectations. These patterns reflect broader trends where men typically own and control large livestock, while women's ownership rights are often weaker due to patriarchal inheritance laws and social norms. Empowering women with livestock assets has shown positive impacts on household welfare, but such empowerment remains limited by entrenched gender roles.

Decision-Making

Women in rural cattle farming frequently lack a strong voice in key decisions. Although they possess significant Indigenous knowledge, their input is often marginalised, and they are not fully consulted in matters concerning cattle management and sales. This exclusion is rooted in patriarchal structures that prioritise male authority in both family and community livestock affairs.

Limited Access to Resources and Services

The study findings reveal that a pronounced gender gap exists in access to training, extension services, and market opportunities. It was brought to light that potential

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meetings and training sessions are often scheduled at times inconvenient for women, who are burdened with household responsibilities. This limits women's participation and contribution in meetings and the transfer of technical knowledge, further reducing their confidence and influence in cattle farming. Additionally, language barriers and the male-dominated nature of farmer associations hinder women's involvement and access to services, further perpetuating their marginalisation.

5.2.3 How can the empowerment of women farmers contribute to household food security and economic development?

This question anticipates how empowered women farmers can contribute to household food security and economic development. The findings reveal that the empowerment of women farmers, particularly in the realm of livestock and cattle farming, has emerged as a critical factor in enhancing household food security. Food security is defined by the 1996 World Food Summit as a condition in which all individuals, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that aligns with their dietary requirements for an active and healthy life.

The findings emphasise the transformative power of empowering women in agriculture. It was noted that the acquisition of skills and resources in cattle farming not only benefits individual women but also has a profound impact on their families' ability to maintain a consistent supply of nutritious food. Participant A articulated the importance of gaining skills, stating that this highlights a deep commitment to ensuring food security for her family, illustrating how women empowerment can drive positive changes within households.

Participant B reinforced this idea, explaining how the sale of cattle can provide critical financial resources. The findings reveal that when cattle are sold, the owner gets money to buy food and other household maintenance. In addition, it was highlighted that food is prioritised because it is essential and should be available at all times. Similarly, Participant F shared a personal reflection on the importance of food security from her own upbringing, linking her success in cattle farming to the ability to provide for her family and avoid the struggles she experienced as a child.

Moreover, the participants acknowledged the role of traditional knowledge possessed by indigenous women in sustainable livestock management. Research by Sekaran et al. (2021) supports this view, suggesting that empowering these women can lead to

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improved grazing practices and animal health, thereby supporting long-term food security. Women often involve family members in farming activities, promoting equitable labour distribution and resilience against food shortages.

When discussing economic development, the data revealed that women's empowerment in cattle farming is a catalyst for economic growth. Female participants highlighted that access to training and resources not only enables them to sell dairy and meat products in local markets but also strengthens household income and promotes economic stability. Participant H noted the importance of training, stating that if an opportunity to access resources and training is presented, women can improve their selling skills and gain more knowledge about where and how to sell products in local supermarkets. Participants A and G also shared insights into how their experiences in various farming practices have enhanced their market skills.

The study findings showcased that the increased income generated from cattle farming not only allows families to invest in education and health but also fosters a more skilled and healthier workforce for future growth. These economic advantages contribute to poverty reduction and stimulate local economies, demonstrating the ripple effect of empowering women in agriculture.

5.2.4 Which strategies can be developed to promote gender equality in Indigenous cattle farming practices?

This question sought to identify strategies that could be developed in promoting gender equality in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi village. The findings of the study identified the following strategies.

- Develop training programs tailored for women in indigenous communities, focusing on sustainable cattle farming practices, financial literacy, and leadership skills. These programs should be co-designed with women to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
- Provide technical training on improved fodder production, animal husbandry, and climate-smart agriculture to increase women's productivity and confidence in cattle farming.
- Establish mentorship networks that connect experienced female agricultural leaders with emerging Indigenous women farmers.

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- Encourage and facilitate women's participation in agricultural committees and decision-making bodies, recognising and valuing their contributions to farming and community life.
- Run community awareness campaigns to challenge traditional gender roles and highlight the importance of women's contributions to cattle farming and food security.
- Engage both men and women in dialogues about gender equality to foster supportive environments for women's empowerment and participation.

5.3 Conclusion

The study explored the factors limiting women's participation in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi Village in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province in South Africa. The findings reveal that women face significant barriers to accessing and owning cattle, primarily due to entrenched patriarchal cultural norms and inheritance practices that favour men. While cattle farming is recognised by both men and women as a vital source of income, food security, and cultural value, women's direct access to cattle is commonly restricted.

Most women in the community gain cattle ownership only after the death of a husband, rather than through parental inheritance or independent acquisition. Cultural beliefs, such as prohibitions on women of childbearing age entering the cattle kraal and inheritance laws that prioritise male heirs, further reinforce gender disparities. Despite these obstacles, some women have taken proactive steps to purchase cattle independently, illustrating a growing interest and potential for increased female participation in cattle farming. However, the persistence of gender-based violence, discriminatory inheritance customs, and limited decision-making power continue to hinder women's full involvement in this sector.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the literature, collected data, and findings of the study, the following recommendations are made.

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- Advocate for the enforcement and awareness of gender-equal inheritance laws, ensuring that women have equal rights to inherit cattle and other family assets, regardless of marital status or age.
- Implementation of community-based education programs to challenge and gradually transform patriarchal cultural norms, specifically those that restrict women's access to cattle kraals and decision-making roles in cattle farming.
- Support women's economic empowerment by establishing targeted support mechanisms, such as microfinance workshops, training, and mentorship programs, to enable women to independently purchase cattle and manage cattle farming enterprises. These support mechanisms should be scheduled in such a way that they accommodate women empowerment.
- Encourage the formation of women farmers' cooperatives and support groups to provide platforms for knowledge-sharing, collective bargaining, and advocacy for women's rights in cattle farming.
- Collaborate with traditional authorities to review and modify customary practices that disadvantage women, fostering inclusive decision-making processes within the community.
- Conduct additional studies to explore the impact of women's increased participation in cattle farming on household food security and community economic development, and to identify effective strategies for scaling up successful interventions.

5.6 Contribution of the study to theoretical frameworks

The study employed social justice theory and feminist standpoint theory. The social justice theory emphasises human rights and improving the lives of disadvantaged and marginalised groups who have historically faced discrimination (Wang, 2018). These groups often experience discrimination based on factors such as gender, age, wealth, ethnicity, heritage, social status, and religion. Social justice efforts today frequently involve redistributing wealth and providing support in the form of income, jobs, and educational opportunities to disadvantaged groups. The study contributed to the social justice theory by addressing its five main principles, which are access to resources, equity, participation, diversity, and human rights. In terms of the feminist standpoint

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theory, the study contributed by highlighting that when it comes to Indigenous cattle farming practices, men's knowledge and perspectives are viewed as superior and dominant, and women's perspectives and interests are always belittled, marginalised, and excluded.

This study shows that participants understand the concept of cattle farming practices. They were able to identify how they are able to acquire access and ownership of cattle. The participants also highlighted the gender dynamics in access and ownership of cattle, revealing that women's participation in cattle farming is less valued than that of men. In terms of equity, the study shows that there is no fairness and justice in access to and participation in cattle farming.

5.7 Limitations of the study

The study has several strengths, but it also has some limitations that were noted. One of the limitations is the number of participants used in the study. The study used a relatively small number of participants from a limited number of residences in Ha-Luvhimbi village. This is mainly because the study area is a small village wherein not every household is involved in cattle farming. Therefore, the findings of the study may not be generalisable to other villages. However, this does not diminish the value of the study as its findings can contribute to theoretical and practical understanding of women's participation in cattle farming.

Another limitation of the study was participant withdrawals. Some potential participants opted out of the study due to their reluctance to disclose personal family issues to the researcher, who resides in the same area. Despite the researcher's efforts to provide explanations, many elderly potential participants struggled to understand the purpose of conducting research on women's involvement in cattle farming.

5.8 Summary

This chapter discussed the findings of the study in collaboration with previous studies and theories. The limitations of the study, recommendations of the study, and conclusion were articulated. The idea of the chapter was to discuss the findings in such a way that they address the research objectives and answer the research questions. The conclusions and recommendations for the study were also highlighted.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM



Informed consent for participation in a research study entitled: Women's participation in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi Village, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Student name: Netshithothole Rialivhuwa Tertia

Student number: 19007436

Cell: 076 522 4941

email: rialivhuwatertia@gmail.com

Dear participant.

You have been invited to take part in an academic research study conducted by Netshithothole Rialivhuwa Tertia from the Department of Youth in Development at the University of Venda (UNIVEN). This study has been approved by the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education, as well as the section of Gender Studies. The aim of the study is to assess if women are being given an equal chance as men to participate in cattle farming practices at Ha-Luvhimbi Village, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Please note the following:

- This study involves responding to questions in an interview guide about the participation of women in cattle farming practices. Names will not appear in the findings and the answers given will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is crucial. You have the option not to participate and can withdraw at any time without consequences.

- The study results will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. The researcher will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Please contact Prof. Thobejane and Ms. Mulaudzi, my supervisors, for any study-related inquiries or feedback.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

…… ……

Participant's signature Date

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APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

This interview guide is for the collection of data for the study “Women’s participation in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi Village, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa”

Student name: Netshithothole Rialivhuwa Tertia

Student number: 19007436

Cell: 076 522 4941

email: rialivhuwatertia@gmail.com

GUIDELINES FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

The researcher is dedicated to upholding ethical values and will adhere to ethical conduct as it applies to academic research projects in higher education institutions in South Africa.

- Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw whenever you no longer want to participate.
- Participants' responses will be treated with the strictest confidence, and anonymity will be guaranteed.

INSTRUCTIONS

There are no **right** or **wrong** answers. Just be honest about your perception and give as much detail as possible when you respond to the questions in this interview guide.

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SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

This section of the interview guide will be used to request biographical information.

Please answer the following questions by crossing **(x)** in the **relevant block.**

1. **Gender**

Male	
Female	

2. **Age**

18-35	
36-59	
60 and above	

3. **Marital Status**

Single	
Married	
Divorced	
Other	

4. **Highest level of education**

No education	
Primary	
Secondary	
Tertiary	

5. **Employment status**

Unemployed	

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Employed	
Self-employed	
Volunteering	
Retired	

SECTION B

This section delves into the various perspectives and opinions regarding the active participation of women in the domain of cattle farming. The approach involves the use of open-ended questions to thoroughly extract and comprehend the nuanced perceptions of the participants in Ha-Luvhimbi village.

1. What do you understand by the concept of cattle farming practices?

……
……
……..

2. Do you own cattle?

Yes	
No	

3. How did you obtain ownership of cattle?

Inheritance	
Market purchase	
Other	

If other, describe……

4. Is cattle farming the primary source of income in your household?

Yes	
No	

5. Do you have formal employment?

Yes	
No	

If yes, describe

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……
……

6. Do you engage in the practice of herding your cattle?

Yes	
No	

If **No**, who is responsible for herding your cattle?

……..

Why is someone else herding your cattle?

……
……

……

If **yes**, how do you balance cattle herding and other reproductive roles within your household

……
……
……

Do you feel safe in the grazing areas? Yes/No. Explain your answer

……

……

What challenges have you encountered when cattle herding as a woman?

……
……..

How does the distance to grazing areas influence women's participation in cattle farming activities?

……
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……
……

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Have you received any negative views from the community as a woman herding cattle? Yes/No. Explain.

……..…
……..…
……..

7. Are there cultural taboos that restrict women's participation in cattle farming? YES/NO

……..

8. What cultural taboos restrict women's access to cattle farming activities?

……

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……

……

……

9. How do cultural practices influence cattle ownership among different genders?

……
……
……..

10. What role do economic factors play in men's access to cattle versus women's access?

……
……
……..

11. Do you understand the inheritance laws? YES/NO

If yes, explain your answer

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……..

12. How do inheritance practices impact the distribution of cattle ownership between men and women?

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……..

13. What specific decision-making roles do men and women occupy in cattle farming?

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……
……..

14. How do societal perceptions of gender roles affect women's confidence in participating in decision-making?

……
……
……..

15. What are the barriers that prevent women from taking on leadership roles in cattle farming?

……
……
……

16. How does the involvement of women in decision-making correlate with their knowledge and skills in cattle farming?

……
……
……..

17. Have you received formal or informal training as a female farmer? Yes/No.
If yes, describe

……
……

18. What specific forms of empowerment (e.g., education, financial resources) are most effective for women farmers? Explain

……
……
……..

19. How does women's empowerment impact agricultural productivity and income generation?

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……..…
……..…
……..

20. In what ways does empowered female participation affect household nutrition and food security?

……
……
……..

21. Are there observable differences in food security outcomes between households led by empowered women versus those without such empowerment? YES/NO. Explain your answer

……
……
……..

22. What role do community support systems play in enhancing the empowerment of women farmers?

……
……
……..

23. What existing gender inequalities are most prevalent in indigenous cattle farming practices?

……
……
……

24. How can education and training programs be designed to address these inequalities?

……
……
……

25. What role do local leaders and institutions play in promoting gender equality within the community?

……
……
……

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26. Are there successful models from other regions that could be adapted to Ha-Luvhimbi Village? YES/NO

If yes, explain your answer

……
……
……

27. How can technology be leveraged to promote equal opportunities for men and women in cattle farming?

……
……
……

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APPENDIX C: RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Ms RT Netshithothole

STUDENT NO:
19007436

PROJECT TITLE: **Women's participation in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi Village, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.**

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: **FHSSE/25/DS/01/2201**

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Prof TD Thobejane	UNIVEN, Youth in Development, Gender Studies	Supervisor
Ms PT Mulaudzi	UNIVEN, Youth in Development, Gender Studies	Co-Supervisor
Ms RT Netshithothole	UNIVEN, Youth in Development, Gender Studies	Investigator -Student

Type: Masters Research
Risk: *Minimal risk to humans, animals, or environment (Category 2)*
Approval Period: January 2025 – January 2026

The Research Ethics Social Science Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
  - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
  - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
  - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
  - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
  - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
  - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
  - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Date Considered: January 2025

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee..Prof M. Mwale-Manjoro

Signature.....

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
2025 -01- 22
Private Bag X5050
Thohoyandou 0950

APPENDIX D: TURN IT IN

Women's participation in cattle farming at Ha- Luvhimbi Village, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

by rialivhuwa netshithothole

Submission date: 27-May-2025 11:11PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 2686300340
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Women's participation in cattle farming at Ha- Luvhimbi Village, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

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APPENDIX E: EDITOR'S LETTER

Language certificate

todani.nodoba@univen.ac.za
+27646869839
27 May 2025

To whom it may concern,

RE: CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING AND PROOFREADING

This serves to confirm that I have copy-edited a Masters Dissertation written by Rialivhuwa Tertia Netshithothole (student number: 19007436) titled: *Exploring factors limiting women's participation in cattle farming at Ha-Luvhimbi Village, Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa.*

The scope of my editing comprised:

- Spelling
- Tense
- Vocabulary
- Punctuation
- Word usage
- Language and sentence structure

If you need any further details, kindly contact me with the details provided above.

Yours faithfully



……..

Todani Nodoba

Ms Todani Nodoba, MPhil (Journalism): Stellenbosch; BA Honours (English); BA Honours (Media Studies; BA Honours (Translation and Interpreting), Wits.