The influence of Indigenous and Contemporary Gender Roles on Household Livelihood Systems and Poverty Dynamics: Perspectives from Villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa

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SHUMISANANI JULIAH MASHAU

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Declaration

Name : Shumisanani Juliah Mashau

Student number : 63403501

Degree : Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

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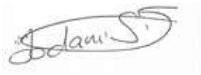

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Abstract

This research examined the indigenous and contemporary gender roles, norms and knowledge systems that shape household-level poverty alleviation strategies in traditional rural communities in South Africa, using the Tshaulu village, in Limpopo, as a case study. Despite ongoing development efforts, poverty remains persistent in many rural areas, and this could partly be due to dominant Western-oriented frameworks, which often fail to account for indigenous gender roles and local livelihoods systems. The study explored how various knowledge systems influence poverty dynamics and the functioning of locally grounded livelihood systems. It is informed by the modernisation theory, social role theory, intersectionality theory and critical theory, and further strengthened by gender and indigenous knowledge perspectives. Together, these contributed to a framework for understanding how gender roles, cultural practices and social structures shape the poverty dynamics and livelihoods system in the case study.

Using a mixed-methods case study design, the research engaged 453 respondents through household surveys, focus group discussions and key Informant Interviews (KIIs)s. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistical methods, while qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis, to generate perspectives on poverty and gender roles at the household level.

The findings revealed that Tshaulu is characterised by high levels of multidimensional poverty, limited access to basic services, particularly water, and a strong dependence on subsistence agriculture and social grants. The households gender representation has shifted because of both temporary and permanent factors, such as labour migration, divorce, death and unemployment. While men are traditionally recognised as the household head and representative, their temporary or permanent absence has led to women assuming these roles. Within the context that male roles, as primary providers, have shifted, the women increasingly carry the responsibility for both indigenous domestic roles and contemporary livelihood activities. This has resulted in complex intra-household gender dynamics that influence decision-making, resources allocation and coping strategies. The research demonstrates that indigenous knowledge systems, including communal labour practices, traditional agricultural methods and lineage-based knowledge transfer, play a significant role in supporting household resilience. However, while contemporary interventions promote gender equality and economic inclusion, they often overlook indigenous gender roles and social structures. This leads to mismatches between policy design and community realities, despite policy implications that highlight the need to integrate indigenous knowledge systems into development and poverty related intervention, the strengthening of locally grounded leadership, and the recognition of women as active economic agents in the development process.

The research advocates for a hybridised development approach that aligns indigenous practices with contemporary strategies, to improve the sustainability, relevance and effectiveness of rural development interventions. By foregrounding indigenous gendered roles and poverty dynamics, the thesis contributes to more inclusive and contextually attuned approaches to addressing rural poverty in South Africa.

Keywords: *indigenous knowledge systems; socio-economic development; gendered livelihood strategies; multidimensional poverty; rural household dynamics; cultural norms and gender roles; subsistence agriculture; sustainable development; poverty alleviation; sustainable livelihoods*

Manweledzo (Abstract in Tshvenda)

Ṱhoḓisiso i sedzulusa mishumo ya mbeu ya sialala na ya musalauno, maitele na sisiṱeme dza nḓivho dzine dza vhumba zwiṱirathedzhi zwa u fhungudza vhushai kha vhuimo ha miṱa kha zwitshavha zwa mvelele zwa vhupo ha mahayani Afrika Tshipembe, hu tshi khou shumiswa muvhundu wa Tshaulu, ngei Limpopo, sa ngudo ya tsumbo. Naho hu na mveledziso ine ya khou bvela phanḓa hu tshi khou shumiswa vhuḓidini, vhushai vhu kha ḓi vha hone kha vhupo vhunzhi ha mahayani, nahone izwi zwi nga vha zwo itwa nga mitheo yo livhiswaho kha vha Vhukovhela vhane vha khou vhusa, ine ya anzela u kundelwa u ṱanganedza mishumo ya mbeu ya sialala na sisiṱeme dza vhutshilo hapo. Ngudo i sedzulusa nḓila ine sisiṱeme dza nḓivho yo fhambanaho dza ṱuṱuwedza ngayo tshanduko ya vhushai na u shuma ha sisiṱeme dza vhutshilo dzo thewaho kha vhupo hapo. Zwo ṱuṱuwedza nga thyiori ya u ita zwithu musalauno, thyiori ya mushumo wa matshilisano, thyiori ya u ṱanganelana ha khethekanyo na thyiori ya ndeme, na u khwaṱhiswa hafhu nga mbeu na mavhonele a nḓivho ya sialala. Zwo ṱangana, izwi zwo shela mulenzhe kha mutheo wa u pfesesa nḓila ine mishumo ya mbeu, maitele a mvelele na zwiimiswa zwa matshilisano zwa vhumba ngayo tshanduko dza vhushai na sisiṱeme ya nḓila dza u ḓitshidza kha ngudo ya tsumbo.

Hu tshi khou shumiswa ngona dzo ṱanganelanaho dza nyolo ya ngudo ya tsumbo, ṱhoḓisiso yo dzhenisa vhafhinduli vha 453 nga kha tsedzuluso ya miḓini, therisano dzi sedzaho kha tshigwada na inthaviwu dza vhafaramikovhe vha ndeme. Data ya tshivhalo yo senguluswa hu tshi khou shumiswa ngona dza mbalombalo dza mbuletshedzo, ngeno data ya vhunzani to senguluswa nga kha tsenguluso ya thero, u bveledza mavhonele a kwamaho vhushai na mishumo ya mbeu kha vhuimo ha muṱani.

Mawanwa o sumbedza uri Tshaulu ḽi ṱalulwa nga vhushai ha nṱha kha masia o fhambanaho, u swikelela ho pimeaho tshumelo dza ndeme, zwihulusa maḓi, na u ḓitika zwihulwane kha u limela u ḽa na magavhelo a mindende. Vhuimeli ha mbeu ya muṱani ho shanduka nga nṱhani ha zwivhangi zwa tshifhinganyana na zwa tshoṱhe, zwi ngaho mupfuluwo wa vhashumi, ṱhalano, lufu na u sa shuma. Musi vhanna vha tshi dzhielwa nṱha nga mvelele sa ṱhoho ya muḓi na muimeleli, u sa vha hone havho lwa tshifhinganyana kana lwa tshoṱhe zwo livhisa kha uri vhafumakadzi vha dzhie iyi mishumo. Nga ngomu ha nzulele ine mishumo ya vhanna, sa muṱunḓeli muhulwane, yo shanduka ngayo, vhafumakadzi vha khou engedzea kha u hwala vhuḓifhinduleli ha mishumo ya hayani na nyito dza u ḓitshidza dza musalauno vhuvhili hazwo. Izwi zwo livhisa kha mvelaphanḓa ya mbeu yo ṱangananaho nga ngomu ha miṱa zwine zwa ṱuṱuwedza u dzhia tsheo, u avhela zwishumiswa na zwiṱirathedzhi zwa u konḓelela. Ṱhoḓisiso i sumbedza uri sisiṱeme dza nḓivho sialala, hu tshi khou katelwa maitele a mushumo wa tshitshavha, ngona dza vhulimi dza sialala, u pfukiselwa ha nḓivho yo thewaho kha lushaka, zwi tamba mushumo muhulwane kha u tikedza u konḓelela ha muṱa. naho zwo ralo, musi u dzhenelela ha musalauno hu tshi ṱuṱuwedza ndinganyelo ya mbeu na u katelwa kha ikonomi, hu anzela u dzhielwa nṱha mishumo ya mbeu ya mvelele na zwiimiswa zwa matshilisano. Izwi zwi livhisa kha u liana vhukati ha nyolo ya mbekanyamaitele na vhungoho ha tshitshavha, musi masiandaitwa a mbekanyamaitele ane a sumbedza ṱhoḓea ya u ṱanganyisa sisiṱeme dza nḓivho ya sialala kha mvelaphanḓa na u dzhenelela hu re na vhushaka na vhushai, u khwaṱhisa vhurangaphanḓa ho thewaho kha vhupo hapo, na u dzhiela nṱha vhafumakadzi sa mazhendedzi a ikonomi o khwaṱhaho kha kuitele kwa mveledziso.

Ṱhoḓisiso i ṱuṱuwedza nḓila ya mveledziso yo ṱanganelanaho ine ya anana na maitele a sialala na zwiṱirathedzhi zwa musalauno, u itela u khwinisa u bvela phanḓa, u tea na u shuma vhudzheneleli ha mveledziso ya vhupo ha mahayani. Nga u vhea phanḓa mishumo ya mbeu ya sialala na tshanduko dza vhushai, ḽiṅwalwa ḽa ṱhoḓisiso ḽi shela mulenzhe zwihulwane kha nḓila yo katelaho na yo ṱanganelanaho na nzulele kha u tandulula vhushai Afrika Tshipembe.

Maipfi a ndeme: sisiṱeme dza nḓivho ya sialala; mveledziso ya matshilisano na ikonomi; Zwiṱirathedzi zwa u ḓitshidza nga mbeu; vhushai kha masia o fhambanaho; tshanduko dza muṱa wa mahayani; maitele a sialala na mishumo ya mbeu; u limela u ḓitshidza; mvelaphanḓa i sa nyeṱhi; u fhungudza vhushai; vhutshilo vhu bveledzaho

Nkatsakanyo (Abstract in Xitsonga)

Ndzavisiso lowu wu kambisisile mintirho ya rimbewu ya ndzhavuko na ya manguva lawa, mikhuva na mafambiselo ya vutivi lama vumbaka tindlela to hunguta vusweti eka xiyimo xa le makaya eka miganga ya ndhavuko ya le makaya eAfrika-Dzonga, hi ku tirhisa muganga wa Tshaulu, eLimpopo, tanihi dyondzo ya ndzavisiso. Hambileswi matshalatshala ya nhluvukiso lama yaka emahlweni, vusweti bya ha ri kona eka tindhawu to tala ta le makaya, naswona leswi swi nga ha va swi vangiwa hi swivumbeko leswi lawulaka swi vumbiwaka hi mindhavuko ya xilungu, leswi talaka ku tsandzeka ku hlamusela mintirho ya rimbewu ya ndzhavuko na tisisiteme ta swo tihanyisa swa ndhawu. Dyondzo yi lavisisile hilaha tisisiteme to hambana ta vutivi ti kucetelaka hakona ku cinca ka vusweti na matirhelo ya tisisiteme ta swo tihanyisa hiswona leti simekiweke laha kaya. Yi tivisiwile hi thiyori ya manguva lawa, thiyori ya ntirho wa vaaki, thiyori ya ku hlangana ka swiyenge swa vumunhu na thiyori ya vuxopaxopi, naswona yi ya emahlweni yi tiyisisiwa hi mavonelo ya vutivi bya rimbewu na bya ndzhavuko. Loko swi hlanganisiwa, leswi swi hoxile xandla eka rimba ro twisisa hilaha mintirho ya rimbewu, maendlelo ya ndhavuko na swivumbeko swa vaaki swi vumbaka hakona ku cinca ka vusweti na sisiteme ya swo tihanyisa eka dyondzo ya ndzavisiso.Hi ku tirhisa dizayini ya dyondzo ya ndzavisiso ya tindlela to pfangana, ndzavisiso wu nghenelerisile vahlamuri va 453 hi ku tirhisa ndzavisiso wa le makaya, mimbulavurisano ya ntlawa lowu kongomisiweke na nkambela-vutivi wa vakhomaxiave va nkoka. Data ya tinomboro yi xopaxopiwile hi ku tirhisa tindlela ta tinhlayo leti hlamuselaka, kasi data yo nyika vuxokoxoko hi ku hlamusela yi xopaxopiwile hi ku tirhisa nxopaxopo wa nhlokomhaka-nkulu, ku tumbuluxa mavonelo eka vusweti na mintirho ya rimbewu eka xiyimo xa le kaya.Leswi kumiweke swi paluxile leswaku Tshaulu yi tiviwa hi swiphemu swo tala swa vusweti lebyikulu, ku kayivela ka vukorhokeri bya masungulo, ngopfu-ngopfu mati, ni ku titshega ngopfu hi vurimi bya ku tihanyisa ni timali ta mpfuneto wa vanhu. Vuyimeri bya rimbewu emindyangwini byi cincile hikwalaho ka swivangelo swa nkarhinyana ni swa nkarhi hinkwawo, swo fana ni ku rhurha ka vatirhi, ku dlaya vukati, rifu ni ku pfumaleka ka mintirho. Hambileswi hi ntolovelo vavanuna va tekiwaka tanihi tinhloko ta mindyangu ni vayimeri, ku va va nga ri kona swa xinkarhana kumbe hi laha ku nga heriki swi endle leswaku vavasati va teka mintirho leyi. Eka xiyimo xa leswaku mintirho ya vavanuna, tanihi vahlayisi-nkulu, yi cincile, vavasati va rhwala vutihlamuleri byo tala bya mintirho ya le kaya ni mintirho ya manguva lawa yo tihanyisa. Leswi swi endle leswaku ku va ni timhaka leti hlanganahlanganeke leti khumbaka timhaka ta rimbewu leti khumbaka ndlela leyi ku endliwaka swiboho ha yona, ndlela leyi mali yi tirhisiwaka ha yona ni tindlela to langutana ni xiyimo lexi. Ndzavisiso wu kombisa leswaku mafambiselo ya vutivi bya ndhavuko, ku katsa na mintolovetiso ya mintirho ya vaaki, tindlela ta vurimi ta ndhavuko na ku hundzisela vutivi bya rixaka, swi na ntirho wa nkoka eku seketeleni ka ku tiyisela ka mindyangu. Hambiswiritano, hambileswi ku nghenelela ka manguva lawa ku tlakusaka ku ringana ka rimbewu ni phurosese yo tiyisisa leswaku vanhu hinkwavo va va na mfikelelo eka swivandlanene swa ikhonomi, hakanyingi va honisa mintirho ya rimbewu ya ndhavuko ni swivumbeko swa vaaki. Leswi swi endla leswaku ku nga vi na ku twanana exikarhi ka matirhelo ya pholisi na ntiyiso wa vaaki, ku nga khathariseki leswi swi pimanyetiweke eka pholisi leswi kombaka xilaveko xo hlanganisa mafambiselo ya vutivi bya vaaki eka nhluvukiso na ku nghenelela loku fambelanaka na vusweti, ku tiyisisa vurhangeri bya le kusuhi, na ku amukeriwa ka vavasati tanihi vatirhi va swa ikhonomi eka endlelo ra nhluvukiso.Ndzavisiso wu seketela endlelo ra nhluvukiso leri hlanganisiweke leri ringanisaka maendlelo ya ndzhavuko na tindlela ta manguva lawa, ku antswisa vuhlayiseki, ku yelana na ku tirha kahle ka ku nghenelela ka nhluvukiso wa le makaya. Hi ku veka emahlweni mintirho ya rimbewu ya ndzhavuko na ku cinca ka vusweti, ndzavisiso wu hoxa xandla eka maendlelo yo katsa hinkwavo na ku fambisana na xiyimo xo lulamisa vusweti bya le makaya eAfrika-Dzonga.

Marito ya nkoka: *mafambiselo ya vutivi bya ndzhavuko; nhluvukiso wa ikhonomi ya vaaki; tindlela to tihanyisa ku ya hi rimbewu; vusweti bya swiyenge swo tala; ku cinca-cinca ka mindyangu ya le makaya; mikhuva ya ndhavuko na mintirho ya rimbewu; vurimi byo tihanyisa; nhluvukiso lowu nga heriki; ku hungutiwa ka vusweti; tindlela to tihanyisa leti nga heriki*

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List of Acronyms

ABCD:	Asset-Based Community Development
AfDB:	African Development Bank
AQIP:	Academic Qualification Improvement Programme
ASGISA:	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
BEE:	Black Economic Empowerment
CAES:	College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences
CRDP:	Comprehensive Rural Development Programme
DRS:	Directorate of Research Support
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
GEAR:	Government Employment and Redistribution Strategy
HDR:	Human Development Report
IDP:	Integrated Development Plan
ISRDS:	Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
MoA:	Memorandum of Agreement
MPI:	Multiple Dimension Poverty Index
NDP:	National Development Plan (South Africa)
NEPAD:	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGP:	National Growth Path
NRLM:	National Rural Livelihoods Mission (India case study)
RDP:	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SENEX:	Executive Committee of Senate
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STATSSA:	Statistics South Africa
TPA:	Targeted Poverty Alleviation (China Model)
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNISA:	University of South Africa
Vhembe DM:	Vhembe District Municipality
WEGE:	Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Policy Framework

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a global problem that will increasingly require a combination of local indigenous and global contemporary knowledge systems and practices to develop effective solutions. Poverty is a socially related issue that involves deprivations across a broad spectrum, including political involvement; standard of living, basic income, health, nutrition and education (Ngwenya & Manyongo, 2019; Ali et al., 2024). Closely related to global poverty trends are persistent patterns of gender inequality. As gender and poverty are interrelated, it follows that the understanding poverty dynamics should extend to include the gender norms and practices that shape opportunities for women and men in the society they live in (Petesch & Badstue, 2020). The United Nations (2023) indicated that globally more than a billion people lived in unacceptable conditions of poverty, with many of these individuals concentrated in the countries in the Global South. Within this context poverty is often disproportionately experienced by women, highlighting the gendered nature of deprivation (United Nations, 2023). In Africa, and particularly in South Africa, rural communities face persistent poverty despite various interventions aimed at improving livelihoods (Tjale et al., 2024). Provinces such as Limpopo continue to exhibit high levels of unemployment, limited access to basic services, and reliance on informal and subsistence-based economies (Libera, 2024). The relationship between gender and poverty dynamics has been widely recognised in the global development.

The United Nations (2023) thus supported the existence of a correlation between gender equality and poverty alleviation. Qiu (2020) highlighted the influence of gender roles in poverty alleviation strategies and reported that the relationship between contemporary and indigenous gender roles within patriarchal structures were significant components in such strategies. When considering the traditional gender roles within communities Bihari (2023) and Ghose & Ali (2023) emphasised that indigenous knowledge is not only knowledge but also extends to a way of life that upholds community traditions. As Omojemite et al. (2024) pointed out, gender roles signify specific behaviour deemed suitable by societal norms that correspond with an individual's gender, socio-cultural and demographic elements, and how these contribute significantly to elevated poverty rates within more traditional societies (Trianto et al., 2020).

1.1. Background and context of the study

In the context of research on poverty alleviation, academics have often emphasised the relationship between gender roles and the effectiveness thereof on prevailing strategies that are aimed at reducing poverty. Diwakar (2018) and Mariano & Molari (2022) however, expressed their opinion that gender roles in the prevailing poverty alleviation strategies were inadequately addressed, as these strategies often neglected critical traditional/indigenous perspectives of gender that prevailed in many rural communities in the Global South. This critique set the foundation for the argument presented in the research of Priyadarshini & Abhilash (2019) where they highlighted the importance of the acknowledging of traditional practices and understanding of rural societies, including the acceptance that associated inherent traditional knowledge, and customs could effectively deal with poverty alleviation. The same authors found that policy developers often marginalised the norms and practices of the more indigenous communities, and the exclusion thereof from poverty alleviations strategies often hindered the positive and active involvement of such practises in many development efforts. Small et al. (2010), Cheteni et al. (2019), Glazebrook & Opoku (2020) and Alcaniz-Colomer et al. (2023) reported that contemporary strategists often viewed women as "*victims of poverty*" and not as active contributors towards household livelihoods systems and poverty reduction efforts within rural communities. Murphy (2004), Kuhnlein (2017) and Ngwenya & Manyongo (2019) found that despite an advanced understanding of their respective social, economic and physical environment in which they live, traditional societies continue to struggle with high poverty rates, inequality, discrimination, and inadequate access to proper services and nutrition.

Awumbila (2006) emphasised the importance of analysing gender roles and relations to comprehend structural poverty that results from discriminatory practices as basis for developing relevant strategies to relieve poverty. Khumalo & Baloyi, (2017) indicated that while undertaking their research the prevailing literature predominantly reflected the underpinnings of more Western ideologies as the solution to poverty reduction and that these underpinnings lacked sufficient consideration or even understanding of the knowledge, norms and practices of more traditional communities.

Handayani et al. (2018) and Onyenekwe et al. (2025) argued that to formulate more effective poverty reduction strategies that are responsive to the needs and unique circumstances of traditional communities it is crucial to understand the gender role dynamics that exist within them. Kuhnlein (2017) supported these arguments by documenting that there is a need to develop more comprehensive poverty alleviation strategies that go beyond simply addressing women as "*victims of poverty*". Aisyah (2021) suggested poverty alleviation strategies should rather focus on combatting gendered poverty and associated patriarchal resistance by addressing gender inequality and associated biases rather than solely providing material assistance as basis of most strategies. Handayani et al. (2018) highlighted the significance of traditional wisdom in tackling poverty, despite the frequent dismissal thereof within the implementation of more contemporary developmental efforts (Khumalo & Baloyi, 2017). Muttarak (2017) endorsed the importance of addressing the specific needs of targeted demographic groups for more successful outcomes in development projects. Researchers and stakeholders indicate that the implementation of contemporary poverty relief initiatives without due consideration of traditional gender roles prevalent in many communities, may reinforce gender disparity and associated poverty may remain a pressing issue in rural communities in the global south (Espinoza-Delgado & Klassen, 2018; UNDP, 2021).

Incorporating traditional knowledge (*wisdom*) is essential to promoting sustainable development that inherently strives for poverty reduction within a context of protecting the dignity and rights of indigenous communities (Handayani et al., 2018).

As explained the current poverty reduction strategies tend to overlook the complexities of gender roles within various traditional contexts, and this oversight may negatively impact efforts to reduce poverty in rural communities. Excluding gender related traditional norms may further restrict the development of relevant and effective interventions. While many scholars argue for the inclusion of contemporary (western) gender roles in poverty alleviation strategies, this has often led neglect of traditional gender roles which are frequently associated with the perceptions of male dominance in traditional communities. Contemporary strategies may therefore overlook the contributions of both men and women by focusing primarily on reducing patriarchal practices and promoting gender equity (Albeda, 2023). However, Mwaniki (2022)

argues that women in all communities actively contribute towards improving the wellbeing of their households despite patriarchal norms that may influence access to resources.

Many contemporary poverty alleviation strategies focus on promoting independence among men and women as a critical component. However, this may reflect a knowledge gap regarding the continued relevance of traditional gender roles, which has historically influenced traditional rural communities and provided practical survival strategies. The United Nations (2101) acknowledged that men and women have diverse gender roles and responsibilities in traditional societies, based on distinct (and sometimes unique) needs, aspirations, and expectations. (Kimani & Kombo (2010) established that poverty is not necessarily a gender issue, as women and men respond differently to this phenomenon.

While not all rural areas in the Global South follow indigenous practices, this study focuses on rural communities that subscribe to indigenous norms and practices. In this context, Cheteni (2019) and Ajala (2016) argued that gendered poverty may be influenced by cultural practices, customs and traditions, rather than solely by patriarchy. Vansteenkiste (2022) discussed how labour the migration in Haiti has reshaped traditional male roles, increasing the burden of women as primary providers, while policies policy responses often overlook these contributions. Dery et al. (2022) critique the western gender equality concept application to African masculinities, theorising African Men, especially black poor men as problematic, abusive and violent. Such scholarship fails to foreground how there are and will always be varying notions of what it may mean to be a man within a specific cultural space. According to Betti et al. (2020), the impact of more traditional gender roles and possible gender discrimination in some traditional households on the incidence of female poverty is an area of research that still needs to be developed. Given this gap in the body of knowledge, it is therefore important to assess whether the practical and holistic inclusion of indigenous and contemporary gender roles within households' livelihoods systems could have a positive impact on poverty dynamics in rural traditional communities.

1.2. Problem statement

During the period 1990 and 2015, significant progress was made to reduce poverty levels globally with the UNDP (2023) estimating more than a 50% reduction in the people living in poverty in the world. Since the many global initiatives to reduce poverty levels and not limited to strategies related to the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implemented in 2015, there have been significant variations in the number of people living in poverty (UNDP, 2023). In many parts of the Global South, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people living in poverty has continued to increase in absolute terms despite relative declines in poverty rates (World Bank, 2019; Aikins & Maclachlan, 2022b). Strong regional differences are prevalent, however across the globe women are more likely to be affected by poverty than men (UNDP, 2023). Shortly after the implementation of the SDGs, Sharpe & Swanson (2016) documented that women in the Global South were more likely to be affected by poverty than men and further argued that poverty had a strong gender component.

Bradshaw et al. (2019) established that feminisation of poverty is complex, showing both decreasing and increasing trends despite targeted development intervention. Kerorsa & Woldeyes (2023) suggested that in traditional rural communities, the failure to recognise the specific relationship between the household headship, poverty and anti-poverty measures creates challenges in addressing persistent gender gaps and this has negatively impacted upon the poverty alleviation strategies as encouraged by the SDGs (specifically SDGs 1 & 5). Sharpe and Swanson (2016) argue that poverty has a multidimensional structure, emphasising gender as a critical determinant shaped by social norms, labour market inequalities, and household structures. This perspective is supported by the findings of Buitrago et al. (2018) undertaken in Colombia where research demonstrates that poverty varies across the life cycle and is deeply gendered. The same authors found that 6% of women in their reproductive years experienced higher poverty rates than men, while they also documented that the poverty levels amongst divorced women were twice the rate of divorced men in the country.

In their research Petesch & Badstue (2020) emphasised that gender norms significantly influenced the poverty dynamics in most South Asian rural villages, they

recorded that restrictive gender norms could have influenced the role women played in their participation in and access to economic opportunities. They found that despite limited employment opportunities. men in the region were able to lift themselves out of poverty, as there was a male gender bias in accessing a variety of fixed assets and sources of income in the region. In addition, they noted that South Asian rural women play a more significant domestic role in agricultural activities and tasks related to the family (household) wellbeing, while men in these villages largely owned the assets and had more control over the available resources than was the case for women.

According to the World Bank (2019), people living in extreme poverty in Africa decreased to 41% in 2015, compared to 54% in 1990, however, the number of Africans living in poverty had risen, and instances of global poverty were increasingly located in the African region. The impact of COVID-19 on poverty trends has been varied. Before COVID-19 and during the period 2015-2019 the extreme poverty rate in Sub-Saharan Africa ($2.15/day) showed a modest decline from about 35.5% to around 35% though in terms of the absolute number of people, 400 million, remain at risk of high levels of poverty (Aikins & Mclachlan, 2022a; Baah & Lakner, 2023). From 2020 onwards the pandemic and ongoing crises like climate impact and conflict stalled the progress and drove an increase of those living in poverty and reaching 46% in 2024 and the African region counting for 67% of the global extreme poor approximately 558 million people (Aikins & Maclachlan, 2022b; Baah & Lakner, 2023).

Admasu et al. (2021) conducted a study in sub-Saharan Africa wherein they analysed multidimensional poverty; gender and forced displacement and multi-country intrahousehold poverty levels. These authors found that women and girls in Nigeria and Ethiopia faced higher multidimensional poverty than the men and boys in these countries. This contrasts with the findings in Somalia; South Sudan; and Sudan wherein no significant gender differences within the nondisplaced population could be found. Research undertaken by Semali (2021), with a specific focus on South Africa showed that women were more affected by rural poverty due to high levels of inherent discrimination and patriarchy, including symbolic patriarchy; inheritance laws; and gender socialisation, which contributes to women subordination within the community and households. The same author further established that the nature of poverty is gendered, with women being affected by intersecting factors such as race, class, and

ethnicity. The post-Apartheid South Africa government prioritised addressing the persisting levels of poverty and underdevelopment, however Statistics South Africa (2022) indicated that there is a gender imbalance in terms of poverty levels as females (58.6%) experienced greater poverty levels when compared to their male (54.9%) counterparts. In 2011, the National Development Plan (NDP) formed the basis of governments policy efforts to alleviate the high levels poverty and inequality in the country (National Planning Commission South Africa, 2012). A review of the implementation of the NDP a decade later (National Planning Commission, 2012), indicated that the issues negatively impacting on the successful implementation of the NDP included the increased levels of inequality, rising poverty and unemployment levels; infrastructures constraints, COVID-19; Russia Ukraine War; climate change; and importantly the failure to address issues that were related to people living with disabilities and pertinent matters related to women and the youth.

Ozoemena (2018) found that in South Africa there were higher levels of poverty and inequality amongst rural women embracing a more traditional lifestyle and argued that this was underpinned by less economic empowerment that was deeply rooted in a variety of cultural restrictions and domestic responsibilities at an individual household level. The same author contends that as men enter the more contemporary economic activities away from the rural household, there is a shift of their traditional responsibilities to the women who remain in the rural area but are now tasked with more responsibilities than are typically allocated to women at a household level. This trend could explain why women are becoming more impoverished than men within the same community. Ndinda & Ndlovu (2018) argued that since the implementation of the NDP, there has been little progress in terms of achieving gender equality and women empowerment, this argument is was already mooted in the earlier research of Dixon (2024) who claimed that traditional knowledge, practises, norms and values that are entrenched in typical rural traditional African communities seem to have been discouraged and excluded in the underpinnings of the various strategies proposed by the NDP, but rather the plan has embraced a more contemporary (western) philosophy into the actions of the proposed strategies. This creates a mismatch between policy design and the lived realities of rural households. Although legislative and legal frameworks in South Africa have made progress in combating poverty, the country's

poverty rate is still high and its efforts to reduce it are not producing the anticipated results (Maxwell & Sentiwe, 2022).

The regional distribution of poverty in South Africa varies between the nine provinces, with Statistics South Africa (2022) reporting that the province with the highest rates of poverty is Limpopo followed by the Eastern Cape. As is the case in many countries in the Global South rural-urban poverty in South Africa, is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. The research of Mamabolo et al. (2023) indicated that poverty is not uniform throughout the various districts in the respective provinces, and generally the rural areas in the nine provinces reflect greater rates of poverty, when compared to the more urban areas. Although the level of multidimensional poverty is similar in both rural and urban settings of South Africa, multiple deprivations are more common in rural areas (Megbowon, 2018). It is also significant to mention that poverty in South Africa is not limited to urban townships or informal settlements but also exist in inner city zones and rural settlements (Frenzel, 2019). Quadika, (2020) undertook a comprehensive review of health shocks and vulnerability to poverty in Congo and concluded that household poverty is determined by education level and household size in both rural and urban areas. Quadika, (2020) and Baiyegunhi & Fraser (2012) found that higher levels of education reduce the likelihood of economic hardship and household poverty. In addition to their findings, they concluded that larger household's sizes are associated with the increased poverty occurrence, concluding that expected households' cost may not be sufficient to alleviate vulnerability to poverty. Despite extensive literature on poverty and gender there remains limited understanding of how indigenous and contemporary gender roles interact within household's livelihoods systems and how this interaction influence poverty dynamics in rural South African communities.

The researcher of this thesis contends that many recommendations for addressing poverty in the typical rural area are largely informed by the western oriented approaches with limited integration of indigenous gender roles and locally embedded livelihoods systems. This may reduce the effectiveness of current poverty reduction strategies in rural context. To balance out the current dominance of contemporary philosophies in the prevailing poverty alleviation strategies, with more traditional approaches, this thesis utilises a case study approach to document how the inclusion

of traditional gender related socio-economic dimensions within a typical rural community can contribute to the improvement of household livelihoods systems and influence poverty dynamics in rural areas of South Africa.

1.3. Research aim and objectives

The overall aim of the thesis is to establish how different knowledge systems, norms and traditions can be infused into the development of more effective poverty related approaches in South Africa, with particular focus on how indigenous and contemporary gender roles interact within households' livelihoods systems and influence poverty dynamics in rural communities. To achieve the aim the following objectives where developed:

- Objective 1: to establish the *socio-economic profile* of households in traditional rural villages.
- Objective 2: to identify and analyse poverty related livelihoods activities and *strategies* practiced at the household level in the traditional rural villages.
- Objective 3: to establish the underlying *knowledge practices* and *gender roles* that inform gendered access to resources and *basic services* within the household livelihoods systems in rural villages.
- Objective 4: to identify the *challenges* and the *impact of gender* roles on households' livelihoods systems and poverty dynamics in typical rural village, through a critical analysis of the empirical findings against development agendas and relevant social theories.
- Objective 5: to advance *suggestions* on the integration of gender related traditional socio-economic norms, practices and traditions into the currently more contemporary based approach influencing household's livelihoods systems and poverty dynamics.

1.4. The study area

This case study selected for this research is the Tshaulu community, Limpopo, South Africa, and represents a typical South African traditional rural community. Tshaulu extends across *15 villages Tshihalwe, Tshiumoni, Hagondo, Habegwa, Tshitumbe, Madzhamu, Dzwaboni, Khunguni, Tshilaphala, Masiwane, Buluni, Manzemba, Tshamahala, Tshinyele, and Phula*. As will be explained in the methodology section,

only five of the villages were selected to represent the case study of Tshaulu. The geographical area was selected due to its characteristics and relevance to the research theme of this thesis. One of the characteristics is that the community maintains many traditional socio-cultural structures that influence gender dynamics, and these may in turn have an influence on poverty related outcomes. Studying traditional gender roles within this community could provide insight into how these practices relate with poverty dynamics within the community of Tshaulu.

It is significant that this community is led by a female chief (currently *Mrs Madzhadzhi Bohwana Ntsedzeni*). In this community, the local tradition specifically prevents a male from occupying this leadership (Chief) position (Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)s, 2022). The presence of a female chief does not automatically imply that gender roles within households have fundamentally changed, as the community reflects a coexistence of both indigenous and contemporary gender role structures, where traditional roles remain influential alongside emerging practices. In many instances, gender roles within households remain structured around traditional norms, where men may occupy representative leadership roles while decision-making and resource access are negotiated within the household. This distinction highlights the complexity of gender relations within the community and is considered as part of the analysis of household livelihood systems.

In contrast the 15 villages in Tshaulu are in turn mostly led by male village Headsmen, while a minority are led by female Headsmen. While this community is under a matriarchal leadership that is not typical in South Africa, the traditional household practises and norms are typical of other rural villages in the country. The advantage of selecting this specific community is that the female chief is an advocate of promoting traditional and modern gender values within various development initiatives (Chief Madzhadzhi, 2022). The selection of the study area is based on its representation of the typical rural community characterised by high level of poverty, limited access to resources and strong reliance on traditional and contemporary livelihoods practices (Statistics South Africa, 2022). The area provides an appropriate context for examining how indigenous and contemporary gender roles interact within household livelihood systems and how these interactions influence poverty dynamics.

1.4.1. Location and accessibility

Tshaulu is in the Thulamela Municipality, Vhembe District, within the province of Limpopo, South Africa (Figure 1.1), and according to Statistics South Africa (2022), there were just over 4000 households with an average of 3.9 people per household.

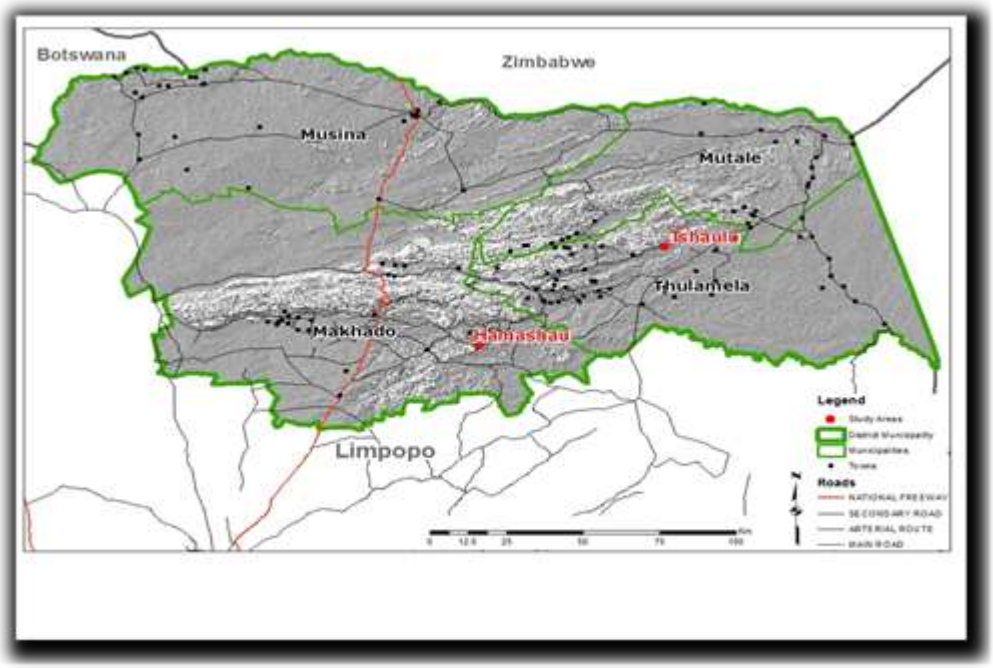

Figure 1.1: Locality Map of Tshaulu Villages, Thulamela Municipality, Vhembe District, Limpopo, South Africa

1.4.2. Living conditions: socio-economic status

Most of the houses in Tshaulu are brick or concrete block constructions, and the majority (93.8%) of the homesteads are equipped with electricity (Statistics South Africa, 2022). A slight majority (51.7%) of the households in Tshaulu are headed by black African women, under traditional jurisdiction. This is mostly likely due to remnants of the apartheid history of South Africa, where economically active males migrated to urban areas to undertake formal and non-formal employment (Oyekunle et al., 2023), resulting in what would have been the male head of household living and working in an urban area (Von Fintel & Moses, 2017), leaving the household to be run by a female. Tshivenda is the primary language spoken (97.1%) in the area, while a small proportion of 0.9% of the population speaking English as their first language. The remaining 2% of the population first language is Shona, Tsonga, Sepedi, or Sotho. Subsistence farming is the most important economy in the villages, and this includes

crops such as maize, peanuts, beans, melons, pumpkins, and vegetables grown (Statistics South Africa, 2022).

Tshaulu faces significant challenges in terms of poverty, with a higher rate of unemployment among the youth and limited-service delivery. Although most households have electricity, water supply challenges dominate as only 9.4% of households have piped water (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Impoverishment is deeply rooted in the community, and this negatively impacts on access and entry to fundamental utilities; healthcare provisions; and career possibilities, further the poverty levels are also reflected in reduced tertiary education (Statistics South Africa, 2022). Given these socio-economic conditions, and the coexistence of indigenous and contemporary gender roles, Tshaulu, presents valuable insights that directly support the aim and objectives of this study.

1.5. Overview of research methodology

The research methodology for this study adopted a mixed methods research approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Triangulation of the various data sources was incorporated into the research design to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. The methodology was thus specifically designed to examine how various phenomenon, and interactions influence poverty dynamics in rural communities.

1.5.1. Data collection

The study was conducted in five (5) selected villages namely Habegwa, Buluni, Manzemba, Tshilaphala and Tshitumbe within the Tshaulu community, representing a typical rural context. Data were collected using a combination of households' surveys, focus group discussions, key informant's interviews and participants observations. Quantitative and qualitative data was obtained through structured household surveys providing insight into socio-economic conditions, livelihoods activity and poverty related indicators. Qualitative data were gathered through from 400 household respondents. Qualitative data were gathered through the focus groups discussions and key informant's interviews enabling a deeper exploration of community perceptions, gender roles and knowledge practice.

Various sampling techniques were utilised to ensure representation and relevance. multistage cluster sampling was used to select the villages, which is appropriate for studies involving large or geographically dispersed populations (Strydom, 2021). Systematic sampling was used to select household's participants by identifying a sampling frame and selecting every K-th household. Purposive and quota sampling technique were used to select participants for focus groups and key informants' interviews ensuring that the inclusion of individuals with relevant knowledge of gender roles and livelihoods practices. A multistage cluster sampling approach was used due to the geographical spread of the study area. The first stage involved the selection of five villages from the larger Tshaulu community. The second stage involved the selection of households within these villages using systematic sampling.

To verify and enhance the data collected from the household's surveys, six Focus Group Discussions were conducted involving 44 community participants across selected villages. In addition, 9 key informants were selected for in depth analysis of the gender roles and their influence on poverty related conditions. Specialist interviews were conducted with knowledge custodians and civic representatives within the Tshaulu community. Participant observation was also applied to strengthen data validation, particularly given the researchers familiarity with the study area. The researcher's familiarity with the study area supported access to participants, while care was taken to minimise bias during data collection and analysis.

The study included only those individuals who reside in the designated study area and are native Tshivenda speakers (mother tongue). Overall, a total of 453 participants from the five villages participated in the study, with representation across gender and age groups (18-80 years), providing insight into the multidimensional nature of gender roles in relation to household livelihood systems and poverty dynamics. Further methodological details regarding participant selection, sampling procedures, and data collection techniques are provided in Chapter 4.

1.5.2. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were central to the research process. Ethical clearance was obtained from the UNISA Ethics Committee, and permission to conduct the study was granted by the traditional authority in Tshaulu (see Appendices 1 and 2). The

participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants. The study ensured confidentiality, anonymity, and protection of participants from harm. Participants were informed of their rights, including the rights to withdraw from the study at any stage.

According to Arifin (2018) research ethics is critical in a case study because it helps with confidentiality and consent. Throughout the process of data collection, the ethical rights of the participants were considered. The data collected during the survey was done through interviews, and households survey questionnaires which are in a hardcopy format. Data was also named and arranged into files and folders that are physically stored on an external drive that is kept in a secure area, as well as electronically stored with a password.

1.5.3. Data analysis

Data analysis incorporated both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative primary data that was obtained through the various research tools was analysed as follows: Interviews and Focus Groups Discussion that form the basis of the primary data source. Structured interviews are a powerful way for acquiring detailed information on individuals' experiences, opinions, feelings, and motives (Karatsareas, 2022). The collected data was recorded and translated into themes was captured on excel for further analysis Interviews, focus groups, and document reviews served as effective qualitative data collection techniques, enabling a deeper exploration of the lived experiences, perceptions, and practices associated with gender roles in these contexts.

Secondary information obtained from published research was subjected to document analysis. The purpose of document analysis was to explore the existing knowledge regarding the indigenous and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation. The sources of data included in this study are government statistics or censuses, technical reports, published research articles or journals, online documents, news and books. All selected documents for review were studied and analysed and reported as content analysis. According to Tunison (2023), content analysis promotes inductive analysis of textual data, data sorting into categories and counting the frequencies of themes.

Quantitative primary data that was obtained through the Households Survey that was administered through face-to-face interviews in a drive to accommodate the varying literacy levels amongst the respondents. Data from the questionnaires research tool were analysed statistically (descriptive statistics and Pearson Chi-Square Test); qualitative methods were used to deepen the researchers understanding the cultural and contextual data of indigenous and contemporary gender roles within specific communities. By combining the primary and secondary data, a comprehensive analysis could be performed that helped validate findings. The linkage of primary and secondary data on the individual level offers great opportunities for using the strengths of different data sources synergistically and overcoming some of their limitations. The analytical techniques were applied to ensure that the findings are interpreted in relation to both empirical evidence and broader development framework.

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1.6. Conceptual framework of the study

The conceptual framework establishes a roadmap for the research, emphasising the need for an understanding of the interplay between indigenous and contemporary knowledge, gender roles, and poverty dynamics. The conceptual framework (Figure 1.2) emphasises a comprehensive strategy that considers how the inclusion of local

indigenous knowledge and practises can improve the effectiveness of strategies aimed at reducing households' poverty in a rural area. Within the context of a typical rural traditional village in South Africa, the study seeks to offer recommendations for the integration of indigenous knowledge practices relating to gender roles into contemporary poverty related interventions. In this study, household's livelihoods systems and poverty dynamics are understood as being shaped by both indigenous and contemporary gender roles.

Due to the multidimensional nature of the research, four theoretical perspectives were identified as relevant, namely, critical role theory, intersectionality theory, social role theory, and the modernization theory. These theories were selected because each contribute to understanding of different aspects of the relationship between gender, socio-economic conditions, and cultural norms in rural communities. Critical Role Theory is applied to interrogate the existing power relation and structural inequalities that influence gender role within the communities. Intersectionality theory is used to examine how overlapping factors such as gender, class and social position shape experiences of poverty. Social roles explain how culturally defined gender roles influence behaviour, responsibilities and access to resources within households. Modernisation theory provides a lens of understanding the interaction between indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary development approaches. Collectively, these theories provide a framework for analysing the indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems interact and how these interaction influence household's livelihoods system and poverty dynamics. Through this integrated approach, the study is able to examine the relationship between gender roles and poverty beyond a single theoretical perspective.

Furthermore, it is critical thinking is applied to evaluate both qualitative and quantitative data, including respondents' statement, assumptions and experiences. This enables an interpretation of findings and support the development of contextually appropriate recommendations for integrating indigenous and contemporary practices into poverty interventions. Figure 1.2 illustrates the conceptual framework guiding the study.

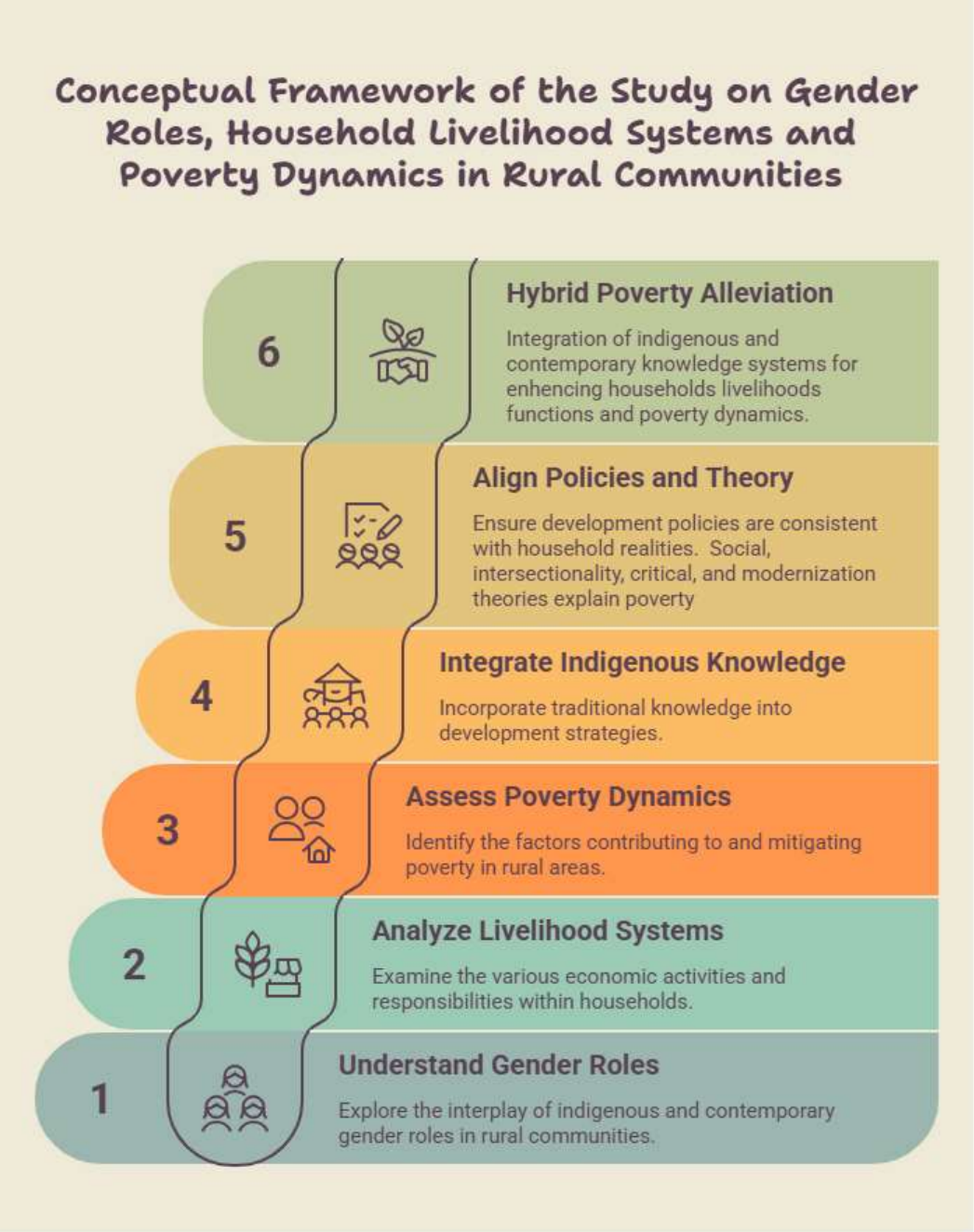

Figure 1.2: Conceptual framework of the study (Source: Researcher, 2022)

As illustrated in Figure 1.2, the study adopts a hierarchical approach to understanding the influence of gender roles on household livelihood systems and poverty dynamics. The framework is structured in sequential levels, each reflecting a key component of the research objectives. At the foundational level, the study focuses on understanding gender roles within rural communities, particularly the interaction between indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems. This stage establishes how gender roles are constructed, negotiated, and adapted within household contexts. Building on this, the

framework progresses to the analysis of household livelihood systems, which include a range of economic and social activities such as subsistence farming, informal economic practices, and shared household responsibilities. These livelihood systems represent the practical mechanisms through which households sustain themselves.

The next level examines poverty dynamics, recognising poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon characterised by vulnerability, resilience, and income instability. This stage highlights how livelihood systems, shaped by gender roles, directly influence household poverty outcomes. Following this, the framework emphasises the need to integrate indigenous knowledge into development strategies. This reflects the importance of recognising traditional practices, local knowledge systems, and culturally embedded livelihood approaches in addressing rural poverty. The framework then aligns these insights with theoretical perspectives and development policies, demonstrating how Social Role Theory, Intersectionality Theory, Critical Theory, and Modernisation Theory provide explanatory lenses for understanding the observed dynamics. At this stage, the framework also highlights the need for policy alignment with household realities. At the highest level, the conceptual framework culminates in the notion of hybrid poverty alleviation, where indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems are integrated to enhance household livelihood systems and effectively address poverty dynamics in rural communities. The conceptual framework provides a structured representation of the study's logic, linking the research objectives, theoretical foundations, and key variables into a coherent model that guides the analysis and interpretation of findings in subsequent chapters.

In this study, a case study approach is undertaken to establish the demographic and socio-economic profile of a traditional rural village in South Africa. This includes assessing the key indicators - such as the educational level, age, gender, employment, households' dependents, gender, and the type of employment. In addition, the study examines existing household level livelihoods strategies and the associated challenges within the typical rural area context. The study further examines gender roles in relation to poverty dynamics by assessing both indigenous and contemporary gender roles and their influence on household livelihoods system This research seeks to understand the interplay between traditional and contemporary gender roles through empirical data and analyses, while examining how communities utilise both

knowledge system in addressing poverty. It also identifies the challenges and impacts associated with the implementation of gender roles within poverty interventions. The study synthesises the findings to propose the recommendations for the incorporation of indigenous knowledge practices into contemporary approaches. It highlights areas where traditional practices can enhance the effectiveness of poverty reduction initiatives and contribute to inclusive understanding of how gender roles influence the household's livelihood systems and poverty dynamics. The study therefore contributes contextually relevant insights for improving poverty related interventions in rural South African communities.

of poverty reduction initiatives. Furthermore, the framework assembles a comprehensive collection of best practices and insights in the sphere of poverty alleviation as it intersects with gender, illuminating potential enhancements for future poverty reduction efforts. The study aims to contribute valuable insights that inform local indigenous sensitive and contextually relevant recommendations for enhancing the impact of poverty alleviation efforts in traditional rural villages in South Africa.

1.7. Significance

Regardless of globalisation trends and the impact of modernisation, there are still many who continue to retain and follow traditions that are guided by their histories and indigenous practices, shaping how they view human life and the environment in which they live (Sillitoe et al., 2006). While Africanisation underpins many debates in Africa today, most of the countries in Africa have adopted a more contemporary strategy towards poverty alleviation that are fundamentally based on more western knowledge systems and principles with little or no regard of more indigenous or traditional systems. Briggs (2013) highlighted the necessity of recognising that effective development interventions require an understanding of deep and fundamental characteristics of traditional communities and argued for a retreat from the often over simplified and essentialist understandings of traditional knowledge. Ewane & Ajagbe (2018) documented that there was a rising demand for the integration and broader acknowledgment of traditional knowledge into Africa's developmental discourse. The same authors suggested that traditional communities harbour a wealth of knowledge, and the incorporation of this knowledge could enable a more inclusive and a more sustainable developmental result. However, it is also important to recognise that

indigenous system may reflect internal inequalities, including the gendered power relations, which may influence access to resources and opportunities within the households.

Evidence supports the idea that scientific interventions alone are not sufficient to address poverty (Muguti & Zibengwa, 2022). In support of the incorporation of traditional knowledge system, Lawal-Arowolo (2015) found that traditional knowledge is more effective in addressing the needs of traditional communities as these needs are more suitable to their local community environment. Possumah et al. (2018) emphasised the importance of recognising the role of traditional wisdom and knowledge in development of economic sectors due to proven evidence for better impact when incorporated into policies. However, many existing approaches tend to overlook the complex interaction between indigenous and contemporary gender roles within household's livelihoods systems. As a results, they do not fully capture the socio-cultural realities that shape poverty dynamics in rural communities. Despite the increasing recognition of indigenous knowledge in development discourse, there remains limited empirical evidence on how indigenous and contemporary gender roles interact within household livelihoods system and influence in poverty dynamics.

Although there is some indication that indigenous knowledge has been incorporated into these strategies, there is need for an assessment of traditional and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation as a progressively critical area within social science studies. This study therefore contributes by providing empirical evidence on how these gender roles interact within household's livelihoods systems and how these interactions influence the poverty dynamics in rural communities. This is possible through a better understanding of the traditional gender roles as a key factor shaping households livelihood systems and informing contextually relevant poverty related interventions in rural settings. By improving the understanding of this interaction, the study contributes to identifying more appropriate and contextually grounded approaches for addressing poverty in traditional rural societies. Simultaneously, this research advances the field of gender and poverty research by enhancing the understanding of the relationship between gender roles, knowledge systems and poverty dynamics. The findings and recommendations provide practical insight for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers by offering contextually grounded

perspectives to improve poverty related interventions and development approaches in the rural South African Communities.

1.8. Limitation of the study

This study had certain limitations that influenced both the scope of the research and the interpretations of the findings. The study focused on assessing the unique characteristics of gender roles, community-based indigenous knowledge, and contemporary poverty alleviation approaches of a rural community. One limitation relates to the sampling frame. Statistical data obtained from Statistics South Africa did not accurately reflect the number of households in the selected villages. As a results, local authorities (chief and village headman) were relied upon to provide more accurate households figures. This discrepancy may have influenced the representativeness of the sample and should be considered when interpreting the findings. Data collection process may also have been influenced by subjective elements. While participants observation, personal experience and familiarity with the study area contributed to deeper contextual understanding, they may also have introduced elements of researcher bias in interpretation. However, the use of mixed methods research approach helped to enhance the reliability of the findings through triangulation of multiple data sources. The scope of the study was limited to a rural setting, and therefore the findings may not be applicable to urban or metropolitan areas where socio-economic conditions, institutional structures, and cultural practices differ significantly. This limitation restricts the generalisability of the findings beyond similar rural contexts. The data collection process took place during a COVID-19 outbreak, which affected participants' willingness to engage. Although safety protocols were followed, including the use of masks and consent procedures, this context may have influenced participation levels and the depth of responses obtained.

Additional limitations include language and cultural constraints. The use of Tshivenda and English during data collection may have resulted in misunderstandings or variations in interpretation, which could influence the consistency of responses. The inclusion of only native Tshivenda speakers was necessary to ensure consistency in communication and to capture culturally grounded perspectives relevant to the study context, as Tshivenda is the dominant language in the study area. While the researcher's fluency in the local language and familiarity with cultural practices

facilitated access and communication, it may also have influenced how participants responded and how data were interpreted. This insider position, while beneficial for contextual depth, may therefore introduce interpretive bias that should be considered when evaluating the findings. The researcher's familiarity with the study area facilitated access to participants and contextual understanding of local dynamics. At the same time, care was taken to minimise potential bias through the consistent application of data collection procedures.

The study is further limited by its focus on a single case study, which does not allow for broad generalisation across different cultural or geographical settings. The emphasis on an indigenous rural context may limit the applicability of findings to non-African or Western contexts. Efforts were made to minimise these limitations through pre-testing of data collection instruments and the use of a mixed methods approach to strengthen data credibility. While this study provides a focused analysis of indigenous and contemporary gender roles within household livelihood systems and poverty dynamics in a rural South African context, these limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. Future research could expand the scope by including multiple study areas, larger sample sizes, and more diverse linguistic and cultural groups to enhance the robustness and applicability of the results.

1.9. Chapter outline

This thesis consists of nine chapters. In the first chapter introduce the research background, highlighting the research aim and goals, study area, limitation of the study, conceptual framework, and significance of the study. Chapter two covers traditional and contemporary philosophy, concentrating on the fundamental philosophical principles and theories that support attempts to alleviate poverty. The third chapter provides a detailed literature analysis of prior research and studies undertaken in the field of gender roles in poverty alleviation, traditional and contemporary philosophy. In Chapter four the research methodology and data analysis are described. The fifth chapter captures the typical socio-economic profile of Tshaulu traditional rural village in South Africa. The sixth chapter presents the household poverty alleviation strategies in Tshaulu. The seventh chapter investigates the underlying knowledge practises that inform gender roles and access to services within the households in Tshaulu. The eighth chapter provides a comprehensive gendered

approach to poverty alleviation strategies from the theoretical perspective of the four major theories underpinning the thesis against the development agendas (global to local). Lastly chapter nine provides a summary of findings, make specific recommendations on how poverty alleviation strategies in South Africa can better incorporate existing traditional norms and practices for a more effective impact. Identifies avenues for future research.

1.10. Conclusion

Using a conceptual framework that highlights the impact of gender roles on poverty, this study presents the significant influence of indigenous and contemporary gender roles on poverty. The patriarchal societal structures prevalent in many regions often relegate women to a disadvantaged state, limiting their access to resources, education, employment, and ultimately leading to a heightened probability of poverty. Nonetheless, tackling poverty based on gender poses significant difficulties, such as deeply entrenched societal expectations, dominant power structures, and the interconnectedness of ethnicity, social status, and race. Gender plays a crucial role in any initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty and must therefore be acknowledged.

The thesis will reveal that there is a pressing need to revise the way gender roles are effectively infused into various strategies that deal with the alleviation of poverty. It is vital to recognise and address these roles within the complex indigenous cultures and more contemporary contexts when exploring poverty reduction strategies. This research yields useful understandings into the interaction of gender and poverty. The findings of this thesis could serve as a foundation for future research, enabling more nuanced discussions around inclusive and intersectional poverty reduction strategies.

CHAPTER 2: PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Approaching a complex topic such as poverty alleviation requires a thorough multi-dimensional analysis of the phenomenon. The research presented in this thesis assessed the effect of both traditional and contemporary gender roles on poverty levels in the rural community of Tshaulu, South Africa. Acknowledging the cultural realities and way of life of people living more traditional lives could contribute to the relief of poverty. Traditional people have been recognised by the United Nations as people with historical continuity in a territory, a distinct culture, and very importantly with the self-identification as indigenous people (United Nations, 2023). Benjamin (2016) recorded that the terms "*indigenous*" is commonly used to refer to tribal or endangered minorities facing political, cultural, legal, or economic disadvantages. While Battiste (2010) explained that traditional knowledge in indigenous societies is often characterised by a process of lifelong learning; with systemic and holistic approaches; and with unique epistemology and philosophy. It is the contention of the author of this thesis, that traditional knowledge systems and related holistic approaches are integral to indigenous societies, highlighting the importance and need of policy makers and development practitioners to recognise and respect indigenous philosophies and practices into their planning. This contention is also supported by the United Nations (2023) that recommends that globally the distinct rights and (often localised) way of life of traditional people and their communities should be recognised. In addition to an acknowledgment of the role traditional societies can play in the relief of poverty in their communities, tackling poverty from a more traditional gendered perspective could allow for a more thoughtful exploration of inherent resource distribution within a community and could bring out a unique perspective into the societal dynamics that either enable or hamper the various poverty reduction efforts.

Despite growing recognition of Indigenous knowledge and gender in poverty discourse, existing approaches remain fragmented and often treat these as separate dimensions. There is limited empirical focus on how these elements interact within household livelihood systems in rural African contexts. This study addresses this gap by examining how indigenous and contemporary gender roles interact and influence poverty dynamics in rural South Africa.

2.1. Philosophy and the discourse surrounding poverty alleviation

Understanding poverty through households' livelihood systems and broader poverty dynamics requires moving beyond universal explanations of poverty. Although dominant approaches have focused on economic and policy perspectives, these often fail to capture the realities of rural and indigenous communities. Poverty is not only economic but is also shaped by the local knowledge system and gender roles practices. Indigenous knowledge therefore provides valuable insight into how households sustain their livelihoods and respond to conditions of poverty. The recognition of the significance of indigenous philosophies in comprehending the multifaceted complexities of poverty could highlight a fundamental transformation in the discourse surrounding poverty alleviation. As articulated by Rip (2019) indigenous philosophy involves unique and complex wisdom and innovative approaches that are embedded within indigenous communities, which have not remained stagnant, but rather have evolved over generations. Khumalo & Baloyi (2017), explained that these unique perspectives, had often been dismissed amongst traditionally western paradigms and this has unfortunately led to a loss of rich context-specific knowledge that have formed so many traditional societies, and in which some poverty relief strategies could founded. The more contemporary philosophy (based on a more western paradigm), although shaped by well-researched empirical evidence although might have simplified universal truths, offers a different perspective on human experiences (Connelly et al., 2000; Bharadwaj et al., 2024), when applied or considered within a more traditional context. However, the western paradigm as outlined by Matapo (2018), may overlook the complex nuances and traditional wisdom rooted in indigenous cultures. As identified by The Herald (2015), the very process of modernising, risks overriding the traditional knowledge and related understanding that could be the key to poverty relief. The author of the thesis argues that when it comes to poverty alleviation, the acknowledgment of and improved understanding of indigenous philosophy is crucial due to its underpinnings that could provide a distinct approach to a better understanding of the phenomenon of poverty as it occurs in more traditional communities. Various authors have presented related arguments, for example Feiring (2003), argued that the indigenous perception of poverty extend beyond mere income constraints, and encompass aspects closely associated with cultural rights and identities. Ashdown et al. (2021) articulated that external

developmental activities that focus narrowly on income constraints, often risk the promotion of cultural assimilation, and in this way undermine the importance of local agency and ownership of such development projects, leading to possible failure in implementation.

As proposed by Sanga (2010), effective poverty alleviation necessitates more comprehensive and participatory policies (strategies) that acknowledge the significance and potential that indigenous worldviews could play in such a process. Perhaps a more integrated approach in poverty alleviation strategies that embrace both indigenous and contemporary philosophical perspectives would enhance the understanding and be better positioned to address the multifaceted nature of poverty more effectively (Othman, 2018). By acknowledging the integral value of indigenous philosophy and integrating it into poverty alleviation efforts, it is possible to achieve a holistic and more sustainable approach to poverty reduction as such achievements would resonate more intuitively with the lived realities of more indigenous communities (Vemuri & Gorman, 2013). As early as 1967, Gusfield, postulated that the more traditional and the more contemporary life views could coexist without resulting in the displacement of one or conflict with each other, nor did they have to exist exclusively in any community (Gusfield, 1967; Mielkov, 2023). Gusfield (1967); Xinzhong (2015); and Serhan et al. (2023) are of the view that tradition is not always weakened by modernity (western philosophy), but rather that tradition and modernity both serve as the foundation for ideas and movements where opposing aspirations can be born out of contrasts, however, it should be cautioned that established forms can provide both support and resistance to change. One could thus argue that an interdisciplinary dialogue between traditional and contemporary views could inform more nuanced and context-specific strategies that would better reflect on the complexity of poverty alleviation and thus could offer a more just and more resilient pathway towards sustainable development.

Sanga (2010), Wong et al. (2019) and Das et al. (2023) emphasised that many indigenous communities globally were marked by stark disadvantages, especially when considering general living conditions and health status of the community members. However, these communities are often resilient as they practice more traditional knowledge systems that have proven to be highly beneficial for traditional

communities in the navigation of ecological and developmental challenges. Traditional communities have over centuries utilised these knowledge systems to create strategies, for addressing challenges such, as adapting to climate change and reducing the risks associated with disasters (D'Souza, 2016).

From the perspective of indigenous philosophy, it becomes evident that poverty in more indigenous communities is multicomplex in nature and reflect complex historical, societal, and economic factors (Magni, 2017; Sanga, 2010). In Southern Asia for example (Eversole et al., 2008), it was reported that one way to address such disadvantages is to explore local indigenous philosophical traditions, for example, the Buddhism concept of *dukkha* that seeks to explain and comprehend '*suffering*' '*pain*' and '*unease*' within the philosophy of poverty. In this way the concept offers critical insights into the existential aspects of poverty, thus highlighting philosophical wisdom might play a role in addressing severe need (Eversole et al., 2008). While Hunter (2020) and Magni (2017) reported that in Australia, despite success in utilising indigenous knowledge to mitigate poverty challenges, certain indigenous communities in the country still grapple with high levels of poverty and related disadvantages. Factors such as the lack of inherited wealth or substantial capital bases contribute significantly to these challenges (Magni, 2017). To effectively tackle poverty, it is crucial to acknowledge the aspects of poverty. As noted by Hunter (2020), this includes aspects such as health, housing, and crime, along with access to land and justice.

A qualitative study undertaken by Ndi (2022) in the Cameroon revealed that poverty and inequality in Africa is often not associated with the lack of resources but rather by a negative mindset that was induced by the more colonial philosophy of capital accumulation. The study of Zondi et al. (2022) analyses the impact of market participation of indigenous crops on household food security in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces of South Africa. The findings of the case studies shows that indigenous crops are popular for being nutritious and are excellent sources of nutrients and the participation of smallholder's indigenous crop farmers hold significant potential for the alleviation of food insecurity and poverty amongst households. The study of Kom et al (2024) examines how indigenous knowledge systems are used by subsistence farmers in the Vhembe District to enhance households' food security,

climate change management, and food preservation. The findings of the study on how indigenous farmers employ indigenous knowledge methods revealed that local framers depend on the use of indigenous knowledge practices to improve households' food security. The evidence of research on indigenous knowledge shows that indigenous knowledge plays significant roles in the gender roles and poverty alleviation of the typical rural households.

The study of Cheteni et al. (2019) focuses on gender and poverty reduction efforts in south Africa at the household's levels. The authors highlighted the importance of considering indigenous knowledge in poverty reduction arguing that current policies are too focused on economic factors and neglect cultural values. In addition, Cheteni et al. concluded that unless the indigenous knowledge is considered in poverty alleviation, it will be hard for any country to fight poverty in rural areas due to deep norms and cultural values. Furthermore, Cheteni et al. (2019) highlighted the significance of the effect of gender indicating that gender plays a huge role in the household's decision-making process and can determine if whether the household falls into a trap of poverty or falls out of poverty.

Turning to a broader philosophical perspective, we see an emphasis on understanding the social dimensions of poverty (D'Souza, 2016), the value of integrative epistemological approaches in poverty-related practice (Erchick, 2009), and the need for philosophical scrutiny in developing strategic solutions for poverty (Brando & Schweiger, 2019). By highlighting the need for global resource redistribution to guarantee basic living standards for everyone, Hart's (1993) examination of the moral aspects of poverty touched on the ethical elements inherent in the discourse on poverty. Understanding and implementing indigenous philosophies and related knowledge systems could yield pertinent insight for poverty alleviation strategies. Despite the challenges and persistent poverty in some more traditional populations, these philosophies and systems highlight the necessity of a more multi-dimensional approach to poverty and underscore the importance of ensuring indigenous peoples have access to key societal resources and processes. It is, therefore, the contention of the author of this thesis that it is important to incorporate indigenous perspectives into poverty alleviation strategies as they could offer contextual and invaluable perspectives on poverty alleviation. While these perspectives highlight the value of

integrating indigenous and contemporary philosophies, they do not sufficiently explain how these approaches interact with gender roles at the household level, particularly within rural African contexts.

2.2. Philosophy and the role of gender in the alleviation of poverty

In their research Knipscheer et al. (1999), gender roles and intergenerational solidarity examined from a more western philosophy and they found that gender positioning and identity creation are not always clearly articulated. They continue by stating that gender theory's philosophical foundations are questionable, as is evidenced by studies on gender theory and gender linguistics. Additionally, these authors highlighted that the effect of gender role attitudes on leaving home for marriage and unmarried independence have been thoroughly examined and that this highlights a shift towards more egalitarian definitions of gender roles in both the workplace and family spheres. Berges (2015) and Ogletree (2014) questioned traditional assumptions about the modern western family, highlighting a possible decline in the value of the family as a social institution and thus a reduction in intergenerational support. Overall, the interdependence of philosophical knowledge and gender theory has been emphasised in the literature, and this has called for a re-evaluation of the philosophic component in modern gender theory and its impact on gender studies (Kretov & Kretova, 2017).

However, gendered studies of African philosophy have been focused on the perspective of male authority (Ipadeola, 2022). Mupangwa (2023) suggested that gender roles in poverty alleviation in Africa have primarily concentrated on a more feminist approach, that hypothesises that a women's experience of poverty is affected by her gender, in addition to other social classifications such as race, ethnicity, and social class. Additional research has concluded that the allocation of gendered time to unpaid labour, the gendered distribution of paid labour, and the gendered structure of social welfare systems pose extreme challenges within Africa to reduce poverty levels (Alemu et al., 2023). Ajala (2016) emphasised how gender inequality and discrimination against women are caused by cultural norms, traditional beliefs, and customary practices, which ultimately result in their poverty. Although, it is not exactly clear how the African philosophy places any significance of gender roles in poverty alleviation, by utilising more indigenous African philosophies that centre around African concepts and values that define their distinct way of existence, action, and

identity, Bhuda & Koitsiwe (2022) advocate for the decolonisation and indigenisation of poverty and gender related research.

Moreover, extensive research has examined the methods by which women in Zimbabwe make valuable contributions to the attainment of sustainable development and the mitigation of poverty. This research has placed emphasis on the active role and capacity for empowerment that these women possess. A comprehensive approach combining indigenous and contemporary philosophical viewpoints, gender theory, and gender research is paramount in understanding and alleviating poverty. Various scholars such as Brando & Schweiger (2019); D'Souza (2016); Kretov & Kretova (2018); Berges (2015) ; Knipscheer et al., (1999); Hart (1993); Broch-Due (2023) and Johnson et al. (2024) have all called for a shift in discourse on poverty in terms of gender and this includes the integration of multi-disciplinary approaches and a commitment to a moral responsibility towards poverty. These scholars have also highlighted the evolution of gender roles and societal perceptions, flagging the importance of a more nuanced understanding of gender and poverty, that would provide a comprehensive framework for the evaluation of the complexity of poverty, particularly within indigenous communities. In its very essence, both the indigenous philosophy and contemporary philosophical discourse emphasise the multifaceted nature of poverty extending beyond just economic dimensions and call for a holistic approach in poverty alleviation. This indicatesthat utilising indigenous knowledge and more African philosophies could provide unique insights and innovative solutions for poverty alleviation strategies, particularly for indigenous populations. These perspectives also stress the need for societal reflexivity and the implementation of policies that address inherent inequalities that exacerbate global poverty. The assessment of indigenous and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation can thus aid the development of more inclusive and effective poverty alleviation strategies.

2.3. Synthesis of relevant theories in reducing poverty

Despite extensive research on gender and poverty, existing studies often focus on gender inequality in isolation or within broader development frameworks, without adequately considering how gender roles interact with indigenous knowledge systems at the household level. In many cases, contemporary approaches remain externally driven and do not fully reflect the lived realities of rural African communities. This study

addresses this limitation by examining how indigenous and contemporary gender roles interact within household livelihood systems and influence poverty dynamics in a rural South African context. This section considers these theories collectively to provide an integrated understanding of household livelihood systems and poverty dynamics. Recognising that no single theoretical perspective fully captures the interaction between gender roles, and Indigenous knowledge in rural contexts. Analysing the indigenous and contemporary gender roles for reducing poverty necessitates an overarching theoretical structure and the author of this thesis postulates that such a structure would include aspects related to four theories that would provide a unique lens to the phenomenon of poverty, namely, Modernisation Theory; Social Role Theory; Intersectionality Theory and Critical Theory. In combination these theories could present an inclusive framework that would assist in understanding the diverse factors that impact gender roles and alleviation of poverty by helping to deconstruct and understand the nuances of gender roles in the more traditional communities and the impact of these roles on poverty alleviation. These theoretical perspectives highlight the complexity of household livelihood systems and poverty dynamics, while also revealing important limitations. Existing approaches tend to engage with structural conditions, gender, or inequality independently, with limited integration of Indigenous knowledge. This study addresses this limitation by drawing these perspectives together to examine how gender roles and Indigenous knowledge interact in shaping livelihood strategies within rural contexts.

2.3.1. Modernisation Theory: An Insight into Societal Transformations, their Influence on Poverty Reduction and A Gendered Approach to Poverty

According to Inglehart (2001); Utami et al. (2024), a core element of Modernisation Theory is that political, cultural, and economic transformations coexist in a consistent and somewhat predictable manner. Furthermore, Inglehart (2001); Alliance et al. (2025) and United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, (2026) reported that as a society begins to industrialise, several linked changes like bureaucratisation and urbanisation become nearly unavoidable, and eventually, gender roles shift.

Modernisation Theory and its relationship with poverty and gender have been the subject of critical analysis and has emerged from two key ideas: the distinction between traditional and modern cultures and the positivist view of development as

progressive stages of human evolution (George, 2021). Modernisation is often explained as a process that was triggered by changes in technology and/or societal values and has led to the transformation of traditional societies into more complex modern communities. The Modernisation Theory is Eurocentric (western) and assumes that all societies needed to develop in the same historical manner and direction as Western Europe and North America (Harber & Oryema, 2014). However, it is recorded by researchers such as Tagarirofa & Tobias, (2013); Lu & Yan, (2022); Dunn (2013); Miller (2025) and Pauw (1996) that Modernisation Theory has faced increasing scrutiny because it has failed to fully anticipate the way in which more underdeveloped nations would react to the proposed incentives specified in the form of development or progress, nor how these would impact on a more traditional way of living. Doubts have been raised on developers understanding of the reorientation of societal practices and the ability of modernisation to lead to communities towards modernity Efremenko & Meleshkina (2014) and Miller (2025). While some argue that the normative model of modernity is a key issue in the contemporary debates about modernisation (Kyianytsia, 2021). Furthermore, Kyianytsia (2021) argued that it is necessary to reconsider the assumptions and assertions of the Modernisation Theory to gain an understanding of global social, economic and political development. Luintel, (2014); Pattnaik, (2024); Chhachhi & Truong, (2009) and Tamale (2024) highlighted the hegemonic dualism in modernisation, which perpetuates gender asymmetry and excludes the reproduction and nurturance of human life from the discourse on poverty. The feminist critique of poverty knowledge challenges the androcentric assumptions of mainstream knowledge systems and offers a lens that addresses a wider social domain of poverty (Udayagiri, 2003 & Udeningwe et al., 2026). However, the policy field has limited incorporation of gendered poverty knowledge, reflecting the construction of a new convention in poverty knowledge systems that are more closely aligned with neo-liberal rationality (Xheneti & Madden, 2025; Shaffer, 2002). The concept of "*development*" itself is contentious, as it perpetuates unequal relations in the global economy and ignores diverse perceptions of '*progress*' (Gunaratna & Gunaratna, 2018). Modernisation, when understood in a more nuanced way, can be conducive to gender equality, but previous models seem to be inadequate and have failed to consider factors such as culture (Gerling et al., 2019). Traditional income and consumption-based measures tend to show higher poverty rates for women and girls, particularly for single mothers and women in marginalised groups (Albelda, 2023).

However, an additional failure of these measures is that it does not capture the gendered nature of poverty and the unequal distribution of resources within households (Bradshaw & Linneker, 2023).

The Modernisation Theory views economic, political, and social development in other parts of the world through the lens of what is perceived as progressive Americanisation, aiming for a homogeneous system of similar modern industrial societies (Matsui, 2018). As a result, it provides a foundation for examining transformation and the impact of this transformation on the reduction of poverty. The process of modernisation encompasses a shift towards a more capitalist society, as well as the dissemination of western institutions, norms, and values (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Li et al., 2024). Viewing poverty reduction efforts through this lens allows us to assess the impact of transitioning from more traditional structures to more modern systems and thereby enriching our understanding of poverty dynamics. Grunwald (2021); Herouach (2020) and Barzinji (2013) adds to the discourse by highlighting that modernity is defined as the state of being modern characterised by the emergence of political and economic structures while traditional one's decline. Following on from this cultural and intellectual shift, modernisation signifies a comprehensive social and economic transformation, wherein traditional societies become modernised through the adoption of contemporary institutions, technologies, and values (Barzinji, 2013; Shilliam, 2010; Baummar, 2024 and Utami et al., 2024). The rise of modernity marks a significant shift in global society's perspectives, effectively challenging pre-existing norms, and standards in favour of newer, and sometime perceived more dynamic ideologies. Modernisation Theory, as posited by Bordoloi & Das (2016), aims to pinpoint the disparities between traditional and modern societies and identify the barriers to development in the former. Kendall (2013); Mensah (2019) and Abduljaber & Onder, (2024), further indicates that, according to this theory, traditional societies are required to transition to modern societies and with this there will be significant economic growth; a shift in world-views; standards; attitudes; and values that in theory should result in an improving of their standard of living. Thus, this transition symbolises a journey that deviates from the inclination of traditional social structure, towards modernism that will prompt modernisation, and will finally resulting in what we understand as modernity (Haferkamp & Smelser, 1992; Khalilzada, 2019; Jong, 2022).

Regmi & Walter (2017) argued that modernisation could result in higher levels of dependency and argued that this process has failed to recognise that sometimes marginalised (traditional) groups are in fact agents of their own growth, and that more western theories have limited societal significance in more traditional communities due to the very focus and underpinning on western culture (Brohman, 1995; Abumere, 1981; Ali et al., 2022; Radebe, 2024). This type of argument had led to a post-development model that challenges the western notion and definition of progress and rather calls for alternative approaches to development, that is driven by the people themselves (Regmi, 2018). Critics of development theory, including post-development theorists, argue for the need to oppose westernisation and the need to preserve non-western forms of life (Matthews, 2018; Gómez-Baggethun, 2022; Dunlap & Tornel, 2025; Ziai, 2025). This perspective emphasises local awareness and highlights equitable and environmentally sustainable alternatives to development (Asher & Wainwright, 2019; Fonseca et al., 2022; Abdallah, 2024; Kalyanwala, 2025). As global societies modernise, there are shifts in gender roles that can potentially empower women and enhance their economic participation in the efforts to reduce poverty. The theory of Modernisation does offer a framework to examine how changes, like education and governance can influence gender roles and associated evolution and subsequently how these changes can impact on poverty alleviation efforts (Nawaz et al., 2022). Despite the criticism, Modernisation Theory remains relevant in understanding the impact of changing gender roles on poverty alleviation. According to Ara (2017) while acknowledging its potential limitations in cultural diversity, Modernisation Theory can contribute valuable insights into understanding the complex interplay between institutions, gender roles, and poverty reduction. Modernisation Theory in this thesis is essential as it helps to shed light on the effect of indigenous and contemporary gender roles on poverty alleviation. Modernisation Theory also provides valuable insights by recognising the predictable trajectories that societies typically follow as they progress from the more traditional to the contemporary states (Hout, 2016). It allows us to measure and understand the changes occurring in indigenous gender roles during the process of modernisation.

One of the key aspects highlighted by Modernisation Theory is the potential modernity creates for the shift in gender roles as societies transform and modernise. These societal shifts have the potential to empower women by challenging the cultural norms

that have traditionally restricted their involvement, in society. This perspective allows us to delve deeper into the dynamics between institutions, gender roles and strategies for poverty alleviation. While it is important to recognise that Modernisation Theory might not fully consider diversity (or the value thereof), nor does it consider the negative impact on more traditional communities, it is still and important theory as it can provide valuable insight into the links between the changing of gender roles and these changes impact on the alleviation of poverty. Incorporating Modernisation Theory in the research for this thesis helped to enrich an understanding on how gender roles are or can be influenced by the process of modernisation and how these changes can contribute to poverty reduction. By exploring gender role transformations within the context of modernisation we can thus gain insight into their potential beneficial effects, on poverty reduction efforts, and thus be more informed on how to include these into more effective poverty alleviation strategies.

In contrast to the often-perceived positive impact of modernisation, Kuhnlein (2017) documented that for many indigenous societies, modernisation has unfortunately brought in disparities, notably poverty, discrimination, and issues relating to nutritional health. Leading to Kuhnlein & Chotiboriboon (2022) arguing for the need of traditional communities to protect and preserve their unique food, tradition, and cultural identity amidst the strong and swift currents of modernisation. Barzinji (2013) highlighted that, modernity is counter traditional as it is characterised by the rejection of traditional values, embracing instead a focus on individualism, experimentation, and innovation.

However, Modernisation Theory has faced substantial criticism since the late 1970s (Wolhuter, 2018). Critics such as Nolte (2015) argued that it is overly optimistic, relies on crude and simplistic assumptions about modernisation, and exhibits an intellectually imperialist stance towards non-European cultures. Klaasen, (2017); Szawarska et al. (2020); Moskvina and Voronina, (2018); Mello-Filho. (2023) and Gallego et al. (2024) contended that modernisation has not effectively supported the progress of underdeveloped countries and has neglected cultural diversity, and this has and can continue to have negative implications for more traditional societal groups. The application of Modernisation Theory in understanding gendered poverty and development also warrants a discursive approach (Jackson, 1997). This encompasses the recognition and interrogation of the manifold ideas surrounding

modernisation, including the moulding and recognition of its normative models (Efremenko & Meleshkina, 2014; Arnason, 2023; Magalhaes-Teixeira, 2024).

Despite shortcomings of the theory, it can facilitate a robust exploration into the intricate interplay between gender roles, modernisation, and poverty alleviation. The adaptive nature of the theory, underpinned by its capacity to integrate diverse perspectives, renders it a vital tool in the continuous effort for poverty alleviation, societal transformation, and gender equality. Thus, the decision to employ Modernisation Theory in this thesis is justified by the richness it can bring in the interpretation of and the ability of addressing complex scenarios of development and gender role dynamics in the backdrop of poverty alleviation efforts.

2.3.2. Social Role Theory and its implications for Poverty Alleviation

Social Role Theory illuminates evolving societal roles and expectations, including new gender identities, and dissects relationships between conventional and contemporary perspectives, offering a clearer view of gender dynamics (Asmorowati & Schubert, 2018; More, 2023; Hing et al., 2023; Khosa-Nkathini et al., 2023; Eagly & Wood, 2016). Social Role Theory indicates that gender differences and similarities in social behaviour are primarily influenced by the distribution of men and women into different social roles within society (Rissotto et al., 2000; Eagly & Wood, 2012; Balducci, 2023; Berxulli et al., 2024). Gender related role models have been found to play a significant role in the distribution of economic and material dependence, which are factors contributing to poverty (Batthyany, 2008; Peng, 2022; Kenea, 2019). Examining poverty through a gender lens aids in comprehending the intricacies and qualities of poverty across settings (Melo, 2019). It sheds light on why specific demographics, women are more prone, to vulnerability, in the face of poverty (Chhachhi & Truong 2009; Li, 2024; Murembe et al., 2021). Feminist poverty knowledge has contributed to challenging and critiquing mainstream knowledge systems, highlighting concepts such as intra-household power relations and the care economy, which provide a broader lens on poverty (Eberharter, 2001; Covarubias, 2023; Portocarrero-Lacayo, 2024). The research for this thesis did not incorporate the feminisation theory into the research objectives analysis rather, a more holistic approach towards gender was adopted to understand the concept of gender roles in the context poverty alleviation. It indicates that these differences and similarities arise primarily from the distribution

of men and women into social roles within their society (Rodgers & Ziegler, 1968; Eagly & Wood, 2016; Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023). Social Role Theory also focuses on organisational expectations for individual behaviour in identified social roles (Sanders, 2014; Ensour & Sarhan, 2024). In understanding societal dynamics involving gender, the Social Role Theory provides a critical framework for discerning gender roles origin and persistence. As proposed initially by Eagly and wood (2016); Berxulli et al. (2024), this theory clarifies that behavioural dissimilarities across genders emerge from their unique social roles in society. According to Schneider and Bos (2019) men and women progressively internalise roles, behaviours, and traits linked to their gender. Applying Social Role Theory can critically illuminate the understanding of traditional and modern gender roles and their implications for poverty alleviation initiatives (Psychology of Gender, 2024; Ghosh, 2024). Yet, it is also crucial to recognise context's role, specifically cultural norms, which can provide nuanced interpretations of gender roles and their corresponding stereotypes (Jeon, 2023; Evsar-Erumit et al., 2025). Synthesizing Social Role Theory with the examination of current gender roles in poverty eradication, it becomes evident that traditional gender roles may not necessarily inhibit poverty reduction progression (Wood et al., 1997; Petesh & Basdue., 2020; Adinugraha et al., 2025).

The theoretical perspective of Eagly & Wood (2012); Olsson and Martiny (2018); Priyashanta et al. (2023) proposes that societal beliefs surrounding gender and gender role beliefs are formulated as individuals observe men and women's behaviour, they deduce inferences regarding each gender's distinct characteristics. This theory offers a perspective on the interplay between gender roles and poverty alleviation providing an avenue to not only understand these dynamics but also develop effective solutions (Semali, 2022). In contrast, the theory also grants that contextual elements such as cultural values affect deductions formed from observed role behaviours to stereotype content (Gustafsson-Senden et al., 2019). The applicability of Social Role Theory to contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation efforts reveals that traditional gender roles are not perennial obstacles to poverty reduction strategies (Wood et al., 1997; Amofah, 2021). Understanding the construct of gender roles from the perspective of Social Role Theory provides a nuanced understanding of poverty alleviation within both indigenous and contemporary societies (Thompson & Greene, 2017). In indigenous communities, the customary gender roles frequently present obstacles to

the mitigation of poverty because of the designated duties and obligations that are deeply embedded in cultural and societal conventions (Wibowo et al., 2023). The impact of patriarchal and discriminatory practices in rural regions is significantly biased against women, thereby intensifying the issue of rural poverty (Awomi & Tariang, 2022). This evolution has contributed significantly to poverty alleviation efforts. However, the persistent effects of colonisation and existing socio-economic disadvantages continue to challenge these efforts within indigenous societies (Bage, 2007; Reilly, 2021 and Diko, 2024). Embracing and harnessing gender roles can empower individuals to realise their potential and bring about socioeconomic stability, crucial for poverty alleviation (Kumari, 2011; Amofah, 2021). Therefore, policy and decision-makers should consider gender roles not as static societal units but evolving and instrumental factors in alleviating poverty and stimulating economic growth (Asriani & Osira, 2019).

Social Role Theory can help examine how societal expectations associated with gender (both in traditional and contemporary contexts) shape economic behaviours and potentially contribute to poverty alleviation (Eckes & Trautner, 2012; Katarangi et al., 2025). Research has also shown that gender role patterns influence labour supply decisions, but primarily for individuals living in households above the poverty line (Eagly & Wood 2016; Sakamoto & Kohara, 2025). In addition, Social Role Theory provides insights into how individuals, organisations, and social systems interrelate around particular issues and can guide behaviour in social situations. Utilising Social Role Theory in the analysis of indigenous and contemporary gender roles can contribute significantly to our understanding of poverty alleviation strategies. The theory argues that societal norms and culture mutually affect and shape individual behaviour, including gender roles (Eagly, 2013; Rogers et al., 2023; Kuvondikovich, (2025), making it an instrumental lens through which to scrutinise poverty alleviation efforts. Applying social role theory can enhance our understanding of the roles indigenous and contemporary women play in poverty reduction initiatives. Asriani & Osira, (2019) highlight that societal and cultural contexts significantly shape these roles, and that imbalances often exist between the roles of husbands and wives. Gender perspective proposed by Nugrahani & Rejeki (2015), is crucial in improving women's access to education and capital, thus addressing gender disparities in poverty reduction efforts. However, the Social Role Theory, anchored predominantly

in gender and the division of societal labour (Eagly, 2013; Balducci, 2023), is insufficient to explain the interplay of multiple identities like race, class, or ethnicity. Social Role Theory is a key perspective in exploring indigenous and contemporary gender roles contribution to poverty alleviation, due to its focus on understanding the interplay between societal norms, culture, and individual behaviour (Eagly & Wood, 2016; Nur et al., 2024). Studies have shown that cultural context plays a significant role in shaping gender roles and creating imbalances in the roles of husbands and wives (Asriani & Osira, 2019).

Within the framework of Social Role Theory, Eagly & Steffen (1984); Olsson & Martiny, (2018); Scheinder & Bos (2019) highlighted the influence of societal roles in fostering gender stereotypes and influencing behaviour. The strength of the research resides in its applicability across several cultures and circumstances. Criticism of social role theory includes reification of ideologies, emphasis on social conformity, lack of comprehensiveness in socialisation process, insufficient addressing of human agency, and promotion of segmented occupations (Jackson, 1998; Kruk, 2020; Alcaniz-Colomer, 2023). However, it lacks in-depth exploration of how these roles and stereotypes are uniquely experienced by and impact different intersectional identities, including indigenous people (Nayak, 2025; Lei et al., 2023; Vasanthan et al., 2025). The following limitations of social role theory was noted: Eagly & Stephan (1984); Nayak (2025); Lei et al. (2023) suggested that further research be conducted in more natural settings so that males and females have the advantage of being in their natural roles. How people react to real life situations can be very different from controlled situations or when they are completing surveys (Lei et al., 2023). The criticism of Social Role Theory includes its limitations in terms of natural settings, relevance to today's culture, and its ability to explain gender differences in certain situations (Lei et al., 2023; Nayak, 2025; Dulin, 2007). The conceptual basis for gender focused policies in poverty alleviation is still not well established and there is a need for more rigorous empirical studies and reliable gender segregated data (Quibria, 1995; Moss & Chen, 2024). Non-Government Organisations play a crucial role in using indigenous women's social entrepreneurship as a means of reducing poverty by providing training, support, and market access (Amofah, 2021; Rozali et al., 2025). Women empowerment through the integration of women in development and the establishment of business groups has been identified as a potential strategy for

poverty alleviation (Rusdianti, et al., 2018). Gender perspective models have been proposed to address gender disparities in poverty reduction efforts, with a focus on improving access to education and capital for women (Nugrahani & Rejeki, 2015; Perzynska & Guzowska, 2024). Social Role Theory provides a crucial framework for understanding gender roles in poverty alleviation, it is imperative to consider the intersectionality of identities and the cultural dynamics of modernisation (Hopkins-Doyle et al., 2023; Woods et al., 2024; Nayak, 2025; Lei et al., 2023). The gaps and contradictions in these theories further emphasise the need for nuanced research, leading to the development of more effective, context-specific poverty alleviation strategies.

2.3.3. Intersectionality Theory in Poverty Alleviation

Intersectionality Theory provides a framework for understanding and addressing the complex overlapping sources of disadvantages that perpetuate poverty particularly amongst marginalised groups (Bond, 2021; Bonga et al., 2024; Bixby, 2024). Intersectionality Theory examines how gender, race, and class intersect, uncovering complex identities within tribal community gender roles and providing a comprehensive understanding of indigenous practices and their bearing on wealth distribution (Asriani & Osira, 2019).

Intersectionality Theory allows for a nuanced understanding of the complexities of poverty, especially within indigenous and contemporary gender roles. It emphasises that poverty is experienced differently depending on intersecting identity factors such as ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status (Kia et al., 2020; Corus et al., 2016). Intersectionality Theory explores the intersections of various systems of oppression such as racism, patriarchy, and capitalism and how they contribute to disadvantage and inequality (Moodley & Graham 2015). The work of Robinson (2016) recognises the significant impact of different social characteristics on shaping individual's experiences. These attributes comprise of sex, ethnicity, and destitution. Studies indicate that the intersection of poverty and disability with gender, age, and race has differing effects on women versus men with disabilities (Davis, 2014). The lens of intersectionality assumes a crucial function in understanding the intertwined nature of race, class, and gender categories and their implications for power dynamics and social realities (Veenstra, 2011; Nayak, 2025; Lei et al., 2023).

Additionally, intersectionality plays an indispensable role in addressing complex issues related to poverty within a framework of substantive equality. It helps us comprehend the interaction between gender, race, culture, and class during efforts towards poverty alleviation. The idea of intersectionality stresses the significance of acknowledging how social identities intersect and influence real-life experiences. According to Cho et al., (2013); Keuchenius & Mugge (2021) intersectionality has gained acceptance and recognition in fields such, as history, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, feminist studies, ethnic studies, and queer studies. Goldblatt (2015); Sabik (2021) emphasises its significance in understanding how dimensions of social identity like race, class, and gender shape ones' life experiences in terms of privilege and oppression. Through their research Goldblatt highlights the importance of analysing how intersectionality operates in shaping our lives. Additionally, Gopaldas identifies intersectionality as an epistemological perspective or research paradigm that aids in examining social phenomena across multiple dimensions of identity. Lastly researchers are examining intersectionality from a political science standpoint. Relationality is a core concept in intersectionality and refers to the idea that focusing on relationships among entities constitutes a defining feature of intersectionality (Collins et al., 2021). The authors highlight how intersectionality reveals the interconnectedness of social categories, impacting experiences of privilege and oppression. Hancock (2007); Collins, (2019) highlights the intersectionality theory role as a research paradigm that directs attention to the simultaneous and interacting impacts stemming from various categories of difference from race to gender to class to sexual orientation. Therefore, Intersectionality Theory indicatesthat poverty alleviation strategies must be nuanced and tailored to address these complexities (Shields, 2008; Corus et al., 2016). Relationality also emphasises power relations social context involves understanding how race, gender and class affect oppression and privilege and acknowledges how social context shapes knowledge and intellectual production (Padilla Wayse, 2014; Collins, 2015; Hopkins, 2019). Cho et al. (2013); Gouws, (2017); Kumar, (2019); Bond, (2021) when explaining intersectionality highlighted the importance of considering the different forms of oppression, race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation.

The role of intersectionality in understanding gender relations in the context of poverty alleviation can be examined through the concept of feminisation of poverty. This

concept, originated by Pearce (2019); Hinze & Aliberti (2007); Moscardo (2022); Perzynska, & Guzowska (2024) brings to fore the disproportionately high incidence of poverty amongst women. This is especially true for women from marginalised racial and ethnic groups who face compounded forms of discrimination and systemic limitations in opportunities (Chant, 2008; Corus et al., 2016). Recognising and responding to the specific issues given by the intersectionality of gender, race, and class is an important component of effectively addressing poverty. A nuanced understanding requires integrating an intersectional perspective which elucidate how multiple social identities and power relations simultaneously interact to shape experiences of poverty and gender inequality (Noris et al., 2010; Tavenner et al., 2022; Dery et al., 2025). For individuals marginalised due to their identities, these intersections can exacerbate their poverty experience (Hancock, 2007; Thompson et al., 2021). Bright et al., (2016) argued that by being explicit about the causal status of their claims, intersectionality theorists can increase self-awareness and draw attention to the question of what interventions would be necessary to bring about relevant events. In addition, Hancock (2007); Bright et al. (2016) highlighted that intersectionality theory aims to correct analytical failings by directing attention to the ways in which intersecting demographic categories produce distinctive effects. Gender equality is no longer simply about gender but also about power relations and structural inequities relating to other characteristics such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, age, ability, religion, and class (Kantola & Verloo, 2018; Funer, 2023; Gupta et al., 2023; Jacobs et al., 2021). The authors also argued that the theoretical centrality of intersectionality has solved some of the feminist theory's disputes, which related to questions of universalism, multiculturalism, and relativism.

Despite these disagreements, intersectionality has been a useful idea that has shed light on the complex and interwoven structure of social injustice and has encouraged important discussions and research in a range of academic disciplines and political contexts (Cho, et al., 2013; Garg, 2020). Intersectionality heory allows for the research of indigenous and contemporary gender roles at different intersections of identity, social position, processes of oppression or privilege, poverty effect and gender roles practices. The greater and more thoughtful incorporation of intersectionality can promote the creation of evidence that is directly useful in population level interventions that is specific enough to be applicable within the social contexts of affected

communities (Bauer, 2014; Cole & Duncan, 2023). Intersectionality enables the creation of targeted poverty alleviation programs by understanding these multiple identities instead of viewing them in isolation (Atewologun, 2018; Cosgrove, 2021).

Crenshaw (2013); Amorim-Maia, (2022) studied how several social identities (gender, race, and socioeconomic class) interact to affect a person's experience of society which became foundational research for the intersectionality theory. Crenshaw discovered that analysis often overlooks these intersections, further marginalising certain identities. However, applying intersectionality in practically diverse contexts, such as in indigenous communities, requires more nuanced exploration and understanding (Osborne et al., 2019).

Intersectionality as a critical theory views knowledge as placed, contextual, relational, and political and economic power based. According to Atewologun (2018), qualitative research approaches including focus groups, narrative interviews, action research, and observations emphasise voice and intersectionality. In addition, the author stated that qualitative researchers using an intersectional reflexivity mindset use intersectionality as a method. Furthermore, quantitative and statistical methods, which help us understand and evaluate the individual, combined effects of various categories in each environment, are also increasingly related with intersectionality (Gross & Goldan, 2023). Indigenous philosophy often conflicts with these theories due to their generalising and often Western-centric biases (Hinzo, 2016; Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010; Bruton et al., 2022; Witlacil, 2025; Kondayya, 2025). According to Freeman & Vasconcelos, (2010) and Hinzo (2016) indigenous cultures may possess distinct understandings of gender roles and socioeconomic structure that these theories overlook. Furthermore, they may not account for unique experiences of colonisation and ongoing socio-cultural pressures indigenous peoples endure (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). To reconcile these theories and Indigenous philosophy, it is crucial to recognise their differences and consciously expand research to incorporate more inclusive methodologies.

Unterhalter (2009); Reed et al. (2021) shows that intersectionality theory has evolved beyond race, ethnicity, gender, and class to accommodate other aspects on citizenship, religion, sexuality, and age. The Feminisation of Poverty Alleviation Program centred on female household heads in East Java, successfully enhancing

economic empowerment and fostering inclusivity (Bose, 2012; Utaminingsih et al., 2021). Challenges persist in guaranteeing the durability of such initiatives and resolving the overarching systemic power dynamics contributing to impoverished situations, especially gendered poverty (Asmorowati & Schubert, 2018). Intersectionality theory aids in grasping the multiple identity factors that affect the experience of poverty. It highlights that different gender, ethnic, and socioeconomic identities do not exist in isolation, but have overlapping effects on an individual's socioeconomic status. This recognition is crucial to poverty eradication. In this research, the intersectionality theory can help us understand how different kinds of oppression overlap and change the way people experience life. By applying intersectionality theory, you can avoid oversimplifying complicated social issues and acknowledge the role of context in forming oppression and privilege experiences. This can help you to develop a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the social phenomena on the indigenous and contemporary gender roles in household poverty alleviation. As a result, poverty reduction efforts must understand how gender, race, and class interact and impact people's experiences. The Intersectionality Theory can give a useful framework for comprehending the complex and overlapping character of social issues, allowing you to avoid oversimplification and acquire a more nuanced view of the social phenomena being researched.

2.3.4. Critical Theory and Its Relevance to Gender Roles and Poverty Alleviation

The Critical Theory provides a powerful analytical lens to understand and challenge the complex interplay of gender roles and poverty. Critical Theory offers an important lens for analysing the structural, historical and ideological forces that shape poverty and gender relations particularly within traditional and contemporary African context (Semali, 2021; Asak, 2023). Critical Theory is a broad theory predominantly associated with Frankfurt school, originated in 1920, with academics seeking to address the societal ills (Bronner, 2017). Critical theory operates from an ontological position of historical realism which hold that reality can only be understood through historical analysis and is fundamentally shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender factors that crystallize over time (Erciyes, 2020; Mosqueda-Diaz et al., 2014). The view recognises that what we consider real consist of historically constructed structures that have become embedded in society (Sims & Saunders,

2025). Critical Theory is fundamentally concerned with the power relations and how they manifest in society, examining the complex interconnection between consciousness and society, culture and economy and state and citizens (Mpofu, 2022; Ozbilgin & Erbil, 2024). Critical Theory does not rely on specific or unique research methods but rather employs traditional quantitative and qualitative methods with a distinctively critical intent and orientation (Mingers & Standing, 2016).

It has been used to examine the underlying factors that keep inequality in place in place, such as the effect of colonialism, changes brought by neo-liberal policies, male dominated systems and ways of thinking that treat some knowledge as more important than others (Yacob-Haliso, 2025; Graness & Kopf, 2024). Critical theory further challenges the dominance of Western Eurocentric poverty elevation frameworks that often fail to consider indigenous knowledge, traditional governance, and cultural systems (Davis, 2021). In effort to reduce poverty critical theory has been used to question technocratic and neoliberal approaches that treat poverty as individual issue (Fuchs, 2017). This is in support to the critics in existing literature which argue that externally design anti-poverty strategies often marginalised rural community by ignoring context specific realities including their gender (Semali, 2022; He & Wang, 2023). Social Structures. Critical theory according to some researchers draws attention to the broader structural factors such as gender labour roles, racialized economic systems and unequal access to resources such education and assets (Fuchs, 2017). Critical theory is an emancipatory framework that examines how power, domination, and exploitation operate in society through institutions, ideologies and social relations. It aims to liberate marginalized groups by promoting self-reflection and understanding of oppressive structures (Mtoi, 2024). Critical Theory calls for empowering communities to participate in knowledge production, decision making and policy formation, ensuring that poverty elevation strategies do not reproduce the very inequalities they seek to address (Ahmed, 2022; Marthinsen, 2023). The Critical Theory application to poverty alleviation emphasizes a holistic understanding of poverty and an inclusive approach to solutions grounded in the urgency and knowledge of those directly affected (Eki et al., 2024; Selanno et al., 2023). This comprehensive approach therefore moves beyond mere material provision to address the deeper structural and epistemic roots of inequality. Therefore, Critical Theory reinforces the necessity of developing poverty alleviation strategies that are not only

economically effective but socially just, culturally grounded, and inclusive of both men and women lived experiences.

2.3.5. Application of the four theories on gendered poverty

The application of these theories to studies on gendered poverty among indigenous and contemporary communities could yield valuable insight into poverty and gender dynamics. The cultural context significantly influences the development of gender roles and imbalances between men and women (Asriani & Osira, 2019). Efforts to empower women by improving their skills in economic activities, like entrepreneurship, aim to address poverty and establish enterprises (Mohammed Shameem, 2024). Paradigmatic shifts in inclusive development and poverty alleviation strategies highlight challenges and opportunities in promoting gender equality (Asmorowati & Schubert, 2018). Gendered poverty knowledge informed by feminist perspectives helps understand poverty in broader social domains, including intra-household power relations and the care economy (Chant, 2010; Yolusever, 2024; Zuazu, 2024) Feminism holds a diverse view on gender, however, it should be noted that the research for this thesis does not adopt the feminism approach to understand gender roles perspectives. The perspectives from African feminist scholarship are acknowledged in highlighting the context-specific nature of gender relations and the need to interpret gender roles within culturally embedded systems. A comprehensive methodology considering the intersectionality of destitution with other types of marginalisation and vulnerability, such as category, ethnic background, and ethnicity, is imperative (Chhachhi and Truong, 2009; Bessell, 2015). These theories offer detailed insights into societal progression, gender roles, and overlapping social stratifications. Applying these theories in the indigenous context aids in understanding unique challenges and opportunities concerning poverty alleviation. Critical theory provides an appropriate framework for unveiling social realities by challenging the status quo and exposing deeper societal equality (Dahms, 2011)

The selection of these theories is justified by the multidimensional nature of the study, which necessitates an analytical framework capable of engaging both structural and context-specific dynamics. Collectively, these theories inform the analysis by providing complementary perspectives through which the interaction between indigenous and contemporary gender roles within household livelihood systems can be examined.

This integrated approach enables the study to move beyond single-theory explanations and to more accurately reflect the complexities of rural South African contexts. While each theoretical perspective offers distinct insights, their combined application provides a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. In combination, they illuminate how gender roles, socio-cultural norms, and economic structures intersect to shape household livelihood systems. This synthesis allows for a more nuanced and contextually grounded interpretation of poverty dynamics in rural setting

2.4 Applying the philosophical and theoretical framework to the research context: role and relevance in the Tshaulu village study

The four theories serve as the theoretical backbone for the research presented in this thesis as it provided insight into the intersection between indigenous and contemporary gender roles and poverty alleviation in indigenous communities in Tshaulu Village. These theories help analyse and interpret our findings, providing the frameworks through which we understand and look at our data. The Modernisation Theory serves as our basis for understanding economic transitions in Tshaulu Village, helping us establish the demographic socio-economic status of this rural community in South Africa, and examine how changes in economic practices and structures are affecting indigenous and contemporary poverty alleviation strategies. The Social Role Theory was used when exploring and interpreting how gender roles are defined within the indigenous community and the wider society. This theory helps understand how established gender roles shape indigenous poverty alleviation efforts. The Intersectionality Theory helped to examine and demonstrate how intersecting identities such as gender, race, class, and sexuality among indigenous people effect poverty reduction measures. Critical Theory was critical in this thesis, as it help contextualise the empirical evidence against the historical past (specifically apartheid) of South Africa. It provides us with the foundations to untangle the complicated network of overlapping social dynamics that would otherwise go overlooked. In conclusion, these theories collectively allow us to meet our research objectives by providing the theoretical toolkit, helping us explore both broader socio-economic structures and intricate socio-cultural dynamics that impact the reduction of poverty within the tribal communities of Tshaulu Village. Their combined insights paved a way for a more holistic understanding of the complex interaction among gender roles,

poverty alleviation strategies, and prevailing societal narratives. In the context of Tshaulu community, critical theory is particularly relevant because it helps uncover the structural conditions that shape indigenous and contemporary gender roles. While indigenous gender roles were historically complementary and linked to the survival of the community external forces such as colonialism, modernization and contemporary development policies have reshaped these roles in ways that either advantage or disadvantages women and men.

2.5 Conclusion: synthesis and application of the theoretical framework in guiding the research study

The theoretical framework chosen for this research provides a meaningful context within which to address our research questions related to indigenous and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation within the Tshaulu Village community. Modernisation Theory, Social Role Theory, Intersectionality Theory and Critical Theory give a comprehensive paradigm for understanding the interplay of economic transformations, socially constructed gender roles, and intersecting identities in indigenous communities' lives. Modernisation Theory provides us with the lens to examine how societal advancements and economic changes are intrinsically linked with the process of poverty alleviation. It allows us to explore how societies progress and adapt, especially focusing on the impacts on indigenous community’s social role theory on the other hand provides a viewpoint on the significance of gender roles and social expectations in influencing individuals' experiences, particularly their experience of poverty. The evaluation of intersectionality, specifically within the perspective of Intersectionality Theory, conveys the necessity of considering how various social categories and identities overlap to shape experiences of poverty. This theoretical approach grants us the ability to highlight the various layers of social identities, often intersecting in complex ways and contributing to the unique experiences of poverty within the communities. Each theory described herein plays a fundamental role in our research. They guide our analysis, structure our narrative, and shape our understanding of the complex dynamics at play within a research domain. It is through these theories that we hope to contribute a nuanced understanding of the experiences of indigenous people in poverty alleviation efforts. They serve as the guiding principle of our research, enabling us to elucidate the multifaceted realities of indigenous and

contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation. The theoretical framework presented above provides an intricate and multi-faceted lens to research the issue of underdevelopment in developing countries, specifically in rural areas and indigenous communities. Being guided by the modernisation theory, we understand the ripple effects of societal evolution and economic growth on gender roles and how these changes can either exacerbate or mitigate poverty conditions. Social role theory enables a critical assessment of societal constructs and the impact of assigned gender roles on access to essential resources, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of poverty. Meanwhile, intersectionality theory neatly merges into this framework by highlighting the intricate complexities that surface when gender roles intersect with other crucial factors like race and socio-economic status. This intersectionality underscores the multi-dimensionality of discrimination while amplifying the need to address each layer distinctly for effective poverty alleviation. Incorporating critical theory alongside modernization, social role, and intersectionality theories strengthen the theoretical foundation of this study by ensuring that the analysis of gender roles and poverty in Tshaulu not only descriptive but deeply reflective, transformative, and rooted in an understanding of the structural forces that shape Tshaulu community life. Nevertheless, while these theories provide a robust and comprehensive framework for understanding, they also exhibit inherent contradictions and inadequacies emphasising the need for a continual critical appraisal. The interaction of these theories presents a nuanced lens to research underdevelopment, enhancing our understanding of poverty and aiding in identifying unique dynamics within indigenous communities.

CHAPTER 3: TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY GENDER ROLES AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES

In the global context, poverty and gender have become a central issue of debate, as is evident from the large and growing body of literature that continues to investigate the relationship between poverty and gender. Increasing emphasis on the hardships endured by women in the more traditional communities of the Global South (de Wit, 2021). Recent evidence (Awomi & Tariang, 2022) shows that women (particularly single mothers) are more likely to be affected by poverty than men. While a considerable body of research exists on gender and poverty, there is a small but growing body of literature that is focused on how indigenous roles of gender shape household livelihoods system and poverty dynamics, especially within more traditional and marginalised communities. Much of the existing literature tend to emphasize contemporary policy approaches, often with limited integration of indigenous knowledge systems and locally gender roles practices. This chapter provides an overview of the literature and contribute to the discussion by examining how a combination of traditional and contemporary gender roles influences household livelihoods systems and poverty dynamics in in the typical rural communities in the Global South.

3.1. An overview of gender roles in relation to poverty alleviation

Understanding societal gender norms is important for examining how indigenous and contemporary gender roles shape household livelihood systems, particularly in marginalised communities. Existing studies highlight the challenges experienced by women and the role of gender in access to resources and livelihood activities. However, much of this literature remains focused on global perspectives, with limited emphasis on African rural contexts, particularly in South Africa.

3.1.1. Operational definitions and orientation

To understand the key terms and underlying themes of this thesis, operational definitions and orientation of concepts as used in the thesis need to be presented. These include the interconnected concepts of the indigenous and contemporary gender roles and their influence on households' livelihoods systems and poverty

dynamics. These are categorised into the three aspects of poverty namely absolute, relative, and multidimensional poverty. However, it is important to note that these understanding of poverty is often limited in capturing the complex and context specific realities of rural communities. These limitations are particularly evident in rural African contexts, where poverty extends beyond income to include access to services and livelihood opportunities.

3.1.1.1.Poverty

The operational definition of poverty is critical foundation for its measurement and for the development of effective policy interventions encompassing various perspectives from absolute to multidimensional approaches (Lipina, 2017). The definition of poverty has been a matter of ongoing discussion among researchers and institutions. Researchers often defined poverty as that the failure of an individual to meet their financial and non-financial basic needs and this includes financial and non-financial assets (Bourguignon & Chakravarty, 2019). Poverty is thus a complex problem with several underlying economic, social and political causes, and is often linked to limited opportunities for education and employment (Gomes, 2017). Additionally, scholars such as Mitra et al. (2015) help to expand the conventional understanding of poverty by including an overall economic imbalance that is characterised by a shortage of material resources. Lemanski (2016) viewpoint, is that the essence of poverty lies in the disparity between societal norms and the availability of essential requirements to function in that society. While these definitions prioritise specific financial indicators, they overlook the subjective experiences and perspectives of impoverished individuals. Ogundipe et al. (2019) uses the human development and capability theories to redefine poverty as a state in which individuals are unable to secure the most basic of necessities for a typical social existence. Since the definition of poverty varies, it is important to clarify that in this thesis the term poverty refers to the state of lacking basic needs and services, as well as the (in)ability to establish sustainable solutions to address poverty issues, including socio-economic strategies to support households.

3.1.1.2. Absolute poverty

As in the case of poverty, varied definitions of absolute poverty could be found in the literature. endPoverty (2023), indicates that absolute poverty is when an individual or

household does not have enough money to cover their basic needs for a prolonged period. Freguja (2013) on the other hand indicates that subsistence below the bare minimum of socially acceptable living standards, which are typically determined by dietary needs and other necessities, is known as absolute poverty. In most definitions, the minimal standard of living that is accepted in a community, considering both the social and material aspects of poverty is highlighted. A different approach (Allen, 2017) to defining absolute poverty, proposes defining absolute poverty based on explicit budgeting and linear programming to ascertain the lowest possible diet that ensures human survival and well-being. This approach incorporates exact calculations to identify the threshold of deprivation, and this thus adds a more technical component to the concept of absolute poverty. For Decerf (2020), absolute poverty has reference to an individual's income that cannot meet their basic needs, (including but not limited to clothing or adequate nutrition). For Hawes (2019), the term absolute poverty refers to an individual's lack of necessities that are essential for survival, irrespective of the overall wealth or poverty of the society they live in. These definitions collectively illustrate the multifaceted nature of absolute poverty, encompassing financial, material, social, and technical dimensions.

3.1.1.3. Relative poverty

Arndt et al. (2016), define relative poverty as an individual's economic circumstances within the larger context of their societal background. These researchers highlight that viewing poverty through a relative lens anchors the phenomenon to the living standards that are endemic to the specific society an individual lives. Similarly, Decerf (2021), indicatesthat measurements of relative poverty are dependent on the income norms in the society under scrutiny. According to the definition provided by Garroway & De Laiglesia (2012) and based on the more advanced countries located within the of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) poverty is often measured in relative terms using a poverty line that represents an average standard of living. However, Decerf (2021), critically observed that this measure overlooks the dynamic aspect of growth and its resultant impact on individual's resources. Canagarajah & Thomas (2001) supported the idea that economic growth can decrease poverty as it should improve the income levels of the poorest citizens. Although, relative poverty is a term frequently used in the literature it lacks a universally accepted definition or standard for relative poverty, and this poses significant challenges in the

practical application thereof (Lepenies, 2020). This has led to researchers such as Putri et al. 2024 highlighting that alterative poverty indices should be developed. This has been followed up by Pu (2020) who emphasised the need to measure poverty beyond just income and consider other measurements such as deprivation of rights; services; social welfare; and security.

3.1.1.4. Multidimensional poverty

Several definitions on the understanding of multidimensional poverty were found in the literature. According to the World Bank Group (2023), the concept of multidimensional poverty goes beyond financial deprivation to encompass access to basic infrastructure, education, and a monetary headcount ratio that is benchmarked at 2.15 US Dollars to determine international poverty levels. The World Bank concluded in the same year, that three dimensions, namely monetary, education and basic infrastructures services, can capture a more accurate dimension of poverty. Scholars such as Decerf (2023) identified several problems with a standard definition of multidimensional poverty largely due the complexity of how deprivation (poverty) features in the complex interplay between economic, political, and social components. In addition, definition of Suppa (2022) include an examination of various aspects of human wellbeing that includes access to health and education, followed by societal participation. Suppa (2022) also specified that an acceptable definition of multidimensional poverty must shift away from solely relying on the monetary indicators. Alkire (2020) is one of the researchers that explored the challenges around the multidimensional poverty that goes beyond the income levels, by arguing that monetary measurement of poverty provides a narrow view of the complex nature of poverty. Alkire (2020) proposes an extended dimension for measuring poverty, highlighting it should encompass education, healthcare, housing quality, and accessibility to fundamental services.

In most arguments for a definition of multidimensional poverty, traditional income-based assessments and promotion of the complex assessment that include the influence of social, economic, and political factors in a rural community are lacking. Thus, it is the assertion of the author of this thesis that the adoption of a more multidimensional assessment in poverty measurement is crucial in addressing the

nuances of poverty and facilitating more targeted and inclusive initiatives that would be valid in rural communities.

3.1.1.5. Gender

Chrisler & Lamer (2016), suggested that the term gender refers to the distinct social identities of men and women including the masculine/feminine personalities or associated behavioural characteristics. Further the same authors indicate that there are social identities that are typically associated with individual genders. Pilcher & Whelehan (2016), affirmed that contemporary gender distinction characterised by masculine or feminine differences seemingly stresses that biological differences might have been overstated with the purpose to uphold patriarchal power and to promote the notion that women are naturally more inclined toward traditional domestic roles. Holdrege, (2024) argued that gender as a construct isn't essentially tied to biology but is rather a blueprint preferred by feminists and behavioural scientists to distinguish identities without insinuating that these differences are purely rooted in biology. According to Dayatami (2015), a definition of gender that is acknowledged in some societies represents behavioural patterns that defy easy classification into male or female categories. In examining the social construction of gender, Pursely (2016) maintained that one should critically question how gender roles have evolved, and Jinia & Asaduzzam (2021) try and provide some answers by indicating that society and culture define what is masculine or feminine, and this has led to gendered expectations and stereotypes. Highlighting the importance of unpacking these constructs Saguy et al. (2021) critiqued that the perspective of viewing gender as a biologically construct essentially serves to perpetuate gender beliefs and norms as fundamental, immutable, and grounded in nature. Meanwhile, Ellemers (2018); Biernat et al. (2018); contends that societal burdens of gender stereotypes impede shared care for children and relatives between genders. These preconceptions affect how gender is viewed, acknowledged, and claimed which affects ideas about oneself and how others are perceived (Kiprotich & Chang'orok, 2017; Steiner et al., 2022). Understanding the societal gender norms assists in exploring the conventional gender role and its impact on poverty reduction, particularly in marginalised communities.

3.1.1.6. Gender discrimination

Within the context of gender and poverty, a link to discrimination is critical. Discrimination within the context of poverty alleviation, has reference to the systematic disregard of the role women play in the societies they live in and thus by default the role they can play in development policies (Daboh, 2010). Research in Nigeria (Ajala, 2017) and Sudan (Osman, 2002), concluded that women are associated with the socio-economic challenges that limit their empowerment and rights and increase the levels of discrimination. In Bangladesh (Siddique, 1998) established that the incidence of impoverishment was exceptionally high amongst the female population and this was ascribed to an inferior socio-economic status and more prejudiced (discriminatory) societal outlook towards them. Similar patterns of research on gender-based inequalities are also observed in Sub-Saharan Africa, where women's access to resources remains constrained in rural settings ().

For Ali et al. (2022), a definition of gender discrimination would have reference to the biased treatment of an individual based on their gender. A further definition of gender discrimination provided by Dussaillant (2024) is any bias that is directed towards an individual that would be absent if they were of a different gender. Some definitions extend to the societal construction of gender roles and how these are related to the occurrence of poverty amongst women. For example, Ajala (2016) contended that traditional beliefs, cultural norms, and practices that perpetuate gender discrimination that contributes to levels of poverty amongst women. Salvini (2014) showed that gender discrimination could lead to unequal opportunities that in turn could contribute to gender limiting poverty alleviation efforts due to disparate access to resources.

3.1.1.7. Gender roles and gender role conflict

Gender roles as used by Nurdin et al. (2022), refers to the differences between men and women that are formed socially and culturally and reflected in the roles, behaviours, and qualities of both genders. In addition, Jaluo & Alunga (2013) explained gender roles as a socially constructed attitude and behaviour that is expected from the individuals based on their gender identity. These roles fluctuate across different cultures and are influenced by both natural and social elements (Daulay, 2017; Alunga & William, 2013) and are further influenced by factors such as socialisation and individual attitudes (Sanchez-Herrero, 2013; Fernandez et al., 2011).

These constructed roles have an impact individual choice of careers, family dynamics, and labour patterns (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2016).

Gender roles represent multifaceted structures that influence societal expectations and gender related behaviours (Aliyeva, 2024). Within the context of generalised and traditional gender roles, the norm is that men are the primary income earners, while women as primarily responsible for more domestic responsibilities (Qing, 2020). Further Ruth & Napier (2014) argue that men should be the protectors of women, and this perpetuates the stereotyping of women as 'inferior' and more suited to domestic roles and this in turn maintains gender inequality. Recognising and at the same time questioning the more traditional gender role are the key steps towards establishing more equitable societies.

Within some research related to gender discrimination in poverty alleviation strategies, the importance of gender role conflict is often highlighted, and this is basically a reflection of the societal expectations of both genders (Baxter, 2014). Masvotore & Tsara (2023) points out that gender role conflict is evident in the gender division of labour that is often remunerated for men, but not for women and this increases the economic vulnerability of the latter, and an increase in the likelihood of them living in poverty. Masvotore & Tsara revealed that gender division differentiation is influenced by the family structure, individual situation, societal standards, financial restrictions, and other broader society challenges such as heritage and political friction. It is critical that we study the discrepancies between community gendered expectations and individuals' abilities. These roles influence how responsibilities are distributed within households and may lead to gender role conflict when expectations change or overlap (). In rural contexts, such conflicts are often linked to changing livelihood conditions and shifting household livelihood systems, particularly within African rural communities.

3.1.1.8. Traditional and indigenous communities

In this thesis the term traditional and indigenous are used interchangeably to refer to the communities whose cultural practices, social norms and gender roles are rooted in the historical customs, communal values and locally inherited knowledge practices. These communities rely on the collective identities and dependency, tribal authority and ruling by chief and village heads, customary norms and intergenerational practices

that shape households' roles, decisions making processes, and the organisation household's daily livelihoods practice.

3.1.1.9. Contemporary and modern communities

The term contemporary and modern are also used interchangeably to describe the households influenced by a more recent socio-economic development including a formal educational training, wage-based jobs, individualised decision making, individual private ownership of properties, politically influenced and use of modern technology in household's efforts to reduce poverty. In this thesis the working definition set to distinguish how gender roles are understood, enacted and negotiated within each context providing a consistent basis for analysing their implication for the typical rural household's poverty alleviation.

3.1.1.10. Head of the households in rural communities

In this thesis, the term head of the household or family representative refers to individuals recognised as holding the primary authority and responsibilities for representation of the family within the community. Within the traditional rural communities, the notion of a head of the households plays central role in shaping social organisation, resources allocation and gendered responsibilities. Although these roles are associated with men particularly because a married men traditionally approaches the chief to secure the residential stand, the position is not exclusively male. In practise, limit of the assault, maybe any adult who represent the family interest, including an elderly relative, a window, a window, or when necessary, an adult child or family relative.

3.1.2. Contemporary and traditional gender roles and poverty alleviation

Researchers looking at poverty from the lens of contemporary gender roles, have shown that efforts to reduce poverty are often influenced by modern gender roles. Situma (2020) highlighted the importance of gender in understanding of poverty, by bringing into focus the feminisation of poverty, by indicating a bias of women towards poverty when compared to men. In addition, the author indicates that key attributes of poverty in contemporary societies are often associated with lower earnings; restricted access to basic service, social marginalization; risk exposure; powerlessness; and lack of representation. Researchers Cheteni et al. (2019) conducted their research on

the contemporary gender roles in relation to poverty and found that contributing factors towards poverty in these societies were: a limited access to education; work opportunities; prevailing gender roles; expectations within families; lack of control over resources; and decision making. This argument was supported by Nisak & Sugiharti (2020) who argued that persistent gender inequality impedes women's economic, social, and political rights and this gives rise to gendered poverty.

Every culture has its own set of views that the people living in the culture uphold and share and these include the role individuals must play; the rights they have towards each other and the values that underpin their behaviour (Bonvillain, 2020). Gender is a very dominant factor in the household decision-making context, and as a result, it can be a driver of poverty or wealth within the household (Cheteni et al., 2019). Thus, and understanding the cultural drivers of traditional (traditional) communities is critical in establishing the role gender plays in these communities and in the household in these communities.

The literature documents that in traditional communities' women are mostly assigned domestic responsibilities, thus limiting their access to economic and political empowerment in their society. For more traditional populations, infusing the traditional culture and beliefs into strategies for poverty reduction could offer fresh perspectives and creative solutions to solving the problem. In research undertaken in Pekanburu, Indonesia, Trianto et al. (2020) established that socio-cultural and demographic factors contributed to higher rates of poverty within traditional societies. In Indonesian traditional societies women's responsibilities in community development are formed by social learning, socio-cultural variables, and self-motivation which contribute to the social welfare (Trianto et al., 2020). Gender focused research has critically illuminated the historical bias inherent in traditional, non-gender research which frequently presume that men are primary contributors and innovators across society (Pluskota, 2014). These androcentric perspectives often overlooked or marginalise the significant contribution and intellectual of women leading to an incomplete understanding of historical development process (Nahlinder et al., 2015). Recognising how gender influences various aspects of life from social structures, various aspects of life and innovation research is crucial for developing inclusive policies and fostering equitable opportunities for all.

The relationship between gender, poverty, social status, and policies is significant in several ways, and is often contradictory. Previous research has shown that gendered identities in poverty relief policies often overlook the more traditional experience of poverty, and this contributes to the perpetuation of racial and gender disparities (Abbott & Chesney, 2007). Specific initiatives on reducing the poverty of women exist however this is often impacted upon by the societal practices and religious beliefs that continue to influence the status of women and their economic reliance on men (Siddique, 1998). Situma (2020) documented that more traditional and traditional communities may experience violence against women; limited freedom of movement; restricted access to healthcare and education; and violations of their legal and political rights; due to a patriarchal structure. However, Briggs (2013) cautioned that the utilisation of traditional practices as a resolution for development challenges may not be as advantageous for traditional communities as there may be an oversimplification of the interpretation of traditional practices. Briggs (2013) argues that idealising traditional practices might lead to a disregard of the inherent power structure and conflict within the society. Briggs (2013) emphasises the necessity of critically understanding traditional practices, especially the intricacies of power dynamics and the context-specific nature of such knowledge before incorporating it into developmental theories and practices.

In contrast and as presented in Chapter 2, Khumalo & Baloyi (2017) provided a compelling argument that African traditional practises are promising yet underestimated resources for fostering development in the Global South. They maintain that traditional practises remain pertinent in contemporary times and could offer solutions to persistent challenges like poverty, disease, and environmental deterioration that many African nations face. This idea is also acknowledged in the literature that in the findings of George et al. (2016); Arinaitwe (2024); Arasio et al. (2020) who reported that traditional community-based groups serve as a significant driver of poverty reduction and community advancement through various interconnected mechanisms such as shared resources, strengthening local governance and promotion of inclusive participation. Jilcha et al. (2025); Asseffa et al. (2025) contend that these communities are treasure troves of practical information and expertise that can advance sustainable development and poverty reduction. They emphasise that the Vhavenda community's traditional knowledge, practises and skill

set such as farming and herbal medicine are essential components in effectively reducing poverty in their communities. Echoing this sentiment, Ewane & Ajagbe (2018) argued that traditional practices are pivotal to sustainable development in Africa, as it could foster growth in areas such as agriculture, natural resource management, and healthcare. These discussions reveal that while traditional practises hold significant value, the process of integrating it into sustainable development practices requires a careful, nuanced approach that considers its contextual nature and inherent power dynamics.

Siraz et al., (2020) proposed that the traditional understanding and traditional customs of the Chakma community (Bangladesh) could play a substantial role in the region's sustainable development. However, they acknowledged that there is a potential threat posed by modernisation, urbanisation, and outside cultural influences on traditional knowledge and practices emanating from them. They thus authors emphasised the necessity of evaluating how traditional practices could boost local sustainable development initiatives. Small et al. (2010) implied that focusing solely on cultural explanations for poverty may lead to overlooking the more extensive social and economic networks that generate and perpetuate poverty. Khumalo & Baloyi (2017) propose that African traditional practises and norms could considerably enhance development in Africa. In addition, they acknowledged that these knowledge systems and practices are frequently discriminated against in favour of more Western ideologies.

Singh et al. (2014) & Aziezi, (2025) assert that employing this deeply rooted traditional and traditional wisdom into fields such as agriculture, healthcare, and natural resource management often produces superior outcomes in a development agenda, however these practices lack of recognition in mainstream development agenda and potentially pose a barrier to the successful implementation thereof. They advocate for comprehensive community engagement to validate and uphold the value of traditional traditions and insights that have been developed through generations and adapted to specific local conditions has important components of achieving sustainable development of which poverty relief is a major component.

These sentiments were supported by Oyeniran (2021) who explored the application of traditional practises in fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the latter

of which inherently includes poverty reduction. The author points out that devaluation; lack of documentation; and increasing modernisation and globalisation of traditional practises impede Africa's acknowledgment and application of this knowledge to deal with sustainability challenges. Shortly after the implementation of the United Nations SDGs in 2015, Kohler & Brondizio, (2017), questioned the newly proposed agenda for sustainable development, with regards its sufficiency in addressing gender equity; equality; and environmentally responsible development within our planet's constraints. The author indicatesthat the SDGs fell short in their ambition and the implementation of a systematic policy approach. This argument was affirmed by Razote (2022) who explored the unique discrimination faced by traditional women in the Philippines in terms of their gender; social status; and ethnic/traditional identity and the role they can play within traditional societies in terms of poverty relief and identified the challenges they encountered when striving to actively participate in the Sustainable Development Goals. The conclusion of Razote's (2022) research was that SDG 5 (focusing on gender equality) lacked and understanding and advocation of the gender dynamics within traditional societies and encourages the formation of suitable platforms to facilitate the significant involvement of traditional women in achieving gender equality.

While the literature has revealed the need to acknowledge and use African traditional practises in Africa's development initiatives, modernisation, when understood in a more nuanced way, can be conducive to gender equality, but previous models seem to be inadequate and fail to consider cultural factors. As indicated in Chapter 2, understanding global social, economic, and political evolution requires re-evaluating Modernisation Theory's underlying presumptions and claims especially within the context of poverty relief by an improved alignment to Social Theory and Intersectionality Theory. In this way, strategists will create contextually relevant practices that respect community's cultures to alleviate poverty more sustainably. There is thus a need to continually learn, adapt, and invent solutions that reach out to all sections of society, Recognising and addressing the different realities of poverty within the overarching subject of gender roles.

3.2. An overview of challenges and impact of poverty in relation to gender roles in indigenous (traditional) and contemporary societies

Poverty disproportionately affects women globally, a phenomenon often termed the feminisation of poverty, which is exacerbated for indigenous women and women of colour due to intersecting inequalities of gender, race and class (Perzynska & Guzowska, 2024; Cosgrove, 2021). This pervasive issue is rooted in complex interplays between traditional and contemporary gender roles, social structures, and economic systems. In indigenous societies, gender roles have historically been diverse and complementary with men and women holding distinct yet equally vital responsibilities for community survival linked to physical capacity and the necessities of land-based cultures (Hinzo, 2016; Anderson, 2016). Gender roles, both in traditional (indigenous) and contemporary societies, contribute to the different causes of poverty within their societies. More traditional communities despite their unique knowledge of ecosystem resources experience more poverty, discrimination, and poor nutritional health at higher rates than more contemporary communities (Murphy, 2015). Kuhnlein (2017) maintained that in most societies, women are more likely to be considered poor or living in extreme poverty and are faced with more unique challenges related to their gender, including higher unemployment rates; limited access to education and land; and vulnerability to violence. Colonisation in many communities in the Global South brought along higher levels of patriarchy and entrenched racism both of which have negatively impacted upon indigenous women's identities and their participation in spiritual and cultural practices (Mnisi & Claassens, 2009; Baskin, 2020; Perini, 2023). Indigenous communities have their own approaches to gender, gender roles and sexuality, reflected in their traditional social systems and governance structures (Hinzo, 2016). The imposition of colonial policies has significantly disrupted this traditional gender roles and social structures, often undermined indigenous women status and contributed to their increased vulnerability to poverty (Oliver et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2023).

Traditional gender roles have evolved over time and are thus dynamic, as demonstrated by the research on indigenous societies in North America, often demonstrating greater fluidity and diversity than western binary constructs though this was severely impacted by the colonial imposition (Anderson, 2016; Hinzo, 2016).

Women in traditional communities have been active in asserting their agency and humanity against oppressive colonial relationships, however, their positions on gender equity and equality can vary as is reflected in the debate of feminist scholars (Sullivan, 2018; Nazzal et al., 2025). The traditional roles of women in many communities in the Global South have changed due to factors such as acculturation and a related shift in perspective (Coburn, 2020). Traditional people often have unique knowledge and practices related to food use and well-being but also experience disparities in poverty, discrimination, and poor nutritional health (Kuhlein & Chotiboriboon, 2022) as gender roles within traditional cultures can impact family food access, availability, and use, as well as the preservation of local food biodiversity (Kuhnlein, 2017).

The interplay of traditional and contemporary gender roles strongly influences poverty rates and living conditions, particularly among women in traditional communities. Comprehending this complex dynamic not only requires a thorough understanding of traditional cultural practices, women's roles, and the challenges they face, but also an analysis of the wider societal forces like colonisation, racial discrimination, and patriarchy. It is evident that scholars contend feminism as a predominantly ‘white’ centred approach that address the social problems of the white middle class, addressing social problems primarily from the perspective of white educated women (Roberti & Wineinger, 2024; Zarestky et al., 2019; Holvino, 2010). In addition, Pierz & Nzefa, (2022); Segato & Monque, (2021) highlighted that for traditional women the marginalisation of their issues is compounded by the fact that a component of the colonialism throughout the Global South involved the imposition of the western gender roles and patriarchal social structures. Those who struggle for gender equality are often seen, sometimes erroneously, as opposing traditional practices and the structures of social organisation (LeRoux-Rutledge, 2020).

Sen (1999); Ascher (2021); Cordes et al. (2024) provides the challenges to efforts addressing poverty alleviation and these include the lack of training and skills relevant to poverty alleviation projects; lack of funds; inappropriate methods of establishing projects; high levels of illiteracy among project beneficiaries; lack of water; lack of equipment; lack of infrastructure; fraudulent use of project funds;, very poor or no record keeping; unavailability of market for products; lack of access road and signage to projects; lack of security, inadequate technical support; and poor commitment of

project members. The list of challenges is indicative of how intricate and complex the phenomenon is. These challenges are further aggravated by the often-unequal gender systems that can hinder the formulation, implementation, and impact of anti-poverty strategies (Nailufar et al, 2023). Understanding the psychology of how the poor react to their plight is also crucial in designing effective poverty alleviation policies (Ascher, 2021).

Assessing the rooted impact of gender roles and related bias is crucial when it comes to understanding how poverty persists. This understanding helps to explore more effective solutions to address this ongoing issue. In both the more contemporary contexts gender roles significantly contribute to poverty, (Jagota & Nyadoro, 2025; Erol & Ozdemir, 2023) while within the more traditional context, unequal distribution of wealth often favours men as gender discrimination plays a role in the women's experience of poverty in Nigeria (Ajala, 2016). Moreover, Kuhnlein (2017) indicates that within traditional structures gender-based violence remains high, yet women bear more responsibilities for activities that exist outside formal employment. Moreover, it is unfortunate that traditional peoples despite their knowledge and traditional practices face high rates of poverty, discrimination and inadequate nutrition when compared to the general population (Ajala, 2016; Nepal, 2023; Abdullah & Khan, 2023). The impact of colonisation and the enforcement of western norms have further marginalised women and diminished their leadership positions (Oliver et al., 2015; Baskin, 2020). Addressing gender roles today necessitates confronting discriminatory behaviours while striving for gender equality and empowering women both economically and socially. Women are frequently subjected to marginalisation and are denied access to critical resources and opportunities and thus they bear a heightened vulnerability towards falling into impoverished circumstances (Erol & Ozdemir, 2023; Emordi, 2021). In certain nations such as Bangladesh where social customs and religious beliefs are influential factors, women find themselves at a lower socio-economic status making them dependent on men for economic stability (Karim et al, 2024). Nevertheless, strides have been taken towards addressing this issue through initiatives such as microcredit programs designed specifically for rural women which provide much needed financial support that can promote better economic conditions for women (Ayanwale & Alimi, 2004; Nkamnebe & Oladipo, 2024; Kesavulu, 2021). Murphy (2015) indicated that when discussing methods of eradicating poverty, it is

essential to consider gender in a holistic fashion, rather than solely focusing on women alone, as gender roles and associated relations strongly influence the perpetuation of poverty.

Further, Baskin (2020) research shows the effects of colonisation enhanced racism and patriarchy, and this has collectively undermined the identify of traditional women, often leading to systemic poverty among traditional communities. Moreover, Baskins work presents a compelling case for a feminist, gendered analysis of traditional struggles, both past and present. By examining traditional life before and after colonisation, as well as the process of assimilation, allows the researcher the opportunity to grasp the complex influence of colonialism and gender issues on traditional societies. This in-depth analysis provides a strong foundation for understanding the historical context that shapes traditional life and contributes significantly to the understanding of the root causes of poverty in communities that had been colonised (Baskin, 2020). While researchers such as Wringley-Asante (2008) advocated that the poverty of women is primarily due to the gender roles that are established by contemporary and traditional practises, Struckmann (2018) asserted that gender inequality can only be addressed by the elimination of unjust laws and cultural practices in all communities. The author of this thesis is of the opinion that it is critical to comprehend the current association between gender roles and poverty within the context of both contemporary and traditional practises, and to accomplish a situation that can lead to poverty alleviation more holistic attention should be given to challenges and impact of the gender roles of both traditional and contemporary norms on poverty.

3.2.1. Gendered pattern in poverty statistics: the overrepresentation of women

The overrepresentation of women in poverty statistics, often termed the feminization of poverty, is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon rooted in structural gender inequalities across various aspects of life (Perzynska & Guzowska, 2024; Kaushik, 2024). This pattern arises not from women being inherently poorer, but from systemic adverse disadvantages that shape their access to resources, labour market participation, education, healthcare, property rights and social protection (Perzynska & Guzowska, 2024; Erol & Ozdemir,2023). Gender roles are culturally assigned expectations that link women to caregiving and supportive functions while positioning

men in leadership and decision-making roles. Gender roles influence official statistics often leading to paradoxical overrepresentation of women in certain statistical categories obscuring in other contribution (Heggeness, 2023; Hillyard, 2020; Burgos & Estrada-Fonseca, 2025). The feminisation of poverty concepts emerged in the 1970s to describe women overrepresentation among the world poor with the United Nations claiming 70% of poor people are women (Mohanty & Chandrana, 2018; Porsani et al., 2019). This statistic was prominently featured when among the poor in the world in its 1995 human development report (Marins, 2017). More broadly, this feminisation means that women, particularly in female headed households are generally much poorer than men and that women are overrepresented in low-skill, low paying jobs (Parry, 2021) However, the foundational 70% statistics has faced significant methodological scrutiny. Several critiques have emerged about the conceptual and methodological characteristics claiming that the finding could not be proved because sex-aggregated data were mostly lacking; lack of accuracy and is an oversimplification (Porsani et al., 2019; Burchi & Malerba, 2023; Bradshaw & Linneker, 2023). In addition, Porsani et al indicated that where data existed were ridden with inaccuracies. Despite these methodological challenges current evidence continues to highlight that half of the people in developing countries are poor and are women (Jones and Perry, 2003; Bradshaw & Linneker, 2023).

Contemporary data from multiple regions confirms women's overrepresentations in poverty statistics showing more women affected by poverty than men. Current statistical evidence consistently demonstrates women overrepresentations among the poor across diverse geographical context and measurement approaches. Global data reveals that women or girls of reproductive age are more likely to live in poor households below the international poverty lines than men (Boudet et al., 2018). The evidence of the study of Boudet et al. shows that 122 women between ages 25 and 34 living in poor households for every 100 men of the same age group. This pattern is supported by the regional analysis trends of Latin America and the Caribbean, where the ratio of women to men in poor households increased from 108 women for every 100 men in 1997 to 117 women for every 100 men in 2012 (Amarante et al., 2022

The country specific studies further confirm the global pattern. In Pakistan, most women suffer from all forms of poverty more than men, with women comprising the

majority of the 75% of Pakistan population living below poverty line (Tarar & Pulla, 2014; Siddique & Nosheen, 2021; Kanat et al., 2024). Similarly, poverty statistics in many developing countries including Zimbabwe continue to show a gender skewed trend with women increasingly more affected than men (Mupangwa, 2023). In South Africa, Statistics South Africa documented that 60% of females were living in poverty compared to 55% of males in 2011 (Cheteni, 2019), with women identified as most vulnerable group amongst most South Africans living in poverty. The situation has persisted over time with poor South African females tending to live further below poverty line than their male counterparts highlighting greater vulnerability (Parry & Gordon, 2021; Ndlovu, 2024).

Individual level poverty calculations reveal even more pronounced disparities. When poverty is measured at an individual level rather than household's level, most of the poor are women and the poverty they experience is more intense in terms of the number of deprivations they face compared to men, with women contributing 91% of the total individual multidimensional poverty index in some analyses (Vijaya et al., 2014). Measuring of women overrepresentation in poverty statistics faces significant methodological challenges including lack of gender disaggregated data (Grisoni & Ruiz, 2018; Porsani et al., 2019), flawed households-level measurements that mask intra-households' inequality and statistical uncertainties that particularly affects estimates for female headed households (Goodman et al., 2025). Beyond data availability conventional poverty measurements approaches contain inherent gender biases that distort women actual poverty experiences. The conversional poverty measure is flawed, particularly from a gender perspective as its overestimate women income and disregards the reality of unequal resource distribution (Ahonen & Kuivalainen, 2024). These methodological limitations mean that households level poverty statistics may obscure important indigenous and contemporary gender differences in resources access and control within the same traditional households. Furthermore, the changes in households' composition pattern can mask underlying trends as in general poverty statistics, the increasing precariousness of work poor families has been neutralised by the increased in the share of two income families (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2020). The methodological challenges highlight that while evidence consistently points to women overrepresentation among the poor the actual

extent and nature of this overrepresentation may be both underestimated in some contexts and inadequately captured by current measurement approaches.

3.2.2 Traditional and contemporary gender roles in land rights and property ownership

The intersection of gender roles and property ownership, which affects poverty, is a complex issue that warrants thorough examination. Existing research in this area is focused on gender disparities in property ownership, with limited insights into how traditional and contemporary gender roles shape asset accumulation within tribal communities. As secure tenure over land property ownership is considered in many poverty relief strategies as the key to promote positive economic and social outcomes that are necessary for poverty relief, Feyertag et al. (2021) undertook research in 33 countries across the globe to access potential gender imbalances of land ownership and property rights in relation to development outcomes in general and poverty reduction in particular. This critical research established that in terms of land rights and property ownership, women feel more threatened by internal sources of insecurity from the household and community levels, while men cited more external sources of insecurity related to government expropriation or private investments. Interestingly, Feyertag et al. (2021) noted that the documentation of formal property ownership and rights help to protect individuals from external threats, however this not the case for protecting individuals from internal threats. This implies that land ownership and property rights in poverty relief strategies should be complemented by the tackling the day-to-day measures that deny women's rights within the household, communities and societies.

A pertinent example of this issue is presented in the research of Deng et al. (2019); Cui et al. (2023) on housing reform in China These authors established that after three decades of reform, housing assets encompassed a significant portion of familial wealth, yet this wealth was unevenly dispersed as most of the registered homeowners were male. This gendered distribution of land resources is further exacerbated by the income disparity that favours men, facilitating their greater intergenerational wealth transfers. Property ownership in rural and Southern Africa is characterised by complex interplay of customary, statutory and informal tenure system reflecting deep historical roots including colonial legacies and post-independence reforms (Home, 2013; Sato,

2022). This intricate landscape often results in land tenure insecurity particularly in communal areas where traditional leaders may hold custodianship over land that is nevertheless subject to state trust (Winkler, 2019; Winkler, 2021). The historical imposition of colonial land laws created a dual system that often constrained private property rights in the communal lands contributing to the persistence of these complex tenure system (Home, 2013; Ramutsindela, 2012; Fergusson, 2013).

The customary system are characterised by their reliance on unwritten traditional rules administered by traditional leaders where land is regarded as more than economic asset and encompasses broader social and cultural meanings (Huffel, 2023).Under these system households typically have strong exclusive residential rights to arable land, and shared grazing land rights and natural resources and the land remains inalienable from community trust (Ngumbela et al., 2020; Chagutah, 2013). Research shows that the largest gender gaps in property ownership are found in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially west Africa, though there is a large variation between African countries with gender gaps being much smaller in Southern Africa than other parts of the continent (De Paz et al., 2020). Understanding the property ownership in this context requires acknowledging the continuous evolution and contestation of these land tenure systems which profoundly impacts livelihoods, economic development and social equity (Asaaga and Hirons, 2019; Lenggnhanger & Ramutsindela, 2021).

The intersection of traditional and contemporary gender roles with poverty alleviation strategies in Africa, particularly in South Africa, reveals a complex dynamic where social structures both constrain and enable economic empowerment. Traditional patriarchal norms have been widely identified as a key factor limiting women's access to resources and decision-making power, thereby reinforcing the feminisation of poverty (Methode, 2024). However, scholars note that contemporary interventions such as social protection programmes, microfinance schemes, and community-based cooperatives are increasingly structured to challenge entrenched gender norms while recognising and strengthening women's pivotal role in household welfare (Mafukata, 2020).

3.2.3 Gender dynamics, decision making, leadership roles, and educational advancement in rural communities

Traditional and contemporary gender roles practice in rural households are complex, reflecting dynamic interplay of traditional norms and modern influences such as education, economic shifts and policy interventions (Kudri, 2024; Hong et al., 2024; Sheridan et al., 2023). While the traditional structure positions a man as a formal head of the household women frequently exercise the significant albeit often unrecognised leadership in domestic management, agricultural sector, childcare and informal economic activities (Sheridan et al., 2023; Cruz et al., 2024; Vincent, 2022). The concept of household headship itself is multifaceted, and its gender dimension is critical factor influencing socio-economic outcomes particularly in rural areas (Acharya et al., 2023; Asiedu et al., 2024). Research emphasised that understanding poverty differences requires distinguishing households by gender composition of resident adults rather than solely relying on the concept of household headship as it avoids some of the inherent problems associated with that classification (Posel et al., 2023). Osman (2002) highlighted that there are obstacles that women must face in decision-making processes within the household, community and society, as cultural, social, and economic norms often restrict women's access to resources, and their participation is often relegated to non-remunerated household work. Acosta et al. (2020) highlighted that contemporary knowledge, which encompasses qualities such as analytical reasoning and advisory skills may prove advantageous in advancing equitable decision-making prospects for women. However, within more traditional communities, accepted practises can limit the involvement of women in decision-making, particularly within those families that maintain strong ties to traditional customs.

Historically, women have demonstrated resilience and leadership within their communities, and this includes combining traditional and contemporary governance models (Olaleye & Abiona, 2015; Samantha et al., 2024; Otoo et al., 2025). Their motherly instinct often leads them to prioritise communal benefits, contributing significantly to local and national leadership (Samantha et al., 2024; Otoo et al., 2025). This observation supports the argument for enculturating more women into developmental agendas, achieving gender equilibrium, and thereby promoting

sustainable community upliftment. Education plays pivotal role in transforming gender roles and leadership dynamics in the rural households (Li, 2024; Marty, 2024). Truong (2020) reported that the level of decision-making is directly associated with educational level and gender differences, and the lack of educational opportunities could result in fewer women participating in decision-making processes, reinforcing cycles of poverty. This has been incorporated into the United Nations SDG 5 (Gender Equality) wherein it is reaffirmed that the need for equal educational opportunities across gender, can significantly impact poverty alleviation efforts (Sharma et al., 2025; Eweje & Nagano, 2021). More broadly, the viewpoint of gender roles in traditional leadership and education underscore the importance of gender equity in lifting rural communities out of poverty (Stelmach, 2011; Wei et al., 2021). Integrating this approach into poverty alleviation strategies could prove effective in addressing gendered poverty (Stelmach, 2011; DiPrete-Brown et al., 2023).

3.2.4 Gender, tradition, and authority: the overlooked leadership roles of rural African women

Rural African women have historically played and continue to play significant roles within their own communities, often exercising authority through informal culturally embedded mechanism that are frequently overlooked by formal political structure and external analysis (Masoga & Shokane, 2019; Day, 2021). This oversight stems partly from the predominance of Western centric models of leadership that prioritise elected or bureaucratic office, leading to an epistemic erasure of nuanced forms of Indigenous female authority (Poltera & Schreiner, 2019; Decker, 2018). Despite women's significant contributions to community development, the actual role of rural women in Africa in achieving sustainable development is misunderstood and thus neglected (Apusigah & Bamora, 2021). In their research they discuss how the oversimplification of the lives of rural African women's is harmful as this oversimplification then presents a victim narrative that obscures power relations and results in marginalisation. The traditional institution of leadership in Africa, while often viewed as male, dominated as historically accommodated powerful female figures including corollas, religious title holders and market Queens who arbitrated. Disputes, distributed resources and even appointed male rulers (Day, 2021; Manthwa, 2024).

One major consequence of this marginalisation is the undermining of the critical role non-financial responsibilities can play in households that are faced with poverty. Household in both traditional and contemporary societies indeed rely on a complex interplay of financial, human and natural resources to mitigate poverty, with women non-financial contributions frequently overlooked in poverty reduction strategies (Chowdhuri & Chowdhury, 2025). This oversight is particularly critical given that poverty measures often focus on income alone, neglecting the accumulation of assets that provide greater precision in analysing household resilience (Chen et al., 2024). And more comprehensive understanding of poverty necessitates acknowledging the multidimensional nature of livelihoods capital, which includes human, social, natural, physical and financial assets (Xu, 2022; Zhao & Lan, 2023). The scholars often disregard for the non-financial contributions of women that are vital for the provision of basic needs in a household in poverty relief strategies is a distinct weakness (Apusigah & Bamora, 2021). Coupled with gendered biases and disparities in income distribution and resource access (Alam, 2011), marginalisation intensifies women's vulnerability to chronic poverty.

Although there is a void in terms of the research into the inherent gender inequality in terms of financial and non-financial activities carried out by women and how these contributions can help mitigate poverty (Chulu, 2015; Erol & Ozdemir, 2023), it does underline the critical need to dismantle binary frameworks and address distortions that resulted from colonialisation (Chen, 2024). Fourshey et al. (2016) indicated that such efforts could foster a more accurate understanding of women, gender, and culture in Africa. Underlying any discussion on the marginalisation of women, one has to take into account that an understanding of gender discrimination and any discord of the expected gender roles in any particular society (Dussaillant, 2024; Salvini, 2014; Baxter, 2014), is critical in both traditional and contemporary societies in order to ensure any move towards poverty alleviation.

In the typical rural and agrarian society, women routinely take part in various farming activities. Singh (2025), in the study of a typical rural and agrarian societies, found that women are profoundly engaged in diverse farming activities, forming a significant, though often under representative, portion of the agricultural workforce. Singh (2025) noted that this engagement encompasses nearly all aspects of agriculture from land

preparation, sewing, reading and harvesting to post harvesting process, seed preservation, livestock rearing, dairy management and Agro forestry. These roles are critical for household food security and income generation, particularly in developing nations (Xu, 2022; Chen et al., 2022). Conversely, Timsina et al. (2023) stated that poverty alleviation efforts are often employed by the very gender inequalities embedded in traditional roles. A recent analysis by (Timsina et al., 2023; Man et al., 2024) highlight that when women have access to financial markets, agricultural training and land ownership, their capacity to improve productivity and generate high income is severely limited. This is evident in countries like rural Nepal, (Sapkota, 2022; Holmelin, 2019), where women tend to have a seemingly unique yet important role in the agricultural sector.

Development processes that ignore this important contribution of women is agrarian societies, will result in a very limited understanding on how the role women can play to reduce hunger and poverty in their respective households and communities (Naseema, 2021; Majumder & Shah, 2017; Mare & Girmay, 2016). This recognition underscores the significant role that women in more traditional sectors can play in sustainable development, not only as participants but crucial contributors and drivers of change. Sarkki et al. (2021); Semali (2022) indicated that this participation challenges the more conventional patriarchal practices that often marginalize women in rural areas, thereby reinforcing deep-seated gender roles and stereotypes. Instead failing to involve women in these processes may result in inadequately representation that will jeopardise agricultural development and poverty alleviation at community and household level. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognise that while men generally are involved in agricultural operations, there are essential aspects of women's experiences and interests they may not be fully articulated leading to their underrepresentation and marginalisation in agricultural development and policy (Voss et al., 2024; Barooah et al., 2023). This leads to the crucial need for include the role of women in any research aimed at effectively mitigating poverty. Gender inclusivity in research, can better design interventions have tailored towards the multifaceted causes of poverty, considering the intersecting aspects of gender, race, class, and ethnicity.

3.2.5 Traditional measures of poverty: income-based measurement challenges

Traditional income-based measures of poverty, while widely used, face significant limitation in comprehensively capturing their multifaceted nature of deprivation (Han & Shi, 2019). These challenges stems from several factors including their narrow focus on monetary income, their inability to account for non-monetary deprivation, and issues related to data collection and measurement methodologies (Dos et al., 2018). Anglade et al. (2022) highlighted a critical gap in the traditional approach to measuring poverty. They posited that conventional income-based measures often do not adequately reflect the gender disparities inherent in the poverty experience, thereby restricting the depth of understanding necessary for effective policy development. By integrating a gendered lens to analyse asset poverty, however, the analysis indicatesa more nuanced approach that could effectively highlight the distinct challenges women face. This perspective could, in turn, potentially guide policymakers in the development of strategic interventions capable of addressing these specific challenges. Jagtap's (2019) research underscores the necessity of a participatory design approach to poverty alleviation, by arguing for a more inclusive representation of the diverse and specific needs of vulnerable communities. This approach ensures that resultant services and products are designed to meet specific community needs, and it fosters a comprehensive understanding of the multi-faceted socio-economic and cultural dynamics that cause poverty.

Li (2020) posited a compelling discourse on the transformation of cultural attitudes, specifically those that cast a stigma on single motherhood. The author contends that the promotion of gender equality is a pivotal component in the process of poverty alleviation, underscoring the need to address socio-cultural biases that exacerbate poverty among vulnerable demographics. Lastly, Gomes (2017) provides a deeply insightful exposition on the intersectionality of poverty, race, and gender in Salvador, Brazil. This study argues that poverty, race, and gender are entangled and together contribute to the creation of multi-dimensional disadvantage that led to marginalization of certain groups. Comprehending this intersectionality is critical to formulating holistic, multifaceted strategies for poverty alleviation that duly recognise these intricate socio-economic realities. One fundamental challenge of income-based poverty measures is their inherent exclusion of non-monetary aspects of well-being. Poverty is not solely

about a lack of income, it also encompasses deprivation in essential services and capabilities such as health, education, access to clean water and sanitation (Frempong et al., 2021).

3.3 An overview of gender dynamics on poverty alleviation strategies and policies

Gender dynamics significantly influence the design, implementation and outcome of poverty elevation strategies and policies creating differential experiences of poverty for women and men due to socially constructed gender roles and unequal access to resources and disparities in decision-making power (Erol & Ozdemir, 2023). Research constantly highlights that women are often poorer than men, experiencing higher vulnerability and more limited survival strategies (Wrigley-Asante, 2008). The role of gender dynamics is crucial in the creation of poverty alleviation policies and strategies. It is important to understand the gender dimensions of poverty to create effective development strategies that enhance women's capabilities and rights (Indriyati & Nugrahani, 2015; Tariang & Thomas, 2020). Integrating gender into poverty alleviation programs requires a comprehensive approach that addresses gender disparities and promotes gender-fair development (Osman, 2002; Barke, 2024). In Türkiye, the feminised face of poverty has led to a re-alignment of policies to include women as the main agents of poverty alleviation (Gokovali, 2013). The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund's policy measures, such as their structural adjustment policies, have been criticised for exacerbating social problems, particularly for women in low and middle-income groups (Izugbara & Ukwayi, 2002; Frempong et al., 2021; Karim et al., 2020). Gender-specific strategies have gained popularity in Africa, but overcoming conceptual challenges is essential for these strategies to be effective in achieving sustainable poverty alleviation.

3.3.3 Global frameworks and strategies for poverty reduction

Global framework for poverty reduction, notably the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals, have significantly shaped International Development efforts, particularly in the developing countries and the African context (Ndaguba & Hanyane, 2018; Adewole & Olatunji-Awotayo, 2022). These frameworks aim to mobilise commitment and cooperation towards elevating human

impoverishment, though their impact and applicability vary across regions (Barimah & Diko, 2013). One of the most significant global strategies to combat poverty were the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) launched in 2000 and were in place until 2015 (United Nations, 2015). The MDGs were launched with the expectation of promoting global challenges to address various phenomenon such as poverty, hunger, disease, and gender inequality. Further the MDGs represented a unified attempt to improve the quality of life for communities globally (Mabuza, 2019). Although notable progress was achieved under the MDGs, globally, extreme poverty, defined as a living on less than $1.90 per day, decreased significantly from 36% in 1990 to, 10% in 2015. Some countries in sub-Saharan Africa such as Ghana made significant gains on MDG 1 which focussed on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger (Abane, 2018). The MDGs were considered to have produced the most successful anti-poverty movement in history, serving as a stepping stone for the SDGs (Oniango, 2020). The policy impact of the MDGs has been substantial though uneven and they have highlighted the importance of a shared ownership between the Global South and North in any future development framework (Sumner & Tiwari, 2010; Sumner & Tiwari, 2011).

However, like most one-size-fits-all solutions, the MDGs faced limitations, such as overlooking the unique obstacles and sustainability issues of various regions (Nhema, 2016). This argument is supported by Fehling et al. (2013) who argued that one of the issues related to the implementation of the MDGs was that the goals and associated targets were created by an unrepresentative group of stakeholders predominantly from the Global North and inadequate involvement of representatives from the Global South. By 2015, there was a growing body of literature that recognised the importance of the MDGS, however, the literature also documented the various challenges associated with the implementation of the MDGs, and it was important for global sustainable development that these challenges were seriously considered in the development of future goals. Ugoani (2015), explored the relationship between global governance and poverty reduction within the context of achieving the MDGs, and the findings suggested that for the ambitious goals to have succeeded, policy should have regularly made adjustments to adapt the goals and their targets to the changing global environment, and in this way would ensure that efforts to reduce poverty are effective and more sustainable. According to Ojobanikan (2022) there was no clear policy document guiding the implementation of the MDGs which resulted in confusion and a

lack of direction for those responsible for conducting the goals. The same author also identified several challenges that affected the implementation of the MDGs, and these include the lack of appropriate education and awareness of the MDGs; overpoliticisation of the goals; and corruption. Within the Global South, and Africa particularly, Oke et al. (2011) explored the effectiveness of the MDGs in addressing poverty in Nigeria and identified two main challenges that hindered the successful implementation of the MDGs. Firstly, the MDG associated policies related to poverty reduction lacked the support of political leaders and were often associated with widespread corruption and secondly, a major shortcoming was that the MDGs were not fully effective in reducing poverty because the focus was primarily on the national level and neglect the more local levels where the actual need was more dire. Related to the second challenge Massuanganhe (2014) emphasised that local institutions and traditional authorities, were crucial for local development to be successful and these were often overlooked in the MDG framework leading to a lack of grassroots perspective.

In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), were implemented. The United Nations SDG 2015 to 2030 Agenda aims at consolidating the successes and navigating the residual shortcomings of the preceding MDGs, in a globally drive that would lead to the achievement of an integrated and sustainable growth that extends from global to local levels (Oniango, 2020). An important aspect of the SDGs is that the goal is to create a world that is impartial in which resources; opportunities; and advancement are shared by all. SDG 1 has an overall aim to reduce global poverty through the achievement of a variety of targets that include the expansion of social protection systems; more equitable rights to economic resources; equal rights to economic resources, basic services and microfinance for both genders; building resilience to reduce exposure and vulnerability to natural and human induced shocks and disasters; mobilisation of resources to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions; and the creation of sound poverty relief policy frameworks (United Nations, 2015). The targets specified for SDG have addressed many of the challenges identified in the implementation of the MDGs. However, to achieve these ambitious targets, a comprehensive monitoring framework and substantial resources and investments have been made available since the implementation of the SDGs. But, beneath the surface of the global aspirations to reduce poverty by 2030 the

sobering reality is that globally and locally more effort must be made to reduce the gender disparity in poverty levels. While the MDGs made significant strides towards gender equality and poverty alleviation and the SDGs have built on these successes, it remains evident that more needs to be done to achieve equality for every individual living in extreme poverty. Vyas-Doorgapersad (2019) argued that gender equality measures in poverty reduction can have positive contribution towards the SDGs. and recommends that current and future research need to focus on gender-disaggregated needs; gender-sensitive roles; gender-based demographic data; and gender mainstreaming as policy options for socio-economic development at the local government level.

While the SDGs have been a critical step towards the global endeavour to tackle poverty and gender inequality, they underscore the urgency to redress these issues as part of the ethical framework of universal human rights (Ararat, 2020) and is thus aligned to Chant & Beetham (2014) argument that gender, poverty, and development, are closely intertwined and the pursuit of gender equality is a principal element within the broader scope of sustainable development and poverty reduction. One year after the implementation of the SDGs, O'Manique & Fourie (2016), expressed concern that the SDGs could unintentionally perpetuate gender injustice through lack of initiatives in challenging entrenched systems of inequality. In 2017, Kim stated that a closer examination of gender disparity in economic participation and opportunity was warranted since there were gaps evident in the documented efforts to reach the targets set for SDG 1 (poverty relief) and SDG 5 (gender equality), by 2022, Okitasari & Katramiz (2022) documented that to overcome this gap was now reflected in the steering of the global goals into National Development Plans of participating countries, and in this way ensured the implementation of more effective locally driven strategies. Despite many challenges, the on-going global commitment to achieving the SDGs by 2030, offers a pathway forward in addressing sustainable development and the improvement of the quality of lives of all humanity. Gender equality and the reduction of poverty remain a critical aspect of the SDGs and gender inequality plays a role, in perpetuating poverty among women.

3.3.4 African Union Agenda 2063: a strategic framework for poverty eradication and inclusive development

The African Union Agenda 2063 is a comprehensive strategic framework designed to achieve social economic transformation and regional integration across Africa over a 50-year period with poverty alleviation being central objective (DeGhetto et al., 2016; Nakiwala et al., 2025). The strategic framework was developed collaboratively by key African institutions, including the African Union Commission' (AUC) the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Planning and Coordination Agency the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (Denisova & Kostelyanets, 2023). The AU Agenda 2063 Vision adopted in 2015 at the 24th Ordinary Session of the African Heads of State and Governments build up on past experiences, challenges and success to chart a strategic path for the continent future development (DeGhetto et al., 2016; Masumbe, 2021). The AU Agenda 2063 is aligned with global development frameworks, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals and seeks to optimise the use of Africa's resources for equitable, people centric socio-economic and technological transformation (Nene, 2024; Nakiwala et al., 2025).

Poverty eradication stands as the central priority of AU Agenda 2063, with the ambitious goal of eliminating poverty within one generation through inclusive growth and social transformation (Tikly, 2019). AU Agenda 2063, approach to poverty eradication extend beyond income poverty to encompass comprehensive human development outcomes. The framework positions poverty eradication is essential for addressing the root causes of many Africa’s persistent challenges, including political instability, weak economies and social unrest (Thusi et al., 2024). Despite its noble objective, the implementation of Agenda 2063 faces numerous challenges. The challenges include governance failures, political instability, corruption and insufficient funding are identified as critical obstacles (Nakiwala et al., 2025). The shift from the MDGs to the SDGs reflects the broader understanding of development, moving from an aid-based paradigm to a universal integrated framework applicable to all nations, emphasising principles of integration, equity and leaving no one behind (Sparks, 2016).

The AU Agenda 2063 represents a long-term commitment to overcoming the continent's developmental challenges and achieving widespread poverty relief through a strategic, integrated and inclusive approach. However, its success hinges. On addressing critical implementation various including governance issues, climate vulnerability and resources mobilisation, while fostering regional cooperation and leveraging technological advancement (Nakiwala et al., 2025). AU Agenda 2063 serves as a comprehensive road map for Africa's future, with poverty eradication and inclusive development at its core. Its success hinges on overcoming significant challenges through robust governance, strategic investments in infrastructure and human capital, fostering regional integration, and building effective partnerships, and all while continuously monitoring progress and adapting to emerging threats (Thusi et al., 2024).

3.3.5 Overview of South African poverty alleviation policy landscape

South Africa's poverty alleviation efforts are built on a strong constitutional foundation that guarantees social economic rights with the post-apartheid government implementing various policy framework starting with the RDP and later NDP. South Africa's policy framework and strategies for poverty alleviation are multifaceted addressing both the historical legacies of apartheid and contemporary socio-economic challenges through a combination of social welfare, economic development, and constitutional mandates (Khumalo, 2013; Sayeed, 2023). Each framework is designed to address poverty, unemployment and inequality through different approaches ranging from social transformation to macroeconomic stabilisation and growth acceleration.

3.3.1.1 Evolution of poverty alleviation frameworks in South Africa

The post-Apartheid South African government has implemented several socio-economic development policies and strategies since 1994, aiming to address inherited challenges such as poverty, unemployment and inequality (Pindo, 2022; Govender, 2016). These frameworks include the Reconstruction Development Programme (RDP), the Growth, Employment, Redistribution (GEAR). Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) and the New Growth Path (NGP) and the Integrated Sustainable Development Strategies (ISRDS) and The Comprehensive

Rural Development Programme (CRDP) and National Development Plan (NDP) (Maphaka & Rapanyane, 2021; Naidoo & Mare, 2015; Tendengu et al., 2022). Despite these effort, high rates of unemployment, poverty, inequality persist, particularly in rural areas (Pindo, 2022; Motal, 2023; Biyase & Zwane, 2018).

The Reconstruction Development Programme, launched in 1994, was the first comprehensive policy framework after the democratic transition (Wessels, 1999; South Africa, 1994; Naidoo & Mare, 2015). It aimed to transform the South African community politically, socially and economically, with a primary focus on attacking poverty, providing basic needs, developing human resources, building the economy and democratising the state and society (Wessels, 1999). The RDP emphasise basic service delivery and redistribution through the state led reconstruction (Klug, 2020). However, its implementation faced challenges in interdepartmental coordination and was ultimately discontinued as a national planning framework in 1996 (Kraak, 2011).

Following the RDP, the Growth, Employment and Distribution strategy was introduced in 1996, marking a shift towards a more neoliberal economic approach (Mubangisi, 2008; Tendengu et al., 2022; Maphaka & Rapanyane, 2021). Gear focused of on fiscal discipline, trade liberation and private sector led growth, aiming to boost the economy growth and create employment (Tendengu et al., 2022; Maphaka & Rapanyane, 2021). While GEAR aimed to address poverty and unemployment, critics argued that such a neoliberal measure have proven ineffective in tackling structural causes of poverty and social inequalities (Mubangisi, 2008).

The Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) was launched in July 2005 under President Mbeki (McGrath & Akoojee, 2007). This strategy aimed to halve unemployment and poverty, accelerate employment equity and improved broad based black economic empowerment (McGrath & Akoojee, 2007). ASGISA represented a different development path from conventional poverty reduction programmes and Millennium Development Goals, emphasising accelerated and shared economic growth (McGrath & Akoojee, 2007; Mubangisi, 2008). Despite its objectives ASGISA like GEAR has been criticised for its limited effectiveness in significantly reducing poverty (Mubangisi, 2008).

The new Growth Path (NGP) framework, introduced around 2010 to 2011, aimed to promote inclusive growth and decent work explicitly linking employment creation with environmental sustainability (Hendriks, 2013; Tendengu et al., 2022). The NGP sought to address the persistent challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality, acknowledging that food insecurity remained high despite national food security claims (Hendriks, 2013). Alongside these growth-focused strategies, South Africa also implemented policies targeting rural development. The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) and the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) were initiated to address spatial equity and rural transformation (Ahmed Ezzat Othman & Sirbadhoo, 2009). The Comprehensive Rural Development Programme in South Africa represent a significant policy initiative aim at poverty alleviation and rural development. Launched in 2009, the CRDP was designed to address underdevelopment, poverty, unemployment and other social ills in red areas, with an overacting goal of enabling rural communities to control their destiny. The CRDP for example, aimed to create vibrant equitable and sustainable rural communities through a three prolonged approach, agrarian transformation, rural development and land reform (Ahmed Ezzat Othman & Sirbadhoo, 2009). This initiative aimed to support the sustainable development of rural areas by addressing issues such as infrastructure, service delivery and economic opportunities, often through partnership involving South African project management firms (Ahmed Ezzat Othman & Sirbadhoo, 2009).

The National Development Plan (NDP) is the most recent and overarching long-term vision adopted in 2012, aiming to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 (Naidoo & Mare, 2015). The NDP integrate aspect of prior strategies and emphasises institutional capacity education, infrastructure, social cohesion (Naidoo, & Mare, 2015). It serves as a comprehensive social economic policy framework for South Africa’s transformation intended to guide government action until 2030 (Naidoo & Mare, 2015). The NDP, however, has been noted to contain potential policy contradiction with the NGP, particularly concerning food security (Hendriks, 2013). The ultimate goal of the NDP is to ensure that all South Africans attain a decent standard of living through job creation, expanding infrastructures, transitioning of low carbon economy and building more capable state (Winkler & Marquand, 2009; Burger & Carltz, 2015).

Despite the multitude of this policy framework, South Africa continues to grapple with severe socio-economic disparities. High unemployment rates persist with an employment absorption rate of only 65.3% between 1995 and 2015, indicating that employment growth has not been sufficient to absorb new entrants into labour force (Festus et al., 2016). Poverty remains high with studies indicating A poverty incident of over 50% using certain metrics (Biyase & Zwane, 2018). Furthermore, South Africa is recognised as one of the most unequal countries globally with significant wealth inequality where the top 10 own 86% of the aggregate wealth (Govender, 2016; Chatterjee et al., 2022). The persistence inequality extends to gendered multidimensional poverty, highlighting ongoing challenges in achieving equitable development outcomes (Omotoso et al., 2022). The effectiveness of these policies in addressing structural causes of poverty and inequality has been subject of continuous debate (Mubangizi, 2025; Gamboa et al., 2020). This shift from MDGs to SDGs emphasises integration and equity, using policy coherence across sectors and prioritising well-being of the worst-off (De Jong & Vijge, 2021). The challenge for South African development framework lies in effectively coordinating policy implementation to achieve transformative change and ensure that all citizens benefit from the progress (Kraak, 2011; Naidoo & Mare, 2015).

3.3.1.2 Gender representation in national poverty alleviation frameworks

South African National Poverty Elevation Framework increasingly recognise gender as a critical determinant of poverty, with effort focused on integrating data perspectives into policies and programmes. This recognition stems from persistent gender gaps in poverty and inequality observed in post-apartheid South Africa (Omotoso et al., 2022; Rogan, 2016; Cheteni et al., 2019). Previous research found that women on average, continued to experience multidimensional poverty at higher rates than men exhibited by structural inequalities related to access to land, credit, education and formal employment alongside a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work (Makhalima, 2023; Longe, 2021). Key policy and legislative frameworks in South Africa explicitly aimed to address gender inequality and its impact on poverty. The 1996 Constitution calls for equality and subsequent framework like the National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality (WEGE) and the National Development Plan 2030 underscores the commitment of gender mainstreaming (Hills, 2015; Isike, 2023). Dave WEGE legislation, for instance, drive for 50% female representative in

executive bodies across organisation, indicating a clear policy direction towards equitable representation (Hills, 2015). Furthermore, the White Paper on Social Welfare 2017 mandates gender responsive social protection design, acknowledging the differential impact of social programme on men and women (Plagerson et al., 2019).

Multidimensional poverty assessment consistently reveals a gendered landscape in South Africa. Studies using the Alikre-foster methodology and the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) demonstrate that women and female headed households face greater deprivation across various dimension including education, health and living standard (Omotoso et al., 2022; Rogan, 2016). For instance, the study of Makhalima (2023) highlighted a gendered analysis of poverty among the employed in South Africa highlight that women earn approximately 30% less than men and more are more frequently employed in low-income jobs within the care economy, such as domestic and part time work, which offer fewer benefits. This contributes significantly to women higher vulnerability to poverty even when employed (Makhalima, 2023). In rural areas, gender plays a substantial role in household decision-making and can determine whether a household falls into or escape poverty trap (Cheteni et al., 2019). The concept of intersectionality is crucial for nuanced understanding of poverty and inequality in South Africa (Moodley & Graham, 2015).

People do not experience single issue lives, rather their identities intersect, creating unique experiences of disadvantage. For instance, the intersection between disability, gender, race and poverty are often overlooked, yet international research point to significant gender gaps for the people with disabilities (Moodley & Graham, 2015). While South Africa has established a robust legal and policy framework for gender equality and poverty elevation, translating these commitments into impactful change requires continuous effort to integrate gender consideration at all levels of planning, implementation and evaluation.

3.3.1.3 Indigenous gender roles and household poverty alleviation policy framework

Indigenous gender roles in South Africa have historically been shaped by diverse pre-colonial social structures where gender responsibilities were often complementary and context specific within various ethnic groups such as Sotho, Zulus, San peoples (Manthwa, 2024). These roles involved differentiated but interdependent functions in areas like agriculture, governance, kinship, spiritual practises and resources

management. However, the imposition of patriarchal, western legal and economic frameworks during colonialism and apartheid eroded meaning of these indigenous roles, leading to marginalisation of indigenous women authority and knowledge system (Manthwa, 2024). Contemporary South African gender in poverty elevation policy frameworks such as those outlined in the National Development Plan and the White Paper on the Rights of Women acknowledge gender inequality as significant structural barrier to poverty reduction (Isike, 2023; Plagerson, 2021; Nxumalo & Fagbayibo, 2020).

Despite these commitments, a persistent gap exists between policy and implementation, and these frameworks largely lacks systematic integration of indigenous gender epistemologies or customary governance mechanism (Pimienta et al. (2012). Studies examining gendered multidimensional poverty in post-apartheid South Africa indicate that reducing the gender gap in poverty is a priority for policymakers (Omotoso et al., 2022). The issue of gender inequality extends to governance and leadership roles. While traditional leadership is the oldest form of governance in Africa, many have historically dominated these positions (Manthwa, 2024). In addition, Manthwa (2024) highlighted that South Africa has been undergoing changes to be more inclusive of women contribution in traditional leadership. Despite Weathers effort is national and international levels to ensure gender equality and increase women participation in political and developmental goals, challenges persist (Nxumalo & Fagbayiyo, 2020). Meaningful inclusion requires a decolonial policy design that engages Indigenous knowledge holders affirms plural legal subjectivities and support community led gender justice initiatives. The integration of Indigenous knowledge systems into policy frameworks can provide a moralistic approach to gender equality and poverty alleviation by recognising and valuing the historical contribution and in ongoing relevance of Indigenous gender roles and knowledge (Manthwa, 2024; Muthien, 2019). This includes acknowledging the importance of self-determination where Indigenous people have the right to determine and develop their own strategies and to design and administer programmes through their own institutions.

3.4 A pathway out of rural poverty: case studies and solutions from the Global South communities

Rural poverty affects billions of people worldwide, but research shows there are proven pathways and solution models from developing countries that can help lift a rural community out of poverty. Rural poverty remains one of the world's most painting persistent challenges, affecting approximately 80% of the world go live in rural areas (Nehring & Campos, 2019). Where this problem spin across many developing countries, extensive research and practical experience have identified multiple effective pathways for rural communities to escape poverty. The global South has been particularly innovative in developing and testing solution models that work within local context and resource constraint. Rural poverty reduction follows several well documented pathways that has been identified through extensive research across developing countries. The research shows there are three main ways rural households. The most widely recognised framework describes three core livelihoods pathways, improvement to current farming activities, increasing income from non-farming sources and diversification of income sources (Hansen et al., 2019). Beyond this framework research identifies several specific pathways that have proven effective. Foreign labour migration, small business development and improved access to land represent the primary routes most households use to escape poverty (Sunam, 2015). Income diversification has emerged as a key factor for most of the households in improving their livelihoods, with successful examples from Tanzania showing farmers who combine staple food production with cash crops and livestock, and from Uganda where households escape poverty through improved land productivity and commercial crops (Sunam, 2015). Evidence have suggested that agriculture alone may not be sufficient. Several studies indicate that the main driver of graduation from poverty has been income from non-farm sources rather than agriculture, with self-employment and entrepreneurship identified as the most frequent path out of poverty (Harris & Orr, 2014). While agriculture hold a potential for growth it cannot fully meet the challenge of rural employment, making diversification into non-farm activities crucial for poor rural households (Chun & Watanabe, 2012). These pathways reflect the heterogeneity of rural context and household's assets positions which implies multiple routes from poverty and need for poverty reduction strategies to be tailored to specific territories and household categories (Janvry & Sadoulet, 2004). This

understanding has led to recognition that successful rural development requires both farm-based paradigms that focus on agricultural sector development and off-farm led paradigms that emphasize industrialisation and non-agricultural sectors (Larue et al., 2021).

3.4.3 Community based and participatory approaches

Community-based and participatory approaches represent a fundamental shift from traditional top-down poverty alleviation strategies to models that prioritise local ownership and control. A key innovation is placing rural people at the centre of poverty alleviation schemes rather than relying on urban elites to design and implement programmes from above (Effiong & Essien, 2022). This approach recognises that making rural people major stakeholders in the planning and implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in their own communities is essential for effective address rural poverty (Effiong & Essien, 2022). The assets-based Community Development (ABCD) approach has emerged as a particularly effective participatory model for rural poverty reduction. This community building approach focuses on identifying and utilising the strength, resources and capabilities of individual and organisations within a community rather than focusing Solely on addressing deficits or problems (Chen et al., 2024). The ABCD methods operates on the principles that every community has assets that can be used to create positive changes rather than relying solely on external resources or solutions (Chen et al., 2024). Evidence from multiple Global South contexts demonstrates the effectiveness of the ABCS approach. Application in Tibet, India and South Africa have all shown significant impact on poverty alleviation (Chen et al., 2024). The approach was found to be effective by focusing on the identifying of usefulness of local resources, mobilising them, and involving citizens in transformation process for rural poverty alleviation (Chen et al., 2024). The participatory approach also addresses governance challenges that often undermine poverty alleviation efforts. When nepotism, exclusion, and unequal spread of opportunities are tackled through good governance, political inclusion and egalitarianism the physical condition of poverty can be addressed in neglected rural communities (Effiong & Essien, 2022). This highlight that community participation not only improves program design but also enhance accountability and reduces corruption that can divert away from intended beneficiaries.

3.4.4 Agricultural and farm-based solutions

Agricultural and farm-based solutions represent one of the most direct pathways for addressing rural poverty, particularly in regions where farming remains primary livelihood. In sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture offers strong potential for spurring growth, overcoming poverty and enhancing food security, with agricultural productivity growth being vital for stimulating growth in other parts of the economy (Byerlee et al., 2008). In addition, Byerlee et al., proposed that this requires sharp productivity increases with the smallholder farming combined with more effective support for subsistence farmers, many in remote areas (Byerlee et al., 2008). Market integration has emerged as a crucial component of agricultural solution. Market based initiatives like agriculture value chain are becoming increasingly common to support smallholder rural farmers, helping them enter larger market intervention and providing pathway for enhancing their social economic well-being (Wang et al., 2021). Countries like China, India and Brazil have developed comprehensive poverty elevation strategies that include supporting smallholders through developing supportive industries for agricultural products and enhancing integration between industry and smallholders through value chain mechanism (Wang et al., 2021).

Productivity improvements through better inputs have shown significant results. Using inorganic fertiliser combined with improved seed can increase crop yield and help eradicate poverty, while agricultural inputs subsidies serve as social protection and are essential for increasing productivity and achieving pro poor economic growth in low- and middle-income countries (Li et al., 2023). In addition, Li et al., highlighted that improvement in agricultural input efficiency increased productivity which directly affect poverty reduction and food security. The transition from subsistence to market-oriented agriculture involve multiple types of intervention. Development agencies focus on five key agricultural market access intervention from farm-to-market transport infrastructure, output market information systems, new marketplaces and alternative marketing opportunities, contract farming initiative and improved storage infrastructure (Villar et al., 2023). In addition, Villar et al., also indicated that these interventions help farmers shift from subsistence farming by incentivising cultivation of higher value crops and adoption of improved inputs. Long term agricultural development follows a clear progression. Increases in agricultural productivity combined with improved commercial

incentives for small scale farmers present a pathway out of poverty, with diversification towards higher value crops and agricultural commodities enabling risk management and income increases. These improvements create linkages to agricultural value chains at domestic, regional and global level, while increasing smallholder income enhance consumption linkages to the local non-farm economy and enable labour release to urban areas (Djurfeldt, 2023).

3.4.5 Non-farm economic development

Non-farm economic development has emerged as critical pathway for rural poverty reduction, particularly as evidence shows that agriculture alone cannot absorb the growing rural workforce. The rural non-farm economy already contributes substantially to household incomes, accounting for 40-45% of average rural household income in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, and 30-40% in South Asia, with the majority coming from local rural sources rather than urban migration (Madzivhandila, 2014). The transition to non-farm employment requires strategic investment in human capital and infrastructure. Education plays a crucial role by allowing households to exit agriculture into more lucrative off farm jobs as demonstrated in Asia successful structural transformation (Muyanga & Jayne, 2014). The same authors also reported that for region like rural Africa, where education level remained relatively low by world standard, investment in rural education and communications become increasingly important to facilitate this transition. Government programmes can play a significant role in supporting non-farm development. Indonesia's Dana Desa program (Village Fund Program) represents one of the world's largest national level rural development programs focused on enhancing rural economies and reducing rural urban poverty gaps (Rammohan & Tohari, 2023). Such programs demonstrate how policymakers can actively enhance rural economies through the targeted intervention.

Rural tourism emerged as a particularly promising non-farm sector, allowing rural economies to diversify away from agriculture while improving livelihoods strategies and reducing poverty (Haulle et al., 2024). In addition, Haulle et al. (2024) points that it offers new livelihoods opportunities and serves as a powerful tool for lifting local people out of poverty while promoting sustainable rural development. However, successful non-farm development requires comprehensive support systems. Key ingredients for success include identifying options for increasing access to social

business networks, developing small towns, supporting producer associations for marketing and sourcing, removing regulatory burdens on small and medium enterprises and reforming extension services into business advisory services (Madzivhandila, 2014). Furthermore, Madzivhandila (2014) demonstrated that intensive interventions are needed to help the poor overcome entry barriers and participate in more productive aspect of rural non-farm economy, including training and credit programmes. The integration of non-farm activities with broader rural development is essential for long term poverty reduction. Access to irrigation, literacy, good vegetation cover, and non-farm economic activity work together to help eradicate stochastic poverty (Haile et al., 2023).

3.4.6 Infrastructure and service delivery

Infrastructure development represents a fundamental pathway out of spatial poverty traps, requiring coordinated investments across multiple sectors to achieve sustainable property reduction (Fuseini et al., 2024). Fuseini et al. (2024) further highlighted that road networks play a particularly crucial role by reducing travel time and costs while enabling the integration of isolated areas into markets, while reliable electricity access improves productivity and education, enabling off farm diversification through manufacturing, agro-processing and services. Say the moon. Furthermore, Fuseini et al (2024) demonstrated that essential infrastructure investment includes energy, roads and telecommunications services as key component for alleviating special poverty. The study of Fuseini et al. (2024) provided evidence for Vietnam demonstrating that policy focused on building rural roads, providing power, building schools and constructing healthcare facilities serve as effective pathway to reduce poverty by fostering human capital growth. Productivity and market access. Financial infrastructure can support broader rural development by enabling the construction of storage facilities in rural areas which reduces post-harvest losses and provides the stable food sources while generating local employment opportunities (Shafiee et al., 2023).

Comprehensive service delivery requires coordinated approaches that integrate multiple interventions. The International Labour Organisation advocates for well-orchestrated combinations of measures including coordinated infrastructure development, improvement of social services, investment of focused on job creation,

availability of credit safety, education and training and support for orderly worker migration (Ahmed, 2014). These comprehensive strategies must focus on improving access to essential services, promoting inclusive economic development, bridging the digital divide, and fostering social inclusion (Calzada, 2023). Access to improved water and sanitation represent another critical infrastructure component as poor access amplifies poverty, while improved sanitation contributes to significant poverty reduction (Fuseini et al., 2024; Nwani & Osuji, 2020). Human capital development through education serves as both a skill and resources with practical significance for escaping spatial poverty traps, making investment in school and health care facilities essential component for infrastructure-based poverty reduction strategies (Fuseini et al., 2024).

3.4.7 Financial inclusion and social protection

Financial inclusion through innovative models has demonstrated significant success in addressing rural poverty. The Grameen Bank model developed by Professor Muhamed Yunus which won the 2006 peace Nobel price provides a small loan to poor people, particularly women without any collateral to run their small profit- making business and lift their families out of poverty, successfully benefitting 100 million families in rural Bangladesh (Nghia, 2010). These are approach recognises that lack of access to financial services is a major barrier preventing rural household from investing in productive activities. Both formal and informal financial participation have proven effective at reducing multidimensional poverty by facilitating land transfer and non-farm employment opportunities (Li & Hu, 2024). In addition, Li & Hu (2024), also highlighted that poverty reduction pathways through land transfer and off-farm employment have broad relevance for agrarian economies facing multidimensional poverty, particularly in regions like South Asia, Southeast. Asia and sub-Saharan Africa that share challenges of financial exclusion in efficient land use and weak social protection. Social protection programs show diversity in design but consistently provide pathways out of poverty. Pure income transfer like South Africa's old Age Grant supplement the purchasing power of household in poverty, while other programmes combine income transfer with access to basic services or infrastructure improvements (Das, 2016). In addition, Das (2016) also presents the findings on Mexico Oportunidedes Program links transfer to school attendance and primary Health

care utilisation with the objective of reducing intergenerational poverty persistence, while social transfers conditioned on labour supply link the transfer to local infrastructure development. The most effective approach is combined financial inclusion with policy reforms. Expanding formatting financial coverage through digital financial technology while regulating informal finance can address deficiencies in rural financial services effectively while optimising land transfer policies and promoting landform. Employment can enhance the income and development potential on firm household by improving land markets mechanism and offering vocational training (Li & Hu, 2024).

3.4.8 Specific solution model from Global South.

Several proven models from developing countries have shown success in reducing rural poverty including China targeted poverty elevation programmes with from Ian Banky, microfinance model from Bangladesh, value chain integration approaches and industrialization strategies use across East. Asia.

3.4.8.1 The National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM): Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)

NRLM is a significant poverty alleviation programme launched in 2011 by the Government of India, aiming to reduce rural poverty by fostering livelihoods opportunities and empowering rural households, especially women through self-managed institutions (Kumar & Singh, 2023; Srivastava & Sharma, 2025). This mission aims to reduce rural poverty by fostering livelihood opportunities and empowering rural households especially women through self-managed institutions (Kumar & Singh, 2023; Soti, 2023). A core strategy of NRLM involves mobilising rural poor household into self-help groups and their federations, promoting collective action, financial inclusion, capacity building and access to credit and markets (Kumar & Singh, 2023; Ashok et al., 2021; Behura et al., 2025). The NRLM operates on the principle of mobilising 70 million below poverty line households into self-help groups and supporting them through livelihood collectives (Ashok et al., 2021). They aim to provide financial aid through small savings and microfinance programmes, which are crucial for financial inclusion in rural areas (Saroj & Singh, 2023; Thangarajan, 2024). NRLM has been instrumental in enhancing the economy, well-being and livelihood security of rural women which promote economic empowerment and livelihoods

security of rural women (Soti, 2023; Srivastava et al., 2025). Beyond economic benefit NRLM contributes significantly to social empowerment and financial inclusion (Maity, 2023). Self-help groups act as a bridge between the unorganised rural population and the formal financial sector. This initiative helps in overcoming geographical barriers and legislative limitation that often exclude low-income populations from financial awareness and services (Kumar & Pathak, 2022). However, challenges exist ensuring uniform formation and effectiveness functioning of this federal structure across countries (Shylendra, 2018). The National rural Livelihood Mission in India represent comprehensive multi-faceted approach to poverty alleviation and women empowerment through collective action and savings programme.

3.4.8.2 China targeted poverty elevation model (TPA).

China's targeted poverty alleviation model represents a significant policy innovation that has demonstrably reduced extreme poverty (Dunford & Bing, 2021; Liu et al., 2020). This approach was initiated in 2013, aiming to eradicate absolute poverty by the end of 2020 (Huang & Yang, 2018; Liu et al., 2020). It shifted China's anti-poverty strategies from large-scale, broad-brush poverty reduction efforts to a more granular, precise and systematic intervention (Guo et al., 2022; Wu, 2021). The model's success is attributed to its multifaceted approach encompassing precise identification of poor household, tailored interventions, robust accountability mechanisms and substantial governmental commitment (Guo et al., 2022; Huang & Yang, 2018). A core principle of the TPA model is the precision identification of poverty's-stricken households, which involves scientifically and effectively identifying those in need (Huang & Yang, 2018; Zheng & Liu, 2018). This initial step is critical for ensuring that resources and interventions are directed to the appropriate beneficiaries, thereby enhancing the efficiency of poverty allegation efforts (Huang & Yang, 2018). The intervention provides a diverse range of tailored intervention that address the specific causes of poverty for each household or region, which includes developing local industries and training, implementation of large-scale photovoltaic poverty alleviation projects, education and human capital development, relocation for poverty alleviation, financial support, social work intervention and land policy innovation (Zhi & Zhao, 2021; Wu et al., 2019; Zou et al., 2019; Zhi & Zhao, 2021; Yang, 2021; Meng et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2018). That TPA model also emphasises precision management, which encompasses monitoring, evaluation and accountability. This include tracking the

progress of poverty alleviation efforts and enhancing ensuring that officials are held accountable for outcomes. The TPA model emphasises a shift from broad based poverty reduction to a highly specific localised approach, often involving the tripartite game between government, enterprise and poor households (Song & Chen, 2021). China experiences provide valuable lesson for other developing countries facing similar challenges in poverty alleviation.

3.4.6.3 Agricultural industrialization model

Odisha has actively pursued agricultural industrialization through a multiple-prolonged approach that leverages value chain development, agro-processing infrastructure and farmer centric initiatives building upon its historical agricultural reliance (Dash et al., 2020; Sarkar & Mukherji, 2025). The states efforts are crucial given the vulnerability of its agricultural sector to climate variability and other challenges (Tanti et al., 2025; Senapati, 2022; Das et al., 2020). One of the cornerstones of Odisha agricultural industrialization model is robust value chain development. Recognising that a significant portion of agricultural produce can be damaged due to fragmented value chains (Acharya et al., 2023), the state has emphasised integrating production, processing and marketing activities. It was found that initiatives are being implemented to strengthen these connections, with studies focusing on factors like fertiliser use and irrigation methods that significantly impact yield and the overall value chain (Mahapatra & Mishra, 2025). Value chain interventions are also critical for improving women's economic empowerment, particularly in agriculture. Way, social, cultural norms and other gender dynamics often influence resources distribution and access to opportunities (Sahoo et al., 2024; Malhotra et al., 2024). In regions with low urbanisation and non-agricultural industry, agricultural industrialization has emerged as a primary approach to real poverty reduction. This model has been demonstrated through successful practices in Odisha, India.

3.5 Addressing gaps in literature on effective gender roles for poverty alleviation

Finding solutions, to the barriers associated with gender roles and poverty alleviation, in both traditional communities is crucial.

3.4.9 Solution to African Women empowerment

To rewrite the history of African nations, we must prioritise the stories of African women and rethink how we discuss power, politics, and the state in Africa (Bouka, 2021). Additionally, the author indicated that there will be no real progress in decolonization until that time comes. Research into traditional or indigenous practises require a global focus on the epistemological patterns that emerge across different cultural contexts (Semali et al., 2002). In a study of a population located in the India Pekanbaru through Zakat institution, the Mustahik demography and socio-cultural influences the success of the Mustahik empowerment initiative in reducing poverty, examining whether Mustahik demography and socio-cultural influences the success of the empowerment initiative in reducing poverty (Trianto et al., 2020). The findings indicate that gender, education, age, and residence did not have a significant impact, and variable societal behaviours and religiosity showed little effect.

3.4.10 Integrating local indigenous and western knowledge system

To move towards multi-scale efficiency, it is necessary to connect indigenous and local knowledge systems with scientific knowledge systems to improve knowledge, practice, and ethics (Tengo et al., 2017). As a result, Tengo et al proposed that increased beneficiary involvement in decision-making and implementation, as well as human resource development and legal framework development, is required. Both men and women should be given opportunities to actively participate in long term efforts aimed at reducing poverty (Florence & Justine, 2015). Moreover, Florence & Justine suggested that, to tackle poverty effectively and promote gender development it is crucial to develop policies that focus on empowering women in areas such as education, employment, decision making processes as ensuring the provision of legal, political, economic and social rights for women. Hep et al. (2019); Alam (2011) contended that the accomplishment of gender parity necessitates the establishment of a society where both genders have comparable admission to education, healthcare, decent job prospects, and sustainable livelihoods.

Breitkreuz et al (2026) mentioned that a lot of families nowadays consider part time work as crucial. However, it can pose challenges for women to come across job opportunities that provide the level of benefits and stability, as full-time employment

(Maestripieri, 2023; Breitkreuz et al,. 2026). One political approach to achieving gender equality in the economy involves family-friendly policies such as publicly funded childcare and flexible working hours (Alam, 2011). As the Okedele (2021) concludes, gender gaps still exist in Africa, allowing for discrimination against women, and it is recommended that the United Nations provide more funds and training programs to African women's movements to help them challenge discriminatory social and cultural practices while tapping into available political and economic opportunities. The policies aimed at reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development should include gender equality, equity, and women's empowerment (Awumbila, 2006). In addition, the author indicated that despite this, the links between gender equality and poverty reduction are complex. Furthermore, Awumbila (2006) concludes that if gender-based poverty reduction strategies are to be sustainable, they must acknowledge the unequal gender relations and power structures that women face at all levels.

Because women's participation is critical to Africa's development, development policies must be designed and programmed to respond to gender needs (Ermodi, 2021). The author proposed that to achieve policy objectives in African states, women must be full partners in the articulation, formulation, and implementation of development policies. Mbenzi and Ashikuti (2018) proposed that the shared resources and employment opportunities may help people escape poverty without causing dependency. In recent indigenous and traditional practises debates, the emphasis has tended to be on gathering more local case study material of exceptional practice (Yanou et al., 2024) The authors demonstrated that the understanding of knowledge can be accurately described as a dynamic process rather, than a fixed collection of facts. Finally, the authors concludes that recent traditional practises debates have focused on increasing the number of local case studies of good traditional practises practice, integrating traditional and scientific knowledge, and co-opting traditional practises into current neoliberal discourse.

To increase development and get out of poverty, improving institutional quality through voice and accountability, rules, and government efficacy on socio-economic concerns is required. Gender inequality in the Sub-Saharan Africa region should be reduced through human development and refined frameworks that improve institutional

accountability (Workneh, 2020). (Mbenzi, & Ashikuti, 2018) proposed that in Africa, many tactics and instruments are being developed to combat poverty, yet poverty may be reduced by using and promoting existing traditional tools. The findings highlight that researchers and policymakers investigate poverty from a gender perspective (Nie, 2021). A paradigm shift in the conduct of community change efforts in rural settings is required to achieve sustainable development using indigenous practises (Godfrey & Siraje, 2019). The implementation of poverty alleviation and gender equality strategies has raised a huge debate on the application of knowledge. The western method of improvement is the received standard for modernisation that and this is connected to humanized advancement and human advancement (Bordoloi & Das, 2017).

As indicated by Therborn (2018:473) “modernisation is not, at this point reasonable as a widespread procedure of one-sided development. Africa was abused by Western Europe from the sixteenth century; in any case, it is dubious how much the history has added to the present disparities on the planet". Therborn (2018: 473) further indicated that “ideas and information flow has claimed to bring participation and empowerment, but the hopes of actors have become more equal, declining local and traditional differences and self- denial”. The native ways of the community of dealing with the community problem were excluded in the agenda to transform the local traditional people. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the relevance and the integration of both knowledge into poverty alleviation and gender equality. Mercer et al. (2009) highlighted that instead of one knowledge above other credit should be given to both knowledge including indigenous practises because each knowledge has its own merits and efficacy.

3.5 Conclusion

It is evident that the modernisation theory, social role theory, and intersectionality theory provide an enriched understanding of traditional and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation. The evidence revealed that poverty is influenced by interconnected factors beyond income, including race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality. Moreover, it establishes that social expectations and norms can shape gender roles, which in turn affect the experiences of poverty. The theoretical frameworks advance our understanding of these complexities and provide a guide to analysing and interpreting the varied experiences and factors contributing to poverty. It highlights the

significance of approaches, to reducing poverty that consider the dimensions of poverty and the specific requirements of traditional communities. These elements are important in driving the subsequent stages of research and reinforce the importance of robust, interdisciplinary, and contextually relevant frameworks in conducting future studies on poverty alleviation. Future research should continue to harness these theories while also Recognising the necessity for tailored adaptations specific to the needs and experiences of diverse cultural communities. However, the literature shows a gap in how Indigenous knowledge and gender roles are included in studies of household livelihood systems and poverty dynamics. Most studies look at these issues separately and do not fully explain how they work together, especially in rural communities. This study addresses this gap by examining how these two aspects interact in the Tshaulu community to provide a more grounded understanding of poverty in rural areas.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS FOR ASSESSING GENDERED APPROACHES TO POVERTY REDUCTION

This chapter aims to explain the methodological framework which include the approach guiding the study design and conduct. Innovative research methodologies, grounded in both qualitative and quantitative approaches, are important for assessing the effect of traditional and contemporary gender on alleviating poverty. The mixed methods are necessary for the rigor and credibility of the study and promote the reliability and validity of the findings (Dawson, 2019). Therefore, the following section begins with an overview of the pragmatism as a philosophical foundation for mixed methods within a case study research design (4.1), Sampling and Target Population (4.2), Data Collection Tools (4.3), Data Analysis Strategies (4.4), Conclusion (4.5). To establish a philosophical foundation for the methodology employed in this research, the subsequent section examines pragmatism and its relevance to the mixed methods research design within a case study framework.

4.1. Research design

The research design plays a significant role in guiding the methodological approach in the collection of data and further influences the interpretation of the data. This study adopts a case study research design within a mixed methods research design, using a convergent parallel approach to integrate qualitative and quantitative data. The research design for this thesis is informed by pragmatism, specifically within the context of the core principle of addressing a problem by advancing an understanding of the problem and then presenting possible solutions (Shank, 2013; Muntaz, 2022). This research design is thus particularly valuable in addressing real-world issues and generating actionable insights. Kelly & Cordeiro (2020) argued that the pragmatic paradigm focuses on solving complex problems and emphasises the relevance of contextual understanding, which makes it a strong fit for case studies aimed at exploring complex phenomena. Schatzki (2019) argued that a comprehensive understanding of human experiences and their significance within social practices cannot rely solely on interpretive frameworks but should also examine the actual behaviours and routines of individuals within their environments. This perspective aligns well with the pragmatic approach, as it encourages exploring how individuals engage with and respond to their experiences in everyday situations, rather than

merely analysing their interpretations. The application of pragmatism significantly influences case study research by providing a flexible and practical framework that accommodates multiple methodologies and perspectives (Elgeddawy & Abouraia, 2024). According to Sefotho (2021), the pragmatic approach affords researchers the capacity to articulate and enhance their understanding of the knowledge generated through their investigations while simultaneously uncovering broader opportunities within the research context itself. In this paradigm, researchers can use different methods to understand how gender affects poverty alleviation without being limited to one viewpoint. Pragmatism informs the design of mixed methods research by valuing the multiplicity of worldviews, which enriches the development of viable solutions for complex problems (Elgeddawy & Abouraia, 2024). The research design also allows for the case study application allowing researchers the opportunity to navigate complex real-world issues, thereby enriching the understanding of phenomena under investigation (Gustafsson et al, 2024; Sefotho, 2021; Harrison et al., 2017; Kumar, 2018). The added advantage of using a case study approach is that the researcher could gain in-depth insight into how indigenous and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation strategies in the specific marginal community have been (or could be) applied. Further the researcher could obtain more in-depth knowledge of the unique experiences of rural women experiencing poverty and subsequently become a rich source of knowledge for the creation of targeted interventions and policies.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative data allowed for triangulation and a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The application of a mixed methods approach allows for the integration of qualitative and quantitative data (Ivankova et al., 2025) and the promotion of cross-disciplinary research (Sefotho, 2021), resulting in a more thorough understanding of the research problem (Elgeddawy & Abouraia, 2024). Combining a mixed methods approach to the case study approach advances the validity and application of research findings (Fishman, 2017). The case study design provides a framework for applying this approach within the study area. This thesis adopted a convergence parallel design using a mixed-methods approach applied in one case study and is thus aligned to pragmatism that will enable the researcher to undertake a more holistic examination of the effect of indigenous and contemporary roles of gender in poverty alleviation within the authentic context of a typical rural locality. The advantage of the convergence parallel research

design (Figure 4.1) involves separate collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data and allows for a comparison of findings to cross-check for confirmation or contradictions in a drive to gain a better understanding of the problem at hand (Creswell, 2014). The study adopted a convergent mixed methods case study design to address the multidimensional and context-specific nature of the research problem. This approach allowed for the integration of qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring methodological triangulation. The methodological approach is therefore well-suited to capturing the complexity of household livelihood systems and gender dynamics. The combination of household surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, participant observation, and document analysis provides a comprehensive empirical foundation for the study.

The qualitative approach allows an exploration of attitude, behaviour, and experience through methods such as interviews or focus groups (Dawson, 2019) to get in-depth opinions from participants. The collection of qualitative data is an important building block in developing an understanding and in-depth insight into the indigenous and contemporary roles of gender in poverty alleviation. The quantitative approach followed allowed for the generation of descriptive statistics to obtain a clear reflection of the demographic profile of a typical rural community in South Africa. Struwig & Stead (2001) indicated that quantitative assessment in a case study approach is important as it allows for a more complete and accurate description of a situation.

Various versions of a convergent mixed method research design have been applied in research that have investigated the phenomenon of poverty and have explored the challenges related to poverty reduction (Unterhalter & North, 2011), the intersection between inclusive growth and feminisation of poverty (Asmorowati & Schubert, 2018) and a gendered, intersectional analysis of poverty (Cameron & Tedds, 2020). Chant (2010) used a similar research design to gain a better understanding of the linkages between gender and poverty and informed policy and intervention development, while Ridder (2017) used a convergent research design to examine factors that contributed to gender disparities by considering various social, economic, and cultural aspects intertwined with gender and poverty. This approach is used to address the research problem by combining quantitative and qualitative data.

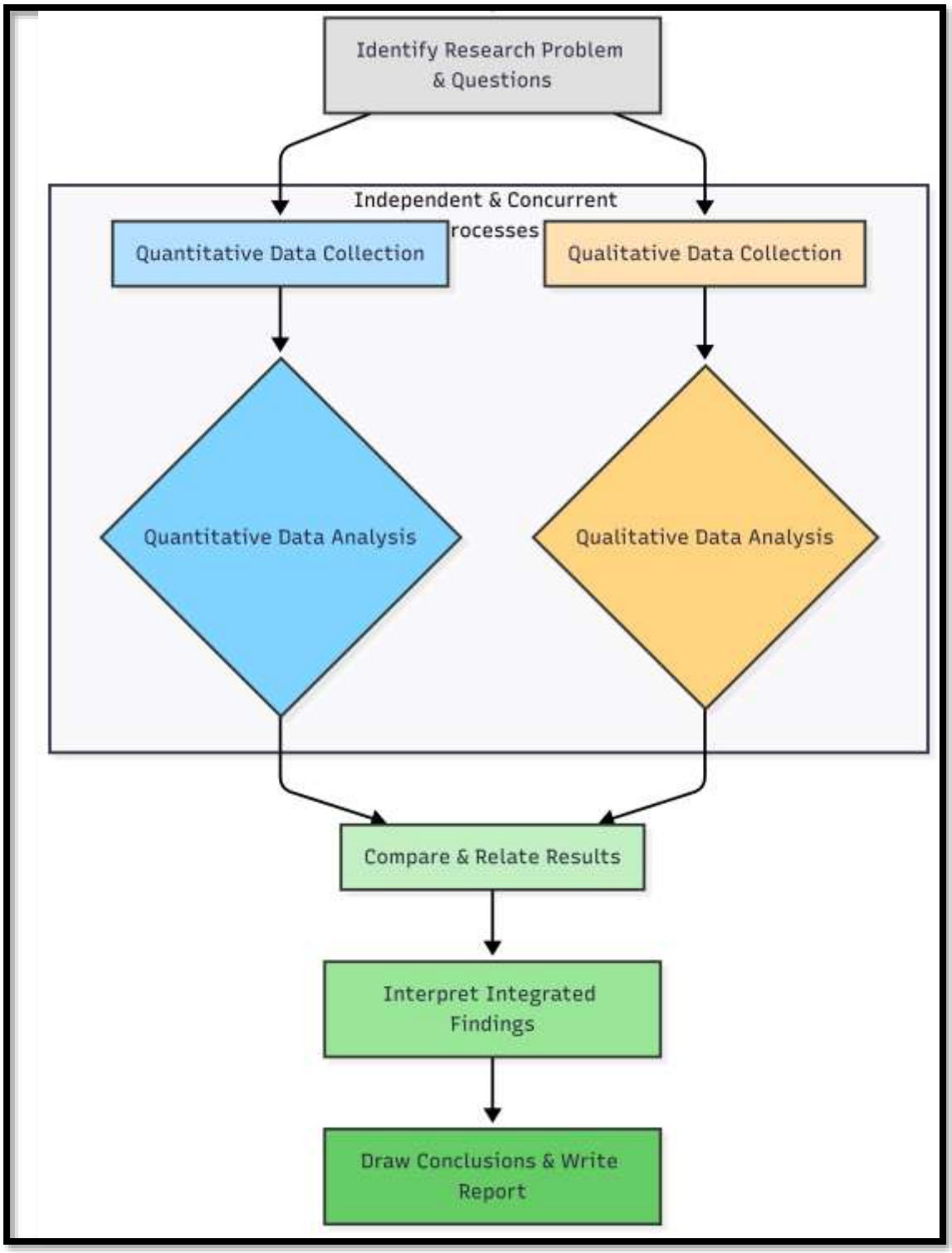

Figure 4.1: Convergent mixed method research design (adapted from Creswell, 2014)

Aligned to acceptable methods of similar research and as this research design enabled the researcher to recognise the complexity of poverty in relation to other elements of inequality, an adaptation of the converging mixed method research design

(Figure 4.1) as suggested by Creswell (2014) was implemented in this thesis. Further, aligned to the sentiments of Corus et al. (2016) but applied to the problem identified for this thesis, this design allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of not only the isolated aspects of poverty but also the multidimensional disadvantages individuals confronting poverty might face. This chapter distinguishes between the research paradigm, methodological approach, research design, and methods, and then aligns them with the problem statement.

4.2. Sampling and target population

The identification of the target population is a critical component of research methodology as it defines the subset of the broader population from which data are collected and to which the study findings are intended to apply (Willie, 2024). In this study, the target population was carefully defined to align with the research objectives, methodological approach, and ethical consideration, thereby ensuring the validity, reliability, and applicability of the research findings (Willie, 2024; Agaku, 2021). The establishment of the target population was guided by methodological, ethical and practical consideration, with the broader aim of generating valid and applicable findings, aligning between population characteristics, research objectives, and data collection strategies ensured precision in analysis and interpretation.Given the use of both primary and secondary data in this study, the target population was categorised into primary and secondary groups corresponding to the different data sources. The selection of the five villages was based on their representation of typical rural communities within Tshaulu, characterised by the coexistence of indigenous and contemporary gender practices.

4.2.1. sampling and target population: Primary data sources:

This study adopted a convergent mixed method research design, which required the integration of the primary data sources, sampling strategy, and target population into a single coherent methodological framework (Stern et al., 2020). The description of the target population is critical component of the research methodology, as it defines the subset of the broader population from which data are collected and to which the findings are intended to apply (Jabkowski & Kolczyriska, 2020). The sampling strategy for primary data is presented below, followed by a structured explanation of the sampling approaches for different participant groups. In this study, individuals were

systematically selected from a larger population to assess the characteristics, perception and behaviour related to indigenous and contemporary gender roles in poverty elevation. The primary target population comprised of individuals and group residing in the selected villages of Tshaulu, which are: Habegwa, Buluni, Manzemba, Tshilaphala, Tshitumbe.

Table 4.1: Primary target population & Rationale: Multistage Cluster Sampling Framework

Cluster stage	Sample Unit	Selected sample	Villages	Rationale
1st	Villages	5 Villages	Habegwa, Manzemba, Buluni, Tshitumbe, Tshilaphala	To identify representative rural village clusters within Tshaulu.
2nd	Civic Organisations (Khoro)	Members of civic organizations (5 village heads)	All five villages	To obtain community level perspectives and ensure cultural legitimacy. To explore the shared and varied perspectives on gender and poverty.
3rd	Focus Groups: Men and Women	Married men and women, grandmothers, grandfathers, in-law sons or daughters (44 participants)	Tshitumbe and Habegwa Villages	To explore the shared and varied perspectives on gender and poverty.
4th	Households	Household heads or representatives (400 participants)	All five villages	To capture a household's perspectives and experiences of roles of gender and poverty alleviation.
5th	Key stakeholders:	Indigenous knowledge custodians (4 participants)	Tshilaphala & Habegwa	To explore the perspectives of the traditional leadership on indigenous and contemporary roles of gender in poverty alleviation.

These villages were selected because they represent a rural communities characterised by both traditional and contemporary gender practises. The demographic attributes of the primary target population included age, gender, marital status, and family role. This study targeted participants at households within selected villages communities and key stakeholders within the tribal authority leadership level to ensure representativeness, inclusivity, and depth of data. To ensure methodological rigour, the study employed multistage mixed method sampling strategy combining

multistage cluster sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling and systematic sampling.

Multistage cluster sampling served as the overarching sampling framework due to the rural and geographically dispersed nature of the study area. This method reduced logistical constraints and cost while enabling access to a representative sample (Kiran et al., 2021). Sampling proceeded through five hierarchical stages, beginning with this selection of villages and progressing to civic organisation (Khoro), focus group participants, households' surveys representatives and key stakeholders. Primary data were collected from three main groups: household representatives, focus group participants and key stakeholders. Household representatives included fathers (husband), mothers (Wife), grandparents and in-laws of any marital status, between the ages 20-69 years. The primary sampling unit for the household survey was the household, represented by an adult member within each selected household. Focus group participants consisted of community members organised into gender specific and a mixed group across different age categories. Key stakeholders included village head men as traditional leaders and indigenous or cultural knowledge custodians. These groups were selected due to their lived experiences, contextual knowledge, and active roles in household and community decision-making processes related to poverty alleviation.

4.2.1.1. The multistage cluster sampling: village sample units

Cluster sampling is an effective methodology for selecting representative samples from populations, particularly in rural settings. Cluster sampling, according to Kiran et al., (2021), is appropriate for studies that involve a huge population that covers a large geographic area or that are too dispersed for a random sample. The advantage is that the method can reduce logistical challenges and costs associated with the survey of dispersed populations (Kiran et al., 2021). This method of sampling is considered cheap and operationally easier to undertake; however, it is also considered less efficient compared to other methods, and the efficiency of the data collected can be improved by using supplementary primary and secondary information (Ly et al., 2018). Table 4.1 illustrates multistage cluster sampling applied in this research. The sample was drawn from multiple units of analysis at different levels, progressing from villages down to specific groups and individuals. The first stage involves a selection of the villages in Tshaulu. The chosen areas out of 15 villages are: Habegwa, Manzemba,

Buluni, Tshitumbe, and Tshilaphala. This is the largest group of the first sample. The second stage involved the civic organization of the selected villages based on the approval from the tribal authority (chief). The third stage involved the groups of men and women from the selected villages participating in the key informants' interviews and focus groups. The fourth stage includes the selection of the households, specifically looking at the head of household or elderly member of a selected house. The last stage includes the selection of the traditional leaders in the selected villages. These are the clusters that shape the sample participants of the study. The qualitative component of this study employed non-probability sampling techniques, specifically quota sampling and purposive sampling, to select participants with relevant knowledge and experience. These methods were appropriate as the study aimed to obtain in-depth, context-specific insights rather than statistical generalisation. The qualitative sample included 44 focus group participants and 7 key informants, selected based on their roles, gender, age, and knowledge of indigenous and contemporary gender practices within the community.

4.2.1.2. The Quota sampling strategy: Focus groups participants

Quota sampling was applied to ensure representation across key characteristics such as gender, age, and household roles in focus groups and key informant selection. Quota sampling is a method that ensures research participant represent specific population groups in predetermined proportions. It's particularly useful for focus groups because it helps researchers get diverse viewpoints while controlling costs and time (Kumer & Urbanc, 2019). Quota sampling is non-probability sampling technique where researchers first define relevant groups and specify the sizes needed from each group, then select individual who fits that description to fill the predetermined quarters (Illiyasu & Etikan, 2021; Mustaffa et al., 2015). In this study, quota sampling method help in creating a sample that represents certain characteristics of the population by ensuring that specific proportion of the sample subgroup matched the proportion found in the entire population (Moser, 2015). The participants are selected according to their characteristics and need to qualify the criteria before participating in the study based on their age, gender and marital status and family roles (Struwig and Stead, 2011). Focus groups, also known as discussion groups, gather people to discuss a specific issue (Dawson, 2019) The focus group participants consist of specified groups either (i.e., women only, men only, or men and women). The advantage of focus group

discussion s is that they are not expensive and rich in data, stimulate and support the respondent, and that they can lead beyond the answers of the single interviewee (Flick, 2015; Akyyildiz & Ahmed, 2021). Focus groups were conducted targeting the youth and women, and mixed aged groups in the community. Table 4.2 shows the different groups of participants based on where they're from, their demographic traits, and how many are in each group.

Table 4.2: Focus groups Sample Size: Key Stakeholders

Group	Location	Demographic	No of participants
1st	Tshitumbe	7 women	7
2nd	Tshitumbe	5 women and 5 men	10
3rd	Tshitumbe	6 men	6
4th	Habegwa	5 men	5
5th	Habegwa	5 men and 5 women	10
6th	Habegwa	6 women	6
Total	**6**	**44**	**44**

The inclusion of these stakeholders ensures that there are various perspectives and in-depth information and contributes to a new understanding of contextual issues. A total of six groups were formed across two locations, Tshitumbe and Habegwa, targeting specific demographics to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives. For example, Group 1 consisted solely of women from Tshitumbe, while Group 2 was a mixed-gender group from the same village. This approach ensured that the study captured both individual and collective experiences across gender and community settings. Additionally, by sampling from two different villages, the study integrated socio-cultural diversity into the findings, contributing to a richer analysis of the data. Participation in the focus groups depended on the availability and willingness of individuals from the selected areas, and data collection continued until saturation was reached. This process was further enriched by key informant interviews with village heads and custodians of indigenous knowledge. The participants included men and women across different age groups and household roles, ensuring representation of diverse perspectives within the community.

4.2.1.3. Purposive sampling: Key Informants-Villages Heads and Indigenous Knowledge Custodian

Purposive sampling was used to select key informants based on their knowledge of indigenous and contemporary gender roles. When using purposive sampling, the

scenario is selected because it exemplifies a process that is relevant to a certain study; however, there must be a valid justification for this selection (Fouche et al., 2021). Purposive sampling was used when sampling the participants because they possess the knowledge of indigenous and contemporary roles of gender in the rural households' settings of the selected area. The selected sample of key informants were involved in the interviews on the indigenous and contemporary roles of gender in poverty alleviation. The main aspect of sample consideration was specific group characteristics composed of men and women. The purpose of the research was clearly identified with the potential participants. This was the advantage because the participants have experience and knowledge and enable in-depth explorations of the subject.To avoid bias, participants were drawn from the focus groups to include relevant participants. These key informants include the traditional leadership and community representatives. Table (4.3) presents key stakeholders involved in a study, focusing on village leadership and cultural knowledge custodians in specific areas. The key informants included male and female traditional leaders and indigenous knowledge custodians with extensive community experience. This selection is essential to ensure that the perspectives of village leaders and indigenous knowledge holders are adequately represented in the research.

Table 4.3: Key stakeholder's sample

Areas of Key Stakeholders	Sample Description	Sample Size
Habegwa, Manzemba, Buluni, Tshitumbe, Tshilaphala	Village Headmen	5 Headmen's
Tshilaphala, Tshiumoni	Indigenous Knowledge Custodian or Cultural Representatives	2 Males and 2 Females

The village headmen were selected and communicated. The purpose of the study was explained, and they volunteered to be involved. Issue of consent and 5 headmen were interviewed. The key stakeholders were selected based on the availability and chief approval of the villages and the community consent. The study was voluntary, the stakeholders are strategically classified according to their pivotal roles within the community, and the sample size powerfully reflects the number of individuals meticulously chosen to represent each group.

4.2.1.4. Systematic sampling: households' participants

This study utilized a systematic sampling method to select household participants for the survey household surveys. Descriptive statistics, including measures such as the mean age of respondents, are presented in Chapter 5 to provide a detailed demographic profile of the sample. The systematic sampling was applied by selecting every k-*th* household within the selected village . This method ensured that all households had an equal and predictable chance of selection, reducing selection bias while maintaining simplicity and efficiency. Data collected from household representatives provided comprehensive insights into the socio-economic, demographic, and cultural factors relevant to the study. This study's demographic includes the spouse's mother or father, grandparents, and in-laws. A cluster of five villages in Tshaulu was used based on the willingness of the traditional authority to grant permission to perform such a study.

Table 4.4 presents the overall study framework this section presents the households samples sizes determinations and procedures. A systematic sampling includes the procedure in which an initial point of household is selected by a random process and then every nth number on the list is selected 30% of the households were drawn from the households in selected villages (Struwig & Stead, 2001). The village's selection was based on diverse demographics. From five villages, about 33% were males, whereas 67% were females. The first step involves selecting 5 villages as the sample, which include Habegwa, Manzemba, Buluni, Tshitumbe, and Tshilaphala. In the second step, members of civic organizations (1 member per village) are selected from each of the 5 villages. The third step involves married men and women, as well as older generations (grandmothers, grandfathers, in-law sons, or daughters), who are chosen to participate in focus groups from each village. Finally, 5th step key traditional leaders, such as headmen of sub-villages and indigenous knowledge custodians, are selected from each village.

Table 4.4: Sampling strategy

Location Of Participants	Sample Type	Sampling Strategy
Tshilaphala, Habegwa, Tshitumbe, Buluni, Manzemba	Household representative (see description above)	Systematic sampling

Table 4.5: Total households' number and villages identified

Village	Total Households (N)	Sampled Households (n)	K=N/n
Habegwa	248	75	Every 3rd household
Manzemba	224	70	Every 3rd household
Buluni	185	55	Every 3rd household
Tshitumbe (Mutshetshe)	274	80	Every 3rd household
Tshilaphala	483	120	Every 4th household
Total	**1,414**	**400**	

The sample size of 400 households was determined from the total number of households across the selected villages (N = 1,414, as shown in Table 4.5), representing approximately 30% of the population, which is sufficient for descriptive analysis within a case study context. This study's demographic includes the spouse's mother or father, grandparents, and in-laws. A cluster of five villages of Tshaulu was used based on the willingness of the traditional authority to grant permission to perform such a study. Several households were provided through a village head under. The population size, a systematic sampling method (Table 4.5) employed to choose the households, and the desired number was estimated around 30% of the households in the chosen villages were utilised. The formular is as follows: K=N (total number of households)/ n (desired households) by (Struwig & Stead, 2001). The area is composed of 15 villages where in this study covers 5 villages which includes the sample unit on the third stages of sample unit in table 3.3. Based on statistics from the tribal authority, there are 248 households in Habegwa, 224 homes in Manzemba, 185 houses in Buluni, 274 households in Tshitumbe or Mutshetshe, and 483 households in Tshilaphala. A starting point was selected within each village, after which every kth household was chosen until the required sample size was reached. Each village was treated as a within a multistage cluster sampling framework (Table 4.1). According to a 2011 poll conducted by Statistics South Africa, most households are headed by women, as opposed to men, and are governed by tribal authorities which the chief is a leader to all villages. The total number of the household selected per village includes Habegwa (75 households); Manzemba (70 households); Buluni= (55 households); Tshitumbe or Mutshetshe (80 households) and Tshilaphala (120 households). Although the systematic sampling was applied within each village cluster some households were not included in the study. This was due to absent of adult's household's members at the time of data collection, the presence of child-led houses

in the absent of parents, individuals do not meet the study target population and voluntary refusal to participate. In accordance with ethical research principles such households were excluded, in that case the next illegible household on the sampling list was selected in line with the predetermined sampling interval maintaining the integrity of the sampling design. The household survey was administered by the researcher with the support of trained research assistants to ensure consistency and to accommodate varying literacy levels among participants.

4.2.2. Secondary data sources

To comprehend and evaluate evidence pertaining to indigenous and modern roles of gender, this study uses a qualitative approach to document analysis. The previous researchers demonstrated that secondary data can be classified into the raw data already collected, summaries of numbers, and written treaties (Struwig & Stead, 2001; Pederson et al., 2020). Documents were selected for their relevance to the study. Analysing existing documents involves either analysing their factual content or shedding light on a deeper meaning that goes beyond what the document's content really indicates (Fouche et al., 2021). The selection criteria were guided by the ability to provide insight on the roles of indigenous and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation and community dynamics. Furthermore, the analysis of the document involved rigorous, systematic processes with specific phases so that an unbiased conclusion can be made based on what is written (Fouche et al., 2021). Table 4.6 presents a summary of the type of document and the selection criteria.

As illustrated in Table 4.6, the predominant category of documents encompasses official documentation, which includes governmental reports, policies, official records, census data, legal documents, and regulatory frameworks. Fouche et al., (2021) posits that the retrieval of official documents frequently presents challenges attributable to confidentiality constraints. The present study incorporates written materials sourced from organizations, encompassing annual reports, publications including journals, books, and news articles, governmental publications, and online datasets, such as global reports from international bodies like the European Union, African Union, Global Poverty Watch, and United Nations Development Programmes. These documents were obtained from a range of institutions and diverse stakeholders, utilizing journal repositories, libraries, search engines such as Google, and online documents from

institutional websites. To ensure credibility and reliability, only documents from authoritative and verifiable sources were included in the analysis. These comprised government publications, policy frameworks, academic reports, and reputable institutional websites. Online materials were critically evaluated based on source authority, institutional affiliation, publication purpose, and relevance to the study, and informal or non-verifiable sources such as personal blogs were excluded.

Table 4.6: Document sample

Document type	Description	Selection criteria
Research articles	Peer reviewed articles: • Indigenous and contemporary roles of gender • Mixed methods and research methodology • Poverty alleviation	Full articles published online with high relevance to the study description.
Policies (non-government and government)	Institutional policies addressing: • Indigenous and contemporary roles of gender • Mixed methods and research methodology • Poverty alleviation	Policies from a credible institution: African Union, United Nations Woman's, World Bank, and other relevance to Africa socioeconomic and cultural contexts
Government reports	Official reports on poverty alleviation programs: • Statistical analysis of the poverty alleviation strategies and gender research	Published by national or local government bodies. Address indigenous and contemporary approaches to poverty alleviation.
International archives	Historical and contemporary documents on gender and poverty	Sustainable Development goals, Policies, and Reports by International bodies focusing on community development and poverty alleviation.
Non-government organisation reports	Reports by non-governmental organization on gender and poverty	Reflect community level poverty alleviation strategies. Address both traditional and modern practices.
Blogs and website	Experts' opinions, analysis and update on poverty and gender issues.	Hosted on reputable platform like African Union, United Nation Website providing contemporary and indigenous insight and updates

Sampling a document in research is all about selecting a subset of data from a larger text or dataset to analyse. In terms of conducting a document analysis, and a variety

of factors must be considered. Flick (2015) highlights four key factors: authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning. In addition, Flick (2015) provides the necessary steps of searching first, determining access, sampling, and relevance. The method requires a researcher to carefully collect various written materials and systematically seek out information that may help to address research issues (Mwita, 2022). The documents were selected with purpose, focusing on their relevance to the goals outlined, as demonstrated in the subsequent table that specifies the document types utilized in this research.

Table 4.6 outlines the types of documents to be selected for research on gender and poverty, emphasizing their relevance to the core topics. The selected document types include peer-reviewed research articles, government and non-governmental policies, government reports, international archives, and NGO reports, all of which should directly address issues of gender and poverty. Document analysis continued until data saturation was reached, This approach ensured a comprehensive analysis that maintained alignment and focus to the research objectives. **Data collection tools**

As described in Section 4.1, this thesis followed a pragmatic research design that included the use of a mixed methods approach using a single case study. The data collection tools thus reflect a mixed-methods data collection strategy, ranging from the collection of qualitative and quantitative data from included focus group discussions; interviews with key informants; researcher observations; household surveys; and thorough related document reviews related to the pertinent themes identified during the research. The application of multiple data collections tools allowed the researcher to triangulate and validate findings against numerous sources. These methods were selected to align with the research design and study objectives.

4.3.1 Primary data

Prior to the collection of data as detailed in the preceding sections, it was necessary to meet with the leadership in Tshaulu Village, this included a meeting and detailed discussion with representatives of the Tshaulu Tribal Office on the purpose of the research and the sharing of information related to the data gathering processes. Permission to undertake the research for this thesis in the Village was then granted by the Chief (Appendix 1). After obtaining the necessary permission from the Chief to undertake the research, the researcher proceeded with an ethics application to the

University of South Africa CAES Health Research Ethics Committee for their consideration of the planned research and related data collection tools and permission was granted undertake the research with certain provisions as specified in the Ethics Clearance Approval letter reference 2019/CAES/060 (Appendix 2). Data collection initially commenced in December 2019 and was then delayed due to the COVID-pandemic and thus continued until 2023. Annual reporting to the Ethics Committee ensured ethical clearance for the research remained valid for the duration of the collection of data.

Aligned to the requirements specified in the university ethical committee the researcher tool note of the ethical considerations of Maree & Westhuizen (2009) who described ethical consideration as inclusive of the issue of confidentiality of findings and protection of participants' identities. Throughout the process of data collection, the ethical rights of the participants were considered. This included voluntary participation; anonymity; and confidentiality. The ethical principles underpinning this research ensure the protection of the rights and values of participants by insuring informed consent; prevention from harm; and assurances of privacy. A transparent process was followed to keep the whole community informed, and this included the invitations to participate in the research. Prior to the interaction with any individual or group, the researcher made it clear that the respondents' participation was voluntary and were provided the option of withdrawing from the research process at any time. Due to the COVID-Pandemic in 2020, strict protocols were observed to ensure the safety of all respondents. It should be noted that although the pandemic resulted in an extended data collection period, this did not impact on the quality of the interaction with respondents and the data collected.

Aligned to agreements with the Village Chief and the University Ethics Committee, the findings of this study will be report to the community through the Tribal Office in a manner identified by the Chief after consultation with the researcher when the thesis has been accepted. These data collection methods were selected to capture both quantitative and qualitative aspects of household livelihood systems and gender roles, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The combination of these methods supports triangulation by allowing for the comparison and integration

of findings from different data sources. This approach enabled the convergence of findings across methods, strengthening the validity of the results. `

4.2.2.1. Focus groups discussion (FDG)

The main purpose of a focus group discussion (FDGs) was to explore the perceptions and views of the participants of the effect of indigenous and contemporary gender roles in household's livelihoods maintenance and poverty alleviation. Dawson (2019) explained that a focus group, is often referred to as a group interview in academic discourse and constitutes an engaging assembly wherein individuals participate in a discourse regarding a particular subject matter. Krueger (2014) on the other hand indicates that a focus group is a relevant data collection tool, when the researcher needs obtain a wide range of opinions, perceptions, and ideas that people have on a particular topic. In addition, Krueger (2014) indicated that the purpose of focus groups is often to uncover factors that influence opinion, behaviour, and what drives motivation. Focus groups allow for more flexible interaction with respondents as well as detailed follow-ups and thus allow for the collection of in-depth qualitative data (Guthrie, 2010). The key characteristic of a focus group is that there are a small group (5-10) of participants, as this allows for more effective discussion amongst the participants, with a moderator that guides the discussion by using open-ended questions. This approach allows researchers to capture the voices and experiences of participants from a variety of demographic and socio-economic backgrounds, making it a powerful tool for understanding complex social phenomena (Planka & Costello, 2024). There are many advantages of using focus group discussion to collect data (Dawson, 2019), including that the tool can facilitate a wide range of responses; rich participant interaction; assistance of each other's memory; participation through follow up questions to the moderator and each other, collectively lessening the bias of the researcher. Dawson (2019) however also indicates there are also distinct disadvantages of the tool as individuals may contaminate other participants views; participants may be uncomfortable with the discussion; not everyone might be able to communicate equally and effectively, and some researchers may find it difficult to moderate such focus group. Aware of the challenges of focus groups as documented in the literature, the researcher was able to mitigate the shortcomings of focus groups through well informed moderation. In this study, the term focus group discussions (FGDs) are used deliberately to emphasise participant

interaction and collective engagement, where participants respond to and build on each other's perspectives.

A pilot focus group was conducted (2022) to test if the focus group question guidelines would ensure effective discussion prompts to obtain the rich and in-depth qualitative data. After the pilot, the phrasing of questions was revised minimally, to ensure that the conversation during these focus groups discussion flowed easily, and the researcher was able to obtain data that was of sufficient depth to respond to the objectives of the research. The final question guidelines used during the focus groups can be found in Appendix 3 and these focused on the discussion of issues of the indigenous and contemporary views and attitudes towards, roles of, and the perception of gender roles in poverty alleviation.

A total of 6 focus group discussion s was held in locations in the communities that were normally used for village gatherings and lasted between two and two-half hours each. As reflected in Table 4.2 the participants were from a variety of age groups and gender compositions. The focus group discussions were attended by 44 respondents carefully selected and grouped together for their age and gender to ensure in-depth discussions that would bridge the age and gender dynamics. The focus groups were conducted using the local language, Tshivenda. The researcher (mother-tongue speaker of Tshivenda) moderated and led the discussion with the participants. Each focus group commenced with an explanation of the 'house-rules' of the interaction and included explanation of purpose of the gathering within the context of the research to be undertaken; the procedure to be followed during discussion; addressing the expectations of the participants and the moderator. Participants data were captured by the researcher after signed consent was provided. The discussions were audio recorded, and this was supported by review notes of the moderator, and these were later transcribed in preparation for analysis. Participants responded to the questionnaire through face-to-face interviews conducted by the researcher and research assistants.

4.2.2.2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Stakeholders in a community often hold embedded knowledge of the community that might not surface during household surveys of focus group discussions (Chambers, 2012). Nicolau (2015) indicated the poverty is multi-dimensional and to fully capture

the reality of poverty in a rural community, it is critical to interview stakeholders such as the community leaders, representatives and those who have inherent understanding of the cultural and indigenous knowledge of the community. Kapoor (2002) indicated that stakeholder interviews can offer contextually and socially grounded data that is often not established in focus groups or household surveys and in this way can help the researcher in more accurate assessment of the lived realities of the community, that will then lead to more effective development strategies. Importantly, the interviews with stakeholders could also be used to validate data (through triangulation) collected while using other research tools (Chambers, 2012; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

The question guidelines used in this research is included in Appendix 4. The 12 guideline questions were designed with the intention of establishing the more traditional methods or practices that households in the community might use to mitigate poverty, while at the same opinion was sought on how more contemporary poverty mitigation strategies have worked to reduce poverty. It should be noted that not all questions were necessary posed at all interviews, as respondents were allowed to time to deviate if the discussion that followed was of such a nature that it would add value to the research. As suggested by Sreejesh et al. (2014) respondents were allowed time to provide further information that was related to the questions posed and/or the purpose of the research.

Five headmen from the different communities were interviewed and 2 stakeholders that were identified as knowledgeable of indigenous knowledge and the cultural practises from Tshilaphala and Tshiumoni and interviewed. The protocol suggested by Achari (2014) on how to conduct interviews with stakeholders was followed by the researcher. The interviews with the stakeholders ranged from 40 to 80 minutes. At each interview the researcher introduced herself and provided the necessary background for the research. Included in the introduction was the request for the respondent to provide consent for the interview and the use of the data that could be gathered from the discussions. Permission was obtained from the 7 stakeholders to audio record the discussion using a tape recorder, and the researcher also took detailed notes during the interview process. The recording and researcher notes were transcribed after the interviews and this allowed for validation of data gathered with

other research tools as well as helping to inform the researcher stance on the role indigenous and contemporary practises and knowledge can play a role in the mitigation of poverty in the community.

4.2.2.3. Household surveys

In research related to poverty, the use of the household survey is important as the researcher can obtain direct, ground-level evidence of the living conditions, experiences and constraints (Mdluli-Maziya et al., 2024). The survey enables the researcher to collect information at the level of households that could assist with t measurement of income, the tracking of assets, employment, education and health and to understand intra-household differences such as gender and age (Wu et al., 2024). A household survey is also important in establishing more accurate measurements of poverty such as the number of people living below the global threshold of poverty, the depth and severity of the poverty, and the more spatial differences of poverty in any geographical area. The survey is also an important tool that can be used in establishing the multi-dimensional aspects of poverty such as education, quality of housing, nutrition and access to food, water and sanitation, social inclusion and security (Agyepong et al., 2026). In relation to this thesis, household surveys are an important research tool to establish the impact of poverty reduction initiatives; perceptions of poverty; and at the same time give a voice to the poor (Nzasabayezu et al., 2024).

The survey tool does have some limitations spanning but not limited to recall bias; inadequacy in reporting true nature of poverty within the sustainable livelihood context; underestimation of real living standards of those who rely on informal income (Jerumeh, 2024). The use of multiple tools thus to validate data when household surveys are applied is critical (Fouche et al., 2021), and in this thesis, data collected in the household survey were validated against the focus groups, stakeholder engagement and participant observation of the researcher.

In this study, the household surveys were piloted for further refinement of the indicators of the perceptions regarding different questions and answers. It was further illustrated that taking tests helps to further refine items, test data collection methods, and check whether respondents can complete household surveys and the time it takes to complete them (Cui et al., 2024).

The aim of the household survey was to draw factual and opinion information regarding the indigenous and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation at household level. The English version of the household survey used in this research can be found in Appendix 5. The household survey was piloted in 2022 in Tshaulu, by administering 50 surveys to ensure that the questions could be refined, reworded, removed or added to ensure that the researcher was able to obtain data of good quality to address the aim of the research, but at the same time to eliminate any uncertainties and sensitivities of typical respondents. The final household survey tool used (Appendix 5) was translated into Tshivenda.

The household survey was designed around five sections, comprising a combination of Likert-scale and non-Likert questions (including demographic and categorical items), to capture both attitudinal and descriptive data. Each section and accompanying questions were carefully designed around the gathering information that would help the researcher address the objectives as specified in chapter 1 to order to achieve the aim of the research. The use of the Likert scale provided ordinal measurements of respondents' attitudes and knowledge (Wu & Leung, 2017). Four hundred (400) household surveys were administered with the family representative of the household's in Tshaulu sample villages. The household survey was the self-administered household survey, wherein the family representative identified in the systematic sample received a hand-delivered survey to consider and complete. During the delivery of the survey, the researcher and/or field assistants explained the nature and purpose of the research and obtained signed consent from the respondents to participate in the survey with the option that they could withdraw their consent if they wished. All respondents were invited to contact the researcher or field assistants should they have need of any assistance in terms of clarity of questions, language or if they required the researcher or assistant to help complete the survey in the case of household representatives who were not literate. The calculated involvement of the researcher or field assistants was kept to the minimum in a drive to reduce the risk of bias and/or influence, and the researcher and the trained assistant collected the data within households. The households survey questionnaires were administered in person by the researcher with the support of trained research assistant, the households' surveys where not self-administered due to language considerations to enhance the accuracy of responses and comprehension.

4.2.2.4. Participant observation

Participant observation was conducted during community interactions and engagements, with the researcher taking a non-intrusive role. Observations were recorded through field notes and later organised into themes for analysis. Chambers (1997); Dawson (2019) and Seim (2024) explained participant observation as a principal component of ethnographic method and allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the development phenomenon under investigation by engaging directly in the everyday practices; interactions; and lived experiences of communities and practitioners involved in initiatives related to the development issue under investigation. In research related to poverty relief, the participation in and the observation of activities such as service delivery; beneficiary interactions; and local decision-making, the researchers can record the more nuanced social processes that could not be effectively captured by using the interview or household survey tool (Seim, 2024). Participant observation has been effectively used in research in Africa related to poverty relief strategies and have included cognisance of the informal coping strategies; power dynamics within a community; and community perceptions of aid provided to mitigate poverty (Khofi et al., 2024; Nordjo, 2024; Jaison et al., 2024). Emerson et al. (2011), describes participant observation as a valuable tool that can support the development of contextualised interpretations of poverty by revealing how structural constraints and cultural norms shape the implementation and outcomes of relief programmes. In poverty research, participant observation thus enhances the validity of findings by grounding analyses in the complexities of real-world practices, enabling researchers to better understand both the intended and unintended consequences of interventions (Chambers, 1997; Svendby, 2025).

During the research for this thesis, participant observation was applied by the researcher to capture the non-verbal interactions and gender dynamics in real-life settings, these observations focused on community meetings, public spaces, and informal gatherings and not only allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the role that gender influences poverty alleviation strategies in the case study, but also to validate the findings generated by other research tools. The researchers' understanding of the history and culture of the community and the fact that she is a mother tongue speaker of the language and is very familiar with the geographical area, was an advantage in the application of participant observation due to her holistic

understanding of the non-verbal interactions of respondents. The household survey was administered by the researcher with the support of trained research assistants to ensure consistency and to accommodate varying literacy levels among participants.

4.2.2.5. Validity and reliability of the primary research data

The application of mixed methods research design by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to enhance the validity and reliability of data by leveraging the strengths of both methodologies. As indicated by Battista & Torre (2023) and Grand-Guillaume-Perrenoud et al. (2023) the mixed methods allows for triangulation, by the use of multiple data sources and methods to cross-verify results and thus enhances the validity and reliability of the research data By comparing quantitative and qualitative data, researchers can assess the convergence and congruence of findings, which are indicators of construct validity. The data collected through stakeholder interviews; household surveys; focus group interactions; and participant observations were validated against each other to ensure that the data collected for the case study was representative of the real-world situation in Tshaulu Village. To strengthen validity and rigour, data from different sources were compared through triangulation. Potential sources of bias, including sampling constraints and researcher influence, were minimised through consistent data collection procedures and the use of multiple methods. These measures supported the credibility and reliability of the findings.

4.2.3. Secondary data

In this research the review of documents included the official reports and policy documents for the indigenous and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation. The review of official documents in relation to gender roles was done to evaluate the effect of gender roles in poverty alleviation within the tribal communities. The document review was done to provide an analysis of the trends and debates on gender roles in poverty alleviation. The document review was done to corroborate the evidence, and for the purpose of this study, the document review emphasised the journal articles; poverty alleviation and gender reports; administrative documents; newspaper articles; and policy documents.

Various phases were involved in collecting secondary data required to support the aim and objectives of the research. A systematic approach was followed to select and analyses documents and were specifically related to gender and poverty alleviation

within a sustainable context. The process began with the identification of relevant documents, such as African Union Policy Briefs and UNDP reports to establish a baseline understanding of regional and global strategies of poverty relief. This was followed by a search strategy that involved systematic searches using specific keywords across academic databases like Google Scholar and JSTOR, as well as organisational websites, ensuring a broad range of published work related to indigenous and contemporary poverty. The selection criteria emphasised choosing recent, credible documents (for example, government reports and peer reviewed journal articles) to focus on current developments in poverty alleviation. In the review and analysis phase, key themes and challenges related to gender and poverty alleviation are extracted from sources like the UN SDGs progress reports and African Development Bank strategies, enabling a comparative analysis. Cross-Validation ensured data consistency by comparing findings from diverse sources, including case studies from traditional societies and local NGO reports. Finally, in the synthesis step, the data was integrated into a coherent narrative of various chapters each addressing the objectives to offer actionable insights that combine traditional knowledge and modern strategies for more effective poverty alleviation efforts.

4.3. Data analysis strategies

The mixed methods approach was designed to integrate the complementary strengths of the quantitative and qualitative data, with the purpose of enabling a richer and more nuanced understanding of the role gender can play in poverty relief strategies. In line with this methodological orientation, quantitative data were analysed to identify patterns, relationships, and statistically significant effects, while qualitative data were examined to explore participants' perspectives, meanings, and lived experiences. Table 4.7 outlines the analytical procedures employed for each dataset and the strategies used to ensure rigour, validity, and coherence across methodological components.

Table 4.7 Data collection, presentation and analysis: Tshaulu Village, South Africa

Data type	Data collection methods	Data presentation methods	Analysis technique
Qualitative data	Key informants' interviews	• Preparing data • Establishing Themes • Structuring analysed data • Interpreting data	• Content analysis • Thematic analysis
	Focus group discussions	• Preparing data • Theme identification • Structuring data • Interpreting data	• Content analysis • Thematic analysis
	Document review	• Studying and analysing written documents • Preparing data • Theme identification • Structuring data • Interpreting data	• Content analysis • Thematic analysis
Quantitative	Household surveys	• Coding • Entering • Data verification and cleaning	• Descriptive statistics • Pearson Chi-Squared Test
	Observations	• Field notes • Preparing the descriptions of observed behaviours and events. • Comparing observations across different settings or times.	• Descriptive summaries • Field notes

The qualitative data collected through key informant interviews; focus groups and document reviews were organised into themes and then analysed using content and narrative analysis. The findings were interpreted and presented in the form of a description. The findings from observation notes were analysed thematically, focusing on patterns such as gendered participation, leadership roles, and economic engagement.

The analysis of the qualitative data collected through participant observation also followed a thematic approach to identify key patterns and trends related to gender roles and their influence on poverty alleviation strategies. First, the notes were coded to categorise specific instances of gendered behaviour, interactions, and participation

during community events and informal gatherings. These codes captured aspects such as gendered participation, leadership roles, and economic engagement, among other relevant themes. Once coding was complete, the examination of the themes was done to identify recurrent patterns across different observations. The goal was to contextualise the observations within broader cultural and socio-economic factors and interpret their implications for gender roles in poverty alleviation. This involved looking for consistent gendered behaviours, such as men's dominance in leadership positions or women's engagement in informal economic activities and considering how these patterns relate to poverty alleviation initiatives. The quantitative data collected through household surveys were analysed using the descriptive statistics and the Pearson Chi-Squared Test. The quantitative analysis in this study relied on the Pearson Chi-Square test, including the reporting of chi-square values, degrees of freedom, and levels of statistical significance. This approach was appropriate as the data collected were primarily categorical in nature, and the study aimed to determine whether statistically significant relationships existed between variables rather than to compare group means or measure linear associations. Therefore, more complex statistical techniques such as t-tests, ANOVA, or correlation analysis were not applicable within the scope and design of this case study. The data was captured in Microsoft Excel and analysed in SPSS. Descriptive statistics is an analysis technique used to characterize or summarize a sample's characteristics.

4.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research employs a pragmatic paradigm with a mixed methods research design to assess the effects of indigenous and contemporary gender roles on poverty alleviation strategies in Tshaulu Village. By combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, the study aims to provide a holistic and in-depth understanding of the complex interactions between gender and poverty in the community. Rigorous strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of the research were employed throughout the study, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

CHAPTER 5: SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS IN RELATION TO THE RISK OF POVERTY.

This chapter presents the socio-economic profile of participating households in the study area. It examines key characteristics to contextualise household livelihood strategies and poverty dynamics within the rural community. Lee & Schuele (2010) and Edminston (2024) emphasised that the socio-economic information is important for situating participants within their context. In this study, however, such information is used to describe and situate the socio-economic characteristics of the selected households, rather than to claim statistical representativeness of the wider population, including patterns of gender representation. The data reflect household representation rather than headship, as responses were provided by available representatives during fieldwork. The study does not aim to compare gender differences but rather to understand household livelihood systems and poverty dynamics within a rural context. In accordance with Objective 1, this chapter provides an overview of the socio-economic profile of household respondents. The discussion begins with the socio-economic context of the participants, followed by selected characteristics, and concludes with an interpretation of these findings in relation to household livelihood strategies and poverty dynamics. Qualitative insights further supported these findings by highlighting how household responsibilities and livelihood strategies are shared among members depending on availability and context.

5.1. focus group discussion The socio-cultural context of the village participants

The participants in this study were drawn from five villages in Tshaulu, as outlined in Chapters 1 and 4. The sample reflects households with varied socio-economic conditions, gender practices, and family responsibilities within the study area. Participants were categorised according to their roles within the household, including mothers or fathers, grandparents, and sons- or daughters-in-law, with ages ranging from 20 to 69 years. This categorisation was not intended to facilitation-based comparisons, but rather to capture diverse household perspectives across different ages, roles and gender. The inclusion of participants from varied age groups and roles enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how indigenous and contemporary gender roles are experienced and practiced within household livelihood systems and poverty dynamics.

5.2. Socio-economic profile of the household representatives in relation to risk of poverty

Within the study area, a higher proportion of household representatives were female. This distribution should be interpreted as reflecting household representation across different roles rather than as an indicator of gender imbalance or household headship. According to the General Household Survey (StatsSA, 2024), approximately 47% of households in Limpopo are female-headed, providing a broader contextual reference. Field observations and qualitative findings also indicated the presence of diverse household structures, including extended and, in some cases, polygamous arrangements (FGD-HB01). These structures are important for understanding how roles, responsibilities, and access to resources are organised within households. Within this context, such dynamics help to explain how household livelihood strategies are formed and how poverty is experienced at the household level. The following sections present the socio-economic characteristics of household respondents, drawing on both descriptive statistics and qualitative insights to provide a contextualised analysis. This section presents the socio-economic profile of the household representatives, including selected variables such as gender, age, role within the household, marital status, income sources, and employment status. These characteristics are examined to provide a contextual understanding of the households included in the household survey. While gender is acknowledged as part of household composition, the study does not aim to compare gender differences but rather to understand household-level socio-economic dynamics within a rural context. Within the context of this study, these socio-economic factors are not only descriptive but are also important in shaping household livelihood strategies and poverty dynamics. The section presents the empirical findings, followed by relevant insights from the literature, and concludes with interpretation informed by the study's theoretical framework. This approach allows for a more integrated understanding of how socio-economic characteristics influence access to resources, role allocation, and decision-making processes within households.

5.2.1. Age and gender

This section presents the gender and age distribution of participants to provide a demographic overview of household representation within the study. It is important to

consider how different age groups and gender shape access to resources, responsibilities and opportunities within households, as these factors may influence vulnerability to poverty in different ways. Reimers (2024) highlight that gender disparities and poverty remain a global challenge. Research in Global South shows that unequal access to resources, discrimination and limiting access to education has contributed to poverty particularly among women (Allan, 2011; Suich et al., 2024; Çuhadar et al., 2025). Studies by Ngwakwe (2020) and Zickafoose et al. (2024), further highlight that improving gender equity can influence poverty outcomes through enhanced participation in economic and social processes. However, this study does not seek to compare men and women rather, it examines how the household's representatives perceive and contribute towards indigenous and contemporary gender roles influence on livelihood strategies and poverty dynamics. The distribution of respondents, as illustrated in Figure 5.1, show that most household representatives were female (66.8%), while male representation accounted for (33.3 %).

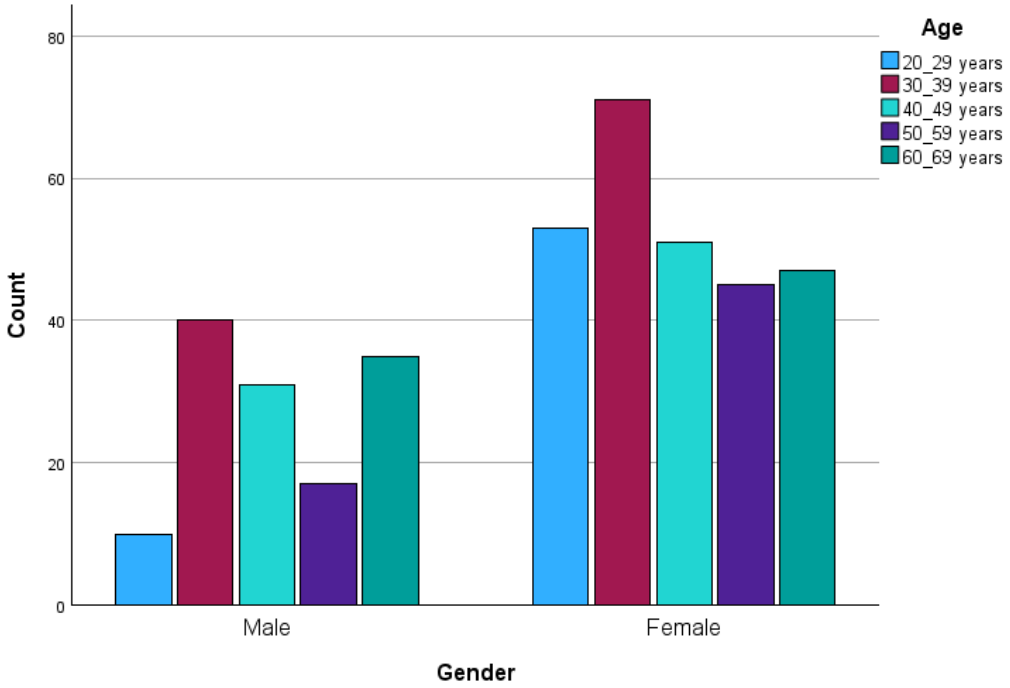

Figure 5.1: Age and Gender of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

It should be noted that this profile differs from the provincial statistics reported by (StatsSA, 2024), where female headed households range between approximately 47% and 53% across Limpopo and the study area. The higher proportion of female respondents reflects household representation during data collection rather than an

intentional gender-based head of the household sampling approach, as responses were obtained from available representatives within households. However, within the context of the study, this pattern reflects households' representation rather than family headship. The findings further demonstrate that the concept of household head is not necessarily the same as household representation, and this distinction is important in research that examines gender roles and poverty at the household level. The higher number of female respondents is associated with absence of spouses, where male members of the house are temporarily or permanently absent due to the different reasons in the households (data collected from focus group discussion s and researcher observations, 2020 to 202). This trend is possibly due the apartheid legacy of South Africa and is better aligned to similar communities in the same geographical area (Kom et al., 2024 & Takawira-Matwaya, 2024). Although most household representatives are married and men are traditionally recognised as the heads of households, women often responded as available representatives, while some were heads of their own households. The descriptive profile indicates that the sample is largely composed of economically active age groups, which is important for understanding household livelihood capacity.

focus group discussion In terms of the age group 30-39 years constitute the largest portion of the sample (27,75%), followed by 40-49 years and 60-69 age groups, each group representing 20.5% of the total sample. This indicates that the study captures both economically active participants and elderly individuals providing a cross-sectional view of households' composition across different age groups. While gender differences remain evident, the gap narrows in older age groups. In the 60-69 age group male representation is relatively higher compared to the younger age groups, increases to approximately 42.7% compared to 57.3% for females. While 30-49 years age groups reflect a strong female dominance the gender distribution becomes more balanced in the older age groups, where male representation increases to approximately 42.7%. It is significant that the gender imbalance is most extreme in the 20–29 age group, where 16% of respondents are male and 84% are female. This age distribution is significant as it relates to household size and dependency levels, which influence both labour availability and resource consumption within households.

However, this should be interpreted in relation to the study design, where a single representative was selected per household. As such, the observed distribution reflects respondent availability and the allocation of roles within households, rather than gender composition or imbalance within the population. It is also significant that 20.5% of respondents were aged between 50-69 years, as these individuals may provide important insights into indigenous knowledge within the community. This age group provides insight into indigenous knowledge systems and long-standing household practices, which are central to understanding how livelihood strategies are shaped within the study area. Their participation strengthens the analysis by linking household-level experiences with intergenerational knowledge and social structures. As indicated earlier, gender and age are important in understanding poverty as both genders experience poverty differently, experiences are also influenced by factors such as geographical location, race, ethnicity, and social class (Ngwakwe, 2020 & Zickafoose et al., 2024). A gap in the gendered rural poverty literature is that limited attention has been given to the role of indigenous gender practices in poverty related studies. As discussed, in Chapter Three, existing research tends to focus on the modernisation of traditional communities rather than exploring the role of indigenous gender systems. The integration of indigenous and contemporary gender roles therefore remains an important area of inquiry. While gender is reflected in the composition of respondents, the analysis focuses on household-level characteristics rather than comparisons between gender groups.

5.2.2. Age and marital status

Marital status is cited by many researchers as a significant determinant of poverty (Ortega-Diaz, 2020 & Nutakor et al., 2023). Within the South African rural community context, Mduli & Dunga (2022) noted that married or divorced women face higher risk levels of poverty that is often aggravated by large households, gendered economic barriers, high levels of dependency, access to land and cultural norms. Most of the household representatives that responded to the household survey were married (84.8%); followed by (7.5%) divorced, 7.0% widowed or widower, and lastly 0.8% never married with their own households and family as presented in (Figure 5.2). This marital structure provides important context for understanding household organisation and resource responsibilities within the study area. Household roles and

responsibilities are often influenced by marital status, particularly in cases of widowed or single-member-led households, which may carry greater economic, and caregiving demands. The Figure 5.2 depicts the marital status of the respondents across the age groups.

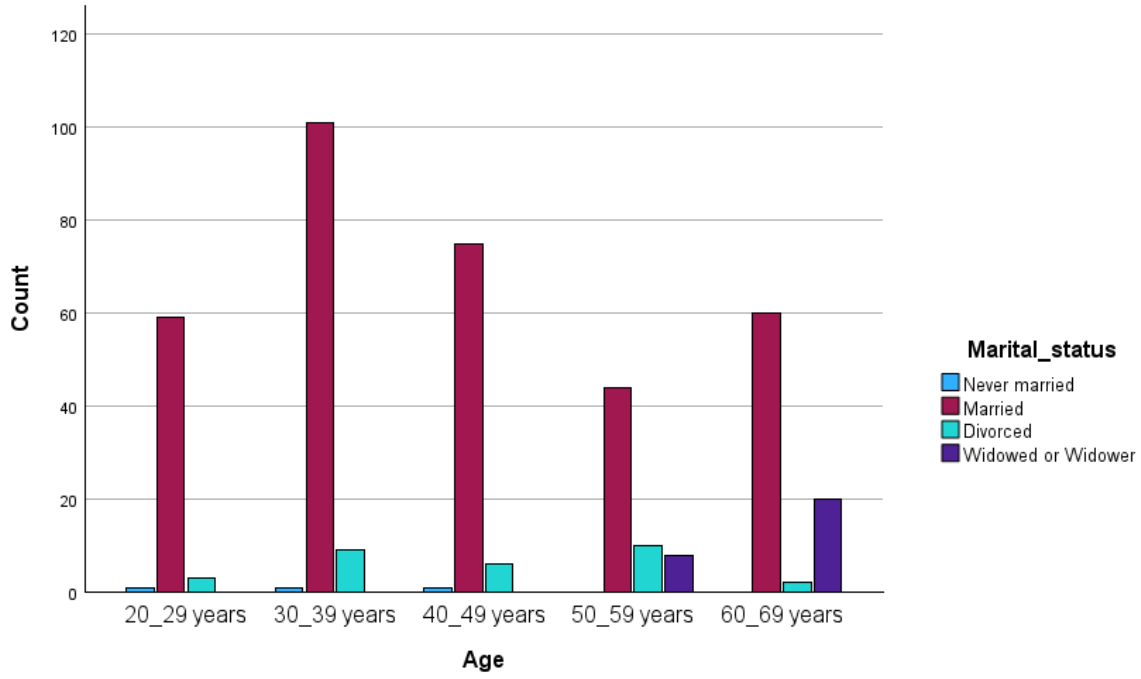

Figure 5.2: Marital status and age of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The pattern reflects that majority of respondents are married, while older age groups reflect increasing level of widowhood. The number of divorced people is spread over all age groups, while those who were never married are within the youngest age group 20-29 years. During the focus group discussions (2022), it was reported that married individuals may experience higher poverty risk due to a larger household size and dependency burdens associated with the extended family structures associated with marriages relationships. Respondents also noted that divorce individuals especially those that then represent female-headed households may face an increased poverty risk (FDGHB_01). Similarly, widowed individuals especially those who took over caregiving responsibilities of their grandchildren, were identified as more vulnerable to poverty. It was further observed that the individuals who had never married were often child minders for the extended family and/or may be responsible for caring for their

parents or elderly household's members (Household Survey Observation, 2020-2023). This pattern differs from findings by (Hornby & Hull, 2023) which highlight that that single or never married individuals often have lower dependency burdens and lower poverty risk. Within the context of the study area, however household's responsibilities appear to extend beyond immediate family structures influencing the relationship between marital status and poverty dynamics. Marital status is therefore considered in relation to household responsibilities and resource distribution, rather than as a basis for direct gender comparison. These patterns are understood within the broader framework of household livelihood systems and socio-economic structures discussed in Chapter 2.

5.2.3. Age and sources of income

The section presents the distribution of household income across different age groups. The experience of poverty differs across age groups, as individual rely on different sources of income throughout their lives. These findings are consistent with the income pattern reported in the literature, where people rely on their wages during their economical active period, pension funds after retirement, social grants during periods of unemployment or household support during childhood (Cui et al., 2023). The participants were asked to provide information about the various sources of income for the household's representative. The variation in incomes sources related across age groups may influence the vulnerability, resilience and the lived experiences of poverty (Patel et al., 2024). Household income is a key economic indicator that affects how much a household can spend and save (Onofrei & Pasa, 2021). This section examines the income sources of the participants in the households.

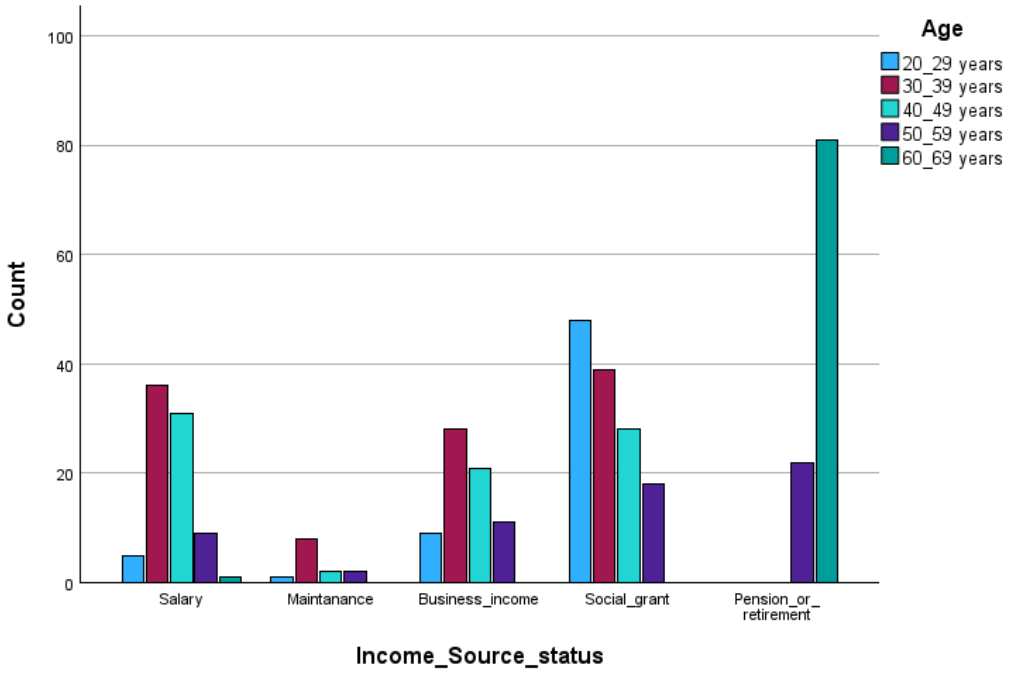

Figure 5.3: Income sources of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Figure 5.3 provides a summary of the statistical information regarding the various individual representative income sources. The data revealed that the participants household income were made up of five different sources: social grants, salaries, business income, maintenance, and retirement or old age grants. These income patterns reflect broader household livelihood conditions and access to economic opportunities, rather than individual-level gender differences or overall household income source. Many participants rely on social grants, such as old age, temporary relief, and child grants (Figure 5.3) and this accounts for 33.3% of the participants that are thus dependent on short-term social grants (Including COVID-19 Temporary Relief Grant) or child grants as their main source of income. The dominance of social grants and informal income sources indicates limited access to stable employment opportunities within the study area. This is followed by income from pension or retirement sources (25.8%); salary (20.8%); own business income (17.3%); and child maintenance (3%). These income patterns reflect the broader livelihood structure of households, where reliance on multiple income sources is necessary to sustain daily needs. Social grants are the major source of income for the people aged 20-59 years, while those between the age of 60-69 years rely heavily on retirement funds or old age grants. Similar findings are reported in rural livelihood studies, where income

diversification and reliance on social support form key survival strategies (see Chapter 3). Salary income is more common among participants in the age group 30-39 years and 40-49 age groups, while a proportion of 1 out of 82 respondents (37.8%) in these groups also rely on the salary. It is significant that approximately 25% of the respondents in each of the age. It is also significant that approximately in each age groups between 30 to 49 years generate income from their own business, despite the high unemployment rates. Less significant are the sources of income from maintenance recorded for the age groups 20 to 59 years. A qualitative cross validation and assessment of the impact of the statistical representation of age and income sources in terms of poverty in the sample villages revealed that income from labour or unemployment is a strong indicator of poverty, however, social protection in the form of grants could assist in the reduction of poverty. According to the FGD (2022/2023) findings some of the households were supported by either old-age grants or child grants, these were not always sufficient to lift the respondents fully out of poverty. Further respondents shared during the focus groups discussion shows that age and income shape poverty in distinct ways, for example household poverty can be negatively influenced by unemployment of working aged adults. This is particularly significant when considered alongside household size, as income from limited sources must support multiple dependents, thereby increasing pressure on household resources. Similar patterns have been observed in rural contexts, where age structure plays a critical role in shaping household livelihood strategies (see Chapter 3). The findings are therefore interpreted in relation to household livelihood systems, as outlined in Chapter 1, rather than comparative gender analysis.

5.2.4. Marital status and income

Marital status and income provide useful insight into household structure and access to economic resources within the study area. Dunga (2025), found that married individuals have higher household incomes than other groups, and thus this status is an important indicator of levels of poverty risk. Marriage is associated with the potential of a dual income, a more stable household structure, the ability to pool resources related to housing, childcare and food. In contrast Dunga (2025) found that divorced and widowed individuals are impacted upon by loss of spousal financial support, normally higher dependency ratios and in some areas and cultural groups gendered property right challenges.

Tichenor (1999) documented that married women with better incomes and occupational position do not necessarily have more control in their relationships than wives in more traditional marriages. Social, economic, and cultural power disparities influence household economic decisions and intimate partner violence (Shobe et al., 2011). When compared to married women, unmarried and cohabiting women have bigger income disparities (Madalozzo, 2008). Relative income influences marriage decisions significantly, with people more likely to marry when their incomes approach a financial level associated with idealised marriage norms (Watson & McLanahan, 2011). Dutton (2019) documented that in Nigeria marital status influences poverty reduction, with monogamous marriages offering the greatest chance of lowering poverty, whereas divorce and widowhood are also significantly connected with the likelihood of poverty. The distribution of marital status and income sources among participants in the selected villages of Tshaulu is presented in Figure 5.4.

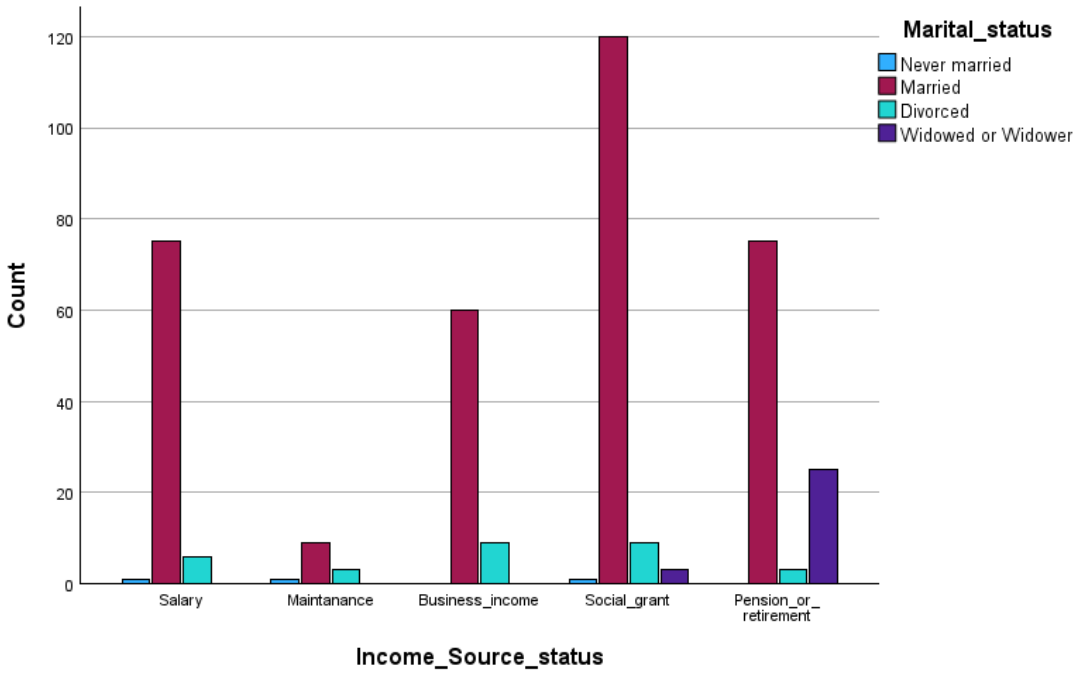

Figure 5.4: Marital statuses of participants and income source of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

An analysis of Figure 5.4 shows that the cross-tabulation of marital status and income source demonstrate that married respondents received most of their household income from social grants and pensions/retirement funds. This is followed by individuals who make their living from salary or own business revenue, with only 8 of

the 339 married people relying of maintenance as their source of income. For those who were widowed received their income from social grants (3 of 28) or pension or retirement funds. The relatively small sample of divorced respondents 30 of 400) received their income from business income, social grants, salary, maintenance, pensions/retirement funds. Although only 3 respondents had never married, their sources of income came from salary, maintenance or social grants. This relationship between marital status and income provides important insight into how household structure influences access to economic resources. Similar patterns have been highlighted in rural livelihood studies, where marital status is closely associated with household stability and economic roles (see Chapter 3).

The key stakeholder's emphasised that within the traditional authority of Tshaulu, marriage and family are deeply valued social institutions reflected in the longstanding Vhavenda cultural belief that two is better than one (FDG and KSI, 2022-2023). According to the key stakeholders and all focus groups marriage strengthen households capacity to access and manage resources particularly land. It is evident in the study area that traditional leader's customary allocates the land to married men for the collective benefit of the entire households some may have extended family members, wives, and children's (FGD-01-2022/2023). This practice reinforces the perception that marriage enhances household stability and socio-economic resilience. This is particularly relevant when considered alongside household size, as income must often support multiple dependents within the same household. However, the focus groups also highlight that unmarried community members despite their gender may also obtain land through the traditional authority (FGD, 2022/2023).

The insight demonstrate that marital status intersects with gendered cultural expectations to influence access to communal resources shaping households' exposure to or protection to poverty. Marital status is therefore, considered in relation to household responsibilities and resource distribution, rather than as a basis for direct gender comparison or individual empowerment. As a result, variations in income across marital categories may influence household vulnerability to poverty. Households with different marital compositions may experience varying levels of economic stability, depending on the availability of income sources and shared

responsibilities. The income distribution reflects limited economic capacity among many households, particularly those reliant on fewer or unstable income sources.

5.2.5 Family role, age, gender and income

Family role plays a significant role in poverty alleviation efforts. Poverty has a long-term and multigenerational impact on families and individuals (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2024). Gender, age and family roles are considered to be major determinants of poverty in many communities in rural South Africa where research has found that female headed households, child headed household; households headed by an older person or a single parent (especially the mother) are more vulnerable to poverty due to limited income, dependency ratios, or unemployment (Aromolaran et al., 2024 & Mdluli-Maziya, et al., 2024). Figure 5.5 illustrates the distribution of income amount and family roles among participants in the study area, based on household survey data collected between 2021 and 2023.

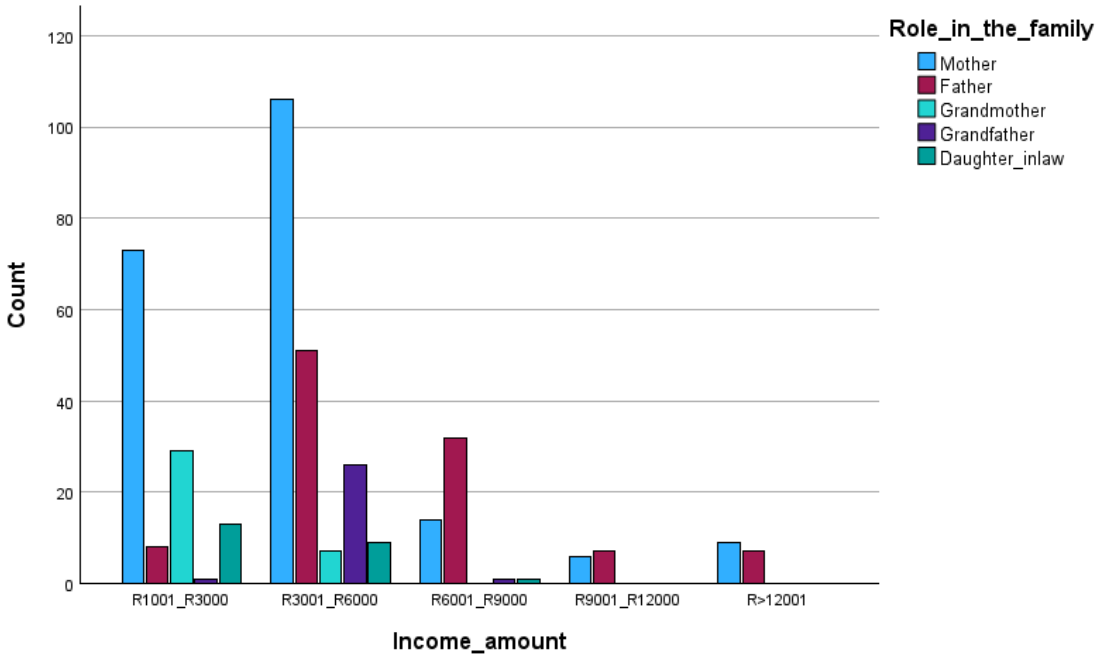

Figure 5.5: Income amount and family roles of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Figure 5.5 presents the distribution of income across different family roles within the sampled households in Tshaulu villages. The findings show that household members contribute to income generation across various roles, with income levels distributed across multiple categories. Most participants are concentrated within the R3001-

R6000 income category, where a large proportion of income contribution is observed, particularly from roles such as mothers and fathers. Contributions are also evident within the R1001-R3000 category, where several family roles, including grandmothers and fathers, are represented. In the R6001-R9000 income category, contributions are relatively limited compared to lower income categories, with the highest representation observed among fathers, while other household roles, including mothers and extended family members, show minimal participation. The higher income categories, including R9001-R12000 and above, show relatively low participation across all roles, indicating fewer household members contributing at these income levels. The findings demonstrate that household income is generated through contributions from various family members across different income levels, with the greatest concentration occurring within the lower to middle income categories. This reflects the collective nature of household livelihood strategies within the study area. Figure 5.6 presents the distribution of age groups and family roles among participants in the sampled households in Tshaulu. focus group discussion.

The findings show that participation across family roles varies across age categories, with different roles contributing at different stages of the age distribution. In the 20-29 years age group, the largest representation is observed among participants identified as mothers, with a noticeably smaller presence of fathers. A small number of participants are also represented in roles such as daughter-in-law, while other roles show little or no visible participation in this age category. In the 30-39 years age group, the highest concentration of participants is again observed among mothers, followed by a substantial representation of fathers. Other roles, including grandmothers,

grandfathers, and daughters-in-law, are present but at much lower counts compared to these two roles.

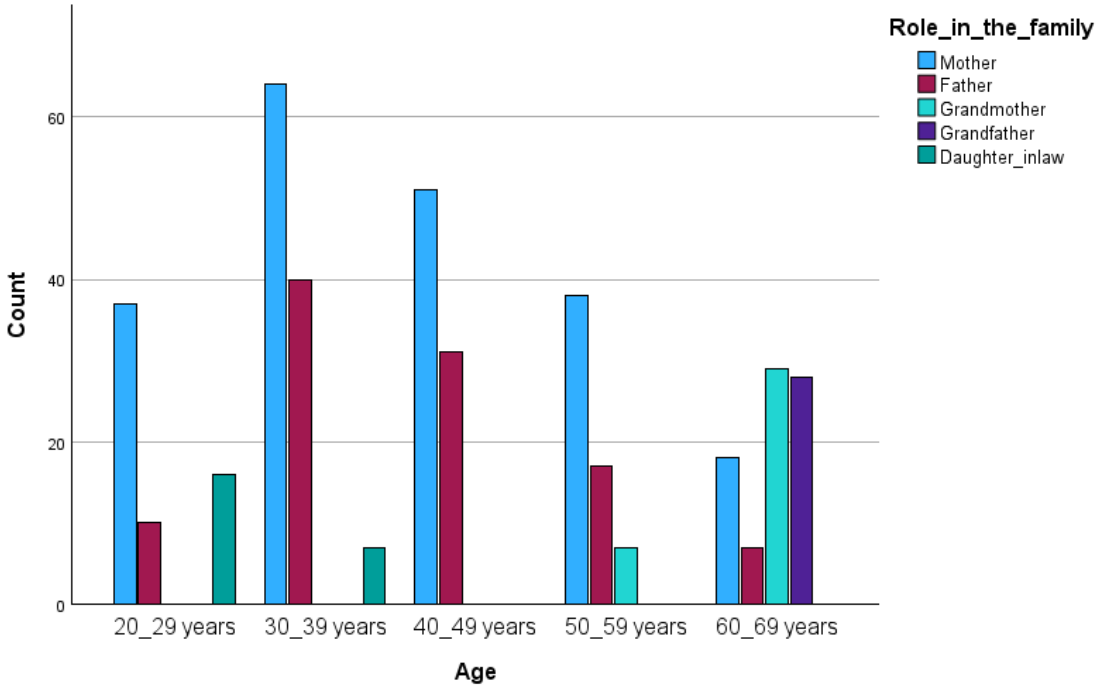

Figure 5.6: Age and Role in the Family of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The 40-49 years category continues to show a strong presence of mothers, with a moderate representation of fathers, while other roles are minimally represented. In the 50-59 years age group, participation becomes more distributed across roles. While mothers continue to show the highest representation, smaller but visible contributions are recorded across fathers and daughters-in-law, with limited presence of other roles. In the 60-69 years age group, the pattern shifts, with notable representation observed among grandmothers and grandfathers. Participation from mothers and daughters-in-law is also visible, while fathers show relatively lower counts in this category. The data indicate that most household representatives were identified as mothers (52%), followed by fathers (26.3%), grandmothers (9%), grandfathers (7%), and daughters-in-law (5.8%). These roles reflect the diversity of contributors within household structures and provide a more detailed understanding of how household representation occurs across different family positions.

Discussions during focus group engagements and key Informant Interviews (KIIs)s revealed that the absence of male household members is often linked to broader socio-economic patterns. These include labour migration to urban areas, engagement in local wage activities, involvement in livestock management, and other income-generating activities outside the home. In some cases, polygamous household arrangements were also observed during fieldwork. As a result, male absence during certain periods creates a temporary vacuum of responsibility within households, which is then assumed by available members.

In this context, household functioning is maintained through the redistribution of responsibilities among available members. Focus group discussions indicated that household roles are arranged in a complementary and interdependent manner, where members contribute in different capacities to sustain livelihoods rather than following a strictly hierarchical structure. The absence of a household member responsible for income generation or resource provision may increase vulnerability to poverty, particularly in households with high dependency levels. This was further highlighted in focus group discussions (2022), where the absent of a spouse in the households has resulted in the following according to the discussion carried during the focus discussion:

- The instability in the family structure deepens the risk of poverty
- In the households where grandparents become caregivers for their grandchildren due to death or labour migration, the pressure is placed on retirement funds or old-age grants, and the result is a higher dependency on limited income, and thus the increase in the likelihood to live in poverty.
- Female headed households often rely on income from their husbands in the urban area and this can be erratic, leading to the household experiencing higher risks of poverty. In the case of single-parent household the risk of poverty is higher.

Extended families are typical in the sample communities, and this includes several dependants of various ages, with limited sources of income and this increases the financial strain and risk of poverty. These observations provide important context for interpreting Figure 5.5, where income contributions are distributed across different household roles. The data reflect not only the presence of various income levels, but

also the collective efforts of household members in maintaining livelihoods under constrained socio-economic conditions. The findings indicate that, in contrast to expectations of a traditional Tshivenda family unit, most respondents who represented households in the survey were women. This reflects the reality of household representation during data collection rather than household headship. Insights from focus group discussions and key Informant Interviews (KIIs)s indicated that the absence of male household members is associated with broader socio-economic patterns. These include labour migration to urban areas, engagement in local income-generating activities within the village, responsibilities related to livestock management, and participation in physically demanding tasks outside the household. In some cases, male household members were reported to be involved in polygamous marriages or were temporarily absent from the household during the day due to work-related commitments.

5.2.5. Gender and education

These dynamics reflect a broader national pattern in which rural households experience the periodic absence of certain members who contribute to household livelihoods from outside the immediate household setting. As a result, a functional gap in day-to-day household responsibilities may arise, which is assumed by available members within the household. Field observations and focus group discussions further confirmed the presence of polygamous household arrangements within the study area. In line with cultural practices discussed in the introductory sections of this study, it was noted that responsibilities within households are assumed based on availability and customary expectations, particularly in situations where certain members are absent (FGDs and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)s). The family role in relation to gender and age is important to consider in poverty alleviation policies in combination these factors shape those who are vulnerable to poverty, who will carry the multidimensional aspects of a household, and how poverty is then carried over across generations, within communities that often have limited economic opportunities. Although most household representatives are married and men are traditionally recognised as the heads of households, women often responded as available representatives, while some were heads of their own households (Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)focus group discussions)

This section presents the distribution of education levels among household members as reflected in the sample. While gender is reflected in the composition of participants, the analysis focuses on how education contributes to household capacity and livelihood strategies rather than comparing differences between groups. The section therefore examines education in relation to household roles and socio-economic conditions within the study area. Education is critical to poverty alleviation since it is regarded as the foundation for reducing poverty and supporting economic progress (Setyoasih & Harnani, 2021; Wang & Xhang, 2020). China has recognised the importance of education in poverty alleviation and has enacted several laws and efforts to address the issue (Liu et al., 2023). Targeted poverty reduction through education has developed as a research focus, emphasizing on precise and comprehensive educational assistance to break the cycle of poverty. Poverty in the rural communities in South Africa is because of multi-dimensional factors such as gender inequalities and especially gender access to education (Khethiwe, 2023). Mduli & Dunga (2022) recorded that within many rural areas' apartheid-era legacies are evidenced through continued lower educational outcomes, skills development and gendered access to employment placing women at a higher risk of poverty. Adetoro et al. (2023) called for more integrated interventions in poverty relief strategies and indicated that this should be done through improved rural schooling in terms of quality and an expansion of gender responsive education policies. Figure 5.7 illustrates the distribution of education levels among participants in the sampled households, reflecting the educational profile of individuals contributing to household livelihoods

As reflected in Figure 5.7 most of the respondents have attained secondary level education (38.5%), followed by those with Matric (21.5%), and primary level education (20.3%). A small proportion of the participants reported having a post school certificate of training (7.5%) or a diploma (5.3%), while 3.3 %, have bachelor's degree and higher. A relatively small proportion (3.8%) reported having no schooling. These findings indicate that most participants possess basic to intermediate levels of education, with fewer individuals attaining higher levels of formal education. These education levels provide important context for understanding the overall capacity of households to access and utilise economic opportunities, as education influences the ability of household members to engage in income-generating activities and adapt to socio-economic challenges.

As reflected in Figure 5.7 most of the respondents have attained secondary level education (38.5%), followed by those with Matric (21.5%), and primary level education (20.3%). A small proportion of the participants reported having a post school certificate of training (7.5%) or a diploma (5.3%), while 3.3 %, have bachelor's degree and higher. A relatively small proportion (3.8%) reported having no schooling. These findings indicate that most participants possess basic to intermediate levels of education, with fewer individuals attaining higher levels of formal education. These education levels provide important context for understanding the overall capacity of households to access and utilise economic opportunities, as education influences the ability of household members to engage in income-generating activities and adapt to socio-economic challenges.

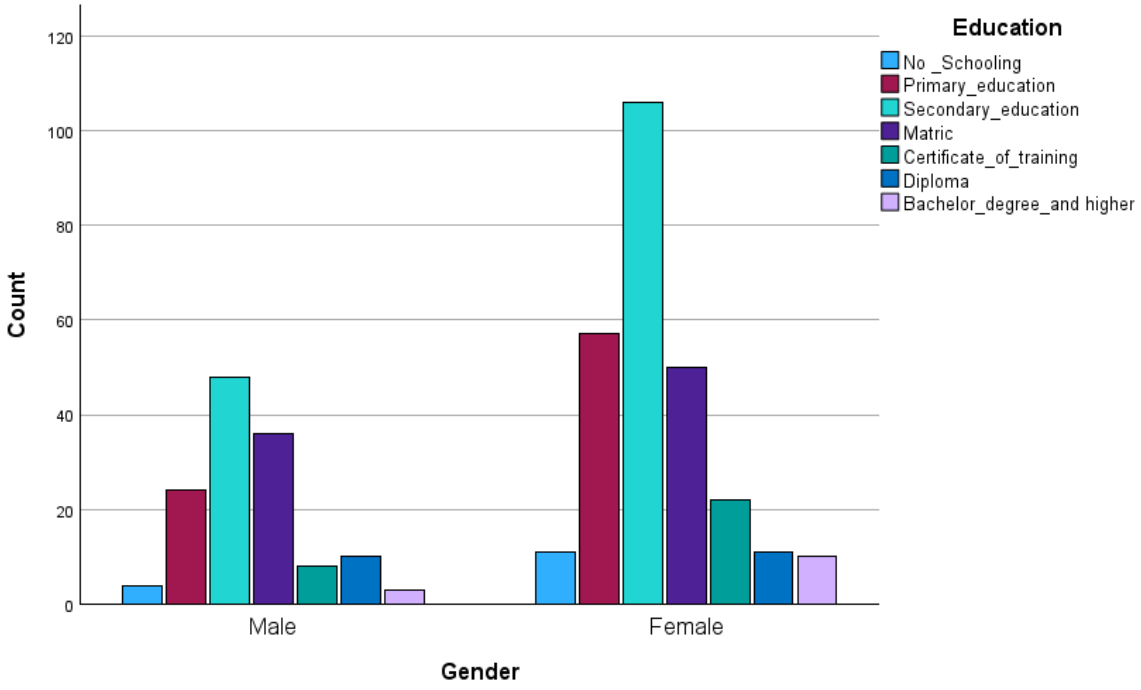

Figure 5.7: Gender and Education of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Given the difference in gender representation in the sample, the educational trend between both genders follows a similar pattern (Figure 5.5). Within households, education contributes to the ability of members to support livelihood activities and adapt to economic challenges. Most men have secondary education and matriculation, followed by primary education, diplomas, and a small minority with no schooling, bachelor's degrees, and higher and training certificates. This is aligned to the same

trends with women with a minority having no formal education, and most having completed secondary education or primary school education, a good number have their matric status and fewer have training certificates, diplomas, bachelor's degrees, or higher. While statistically not significant it should be noted that comparatively more women have not undergone any form of schooling, when compared to men, and this could be due to systematic barriers in accessing schooling that could be due to cultural practises and the traditional roles of women. The gender and education trend in the sample villages reflect the same trend in other rural areas in South Africa, where StatsSA (2024) has reported that in 1996 the majority of communities in rural areas recorded a 57.9% of primary school only education to 22.2% in 2022, and with those achieving secondary school education tripling during the same period, with the result that most community members in rural areas have undergone secondary school training. The findings of the focus group shows that education is often promoted as a pathway out of poverty this has not translated into the improved livelihoods of the community. Many educated participants remain unemployed and rely of social grants to maintain their households with temporary informal jobs. Participants also emphasised that men and women can relocate to the urban areas thanks to the modernity which promoted and enhance their educational levels and participation in the economic activities (All FGD and Key Informants Interview). Going to school according to the elderly participants shows no significant impacts since men were taken by force to work in the urban areas, which have also contributed to men marrying other women neglecting their own families. In addition to the relocation women added that we have been pillars of the families in the absent of men working domestic and other socio-economic activities so that our families may have a better life. When asked about the education access, a question was raised that what if men are stupid and did not pass at school? Emphasizing that not everyone succeeds through education and poverty persist even among the educated. In addition, it was clear that the community define themselves as rich since they can work by their own hands to produce food that can sustain their family. Education levels are examined in relation to household socio-economic conditions and capacity, rather than differences between gender groups. These findings are interpreted within the broader framework of household roles and socio-economic organisation discussed in Chapter 2. In this context, gender is considered as part of household composition rather than as a basis for comparison between groups.

5.2.6. Employment status and education

Building on the educational profile presented in the previous section, this section examines employment status in relation to education levels among participants in the sample households. Education is considered an important factor influencing access to employment opportunities and the capacity of household members to contribute to household livelihoods. Employment remains one of the most important means of a household earning a livelihood. Thus, documenting the employment status of a community allows the researcher to establish if a household has any access to income, how stable and how regular the access to income is; an if this income is sufficient to cover the basic needs of the household (Dunga, 2024 & 아이작, 2024).

Knowing the employment status of a community allows the researcher or the development practitioner to establish the foundation of understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty and in this way are enabled to develop better poverty reduction strategies (Berchoux et al, 2020). Figure 5.8 presents the distribution of employment status across different education levels among participants in the sampled households, illustrating how individuals with varying educational backgrounds contribute to household livelihood activities.

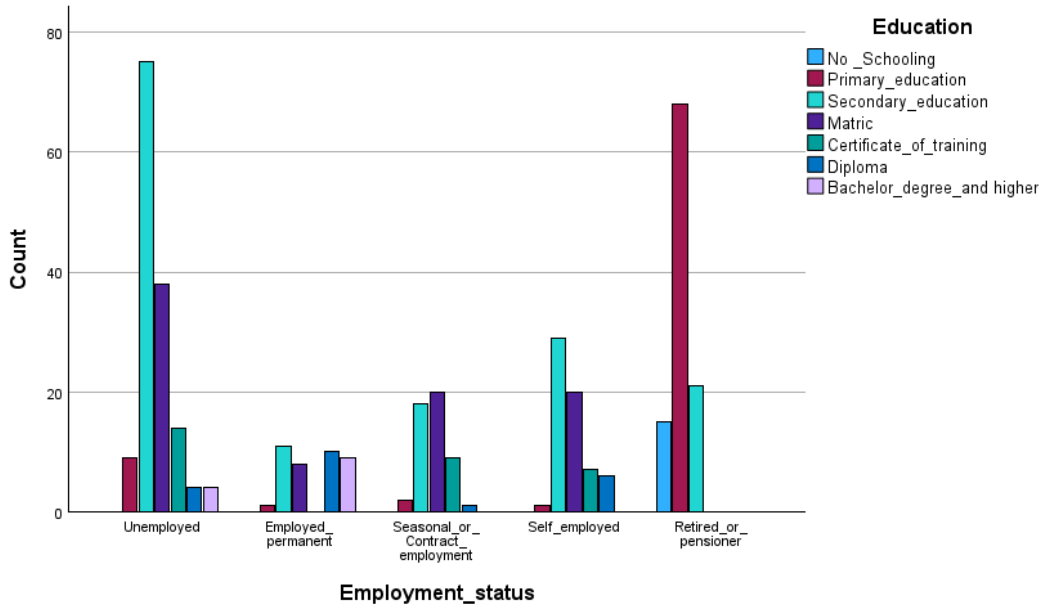

Figure 5.8: Employment and Educational status of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The statistics presented in Figure 5.8 reveal that 36% of the respondents were unemployed, compared to 26% who are of retirees/ pensioners, 15.8% of those who are self-employed, 12.5% of those who have seasonal or contract work, and just 9.8% of the respondents were permanently employed. This relationship between education and employment provides important insight into the capacity of households to access stable income sources. Figure 5.8 shows that employment participation across households is concentrated among individuals with secondary and matric education, particularly in self-employment and non-permanent forms of work, while permanent employment remains limited across all education levels. The relatively high levels of unemployment within the same education categories highlight that basic to intermediate education does not consistently correspond with access to stable employment opportunities in the study area. The findings in the retired or pensioner category is largely associated with lower education levels, reflecting reliance on social transfers among older household members. The findings highlight that household livelihoods are supported through a combination of self-employment, non-permanent forms of work, and pension income, while stable formal employment remains limited, with education appearing to be associated with different types of economic activity rather than ensuring access to stable employment. During the focus groups discussions, key Informant Interviews (KIIs)s (2022) and own observations during the field work, it was shared that the geographical disadvantage of living in the rural area, was that there were not many formal paid employment opportunities in the village or surrounding area. This left the economically active members of the community with the choice of relying on income from low wage informal or seasonal work, or the option of the main breadwinner (generally male) travelling to urban areas in South Africa for formal paid employment that was more secure. Higher levels of education are generally associated with improved employment opportunities, although this relationship may be constrained by limited labour market opportunities within the study area. As a result, households with limited access to education and employment opportunities are more likely to experience economic vulnerability. This trend however has disrupted the household dynamics leaving the female in the household with the full responsibilities of maintaining the household.

There were different employment statuses and level of education. The unemployed group has most participants who have secondary education. It is observed that the majority of unemployed are dropout who had taken the decision based on their family responsibilities as women in the house. It is also noted that majority of them rely on grants to sustain their families. In the employed category, most participants are permanently employed workers with diplomas and bachelor's degree and above. Overall, the distribution indicatesthat many households face constraints in translating educational attainment into stable employment. The self-employed are having the secondary education and certificates which reflects a potential of this group to fall under self-employed, or business minded. The majority of retired and pensioners are between the primary education which reflect the apartheid legacy wherein individual will leave school for the job opportunities due to economic situation in the rural areas. The correlations highlight the importance of higher qualifications and workforce advancement for further improvement of rural communities. This pattern is consistent with findings in rural contexts, where structural barriers often limit the conversion of education into formal employment (see Chapter 3). These findings are interpreted within the broader framework of household livelihood systems and socio-economic structures discussed in Chapter 2. The relationship between education and employment is therefore considered within broader household livelihood strategies rather than individual gender-based outcomes.

5.2.7. Employment status and gender

Employment patterns are interpreted at the household level, recognising that different household members contribute in various ways, without implying direct comparison between gender groups. Women's employment is viewed as a tool to improve their status and economic independence, allowing them to overcome gender stereotypes (Burrows, 1988). Gender influences several elements of employment, including job selection, promotions, and assessments (Winstead & Streets 2013). Women's labour-force participation and labour-intensive growth are acknowledged as critical for poverty alleviation (Gayathri, 2005). However, barriers to employment for women include low levels of education and gender disparities in the workforce (Wati, 2017). Figure 5.9 presents the distribution of employment status among participants across the sampled households, disaggregated by gender as part of the sample composition.

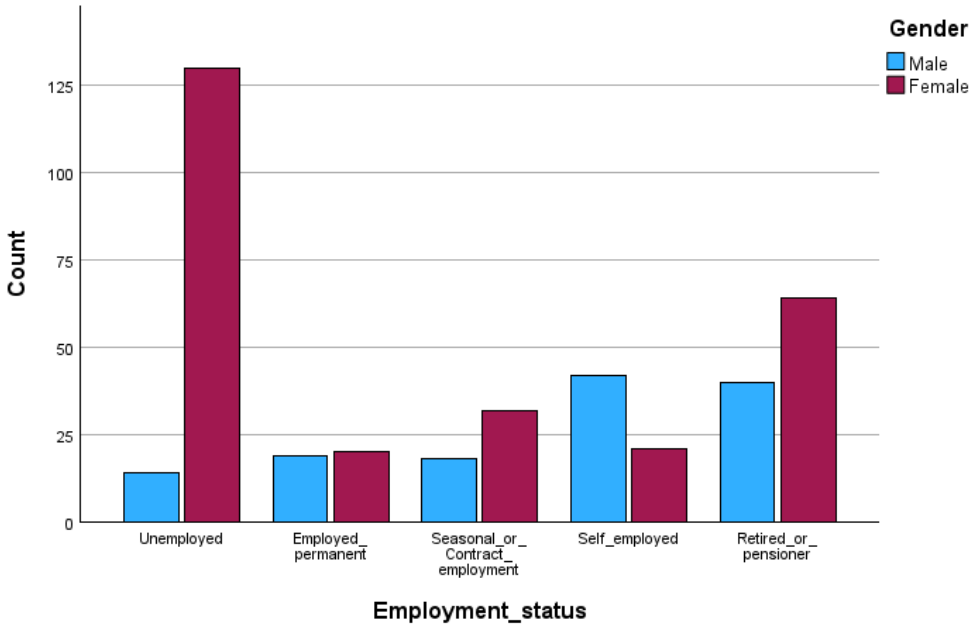

Figure 5.9: Gender and employment status of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Figure 5.9 presents the distribution of employment status among participants in the sampled households, with responses disaggregated by gender to reflect the composition of household representatives. The largest concentration is observed in the unemployed category, where the female respondents are substantially higher (approximately above 120) compared to male respondents (approximately around 15). This indicates that unemployment represents the most prominent employment category within the sample. In the employed (permanent) category, participation is relatively low and similar across both male and female respondents (approximately around 20 each), highlighting limited engagement in stable employment. The seasonal or contract employment category shows moderate participation, with female respondents (approximately above 30) exceeding male respondents (approximately below 20), indicating some engagement in non-permanent employment arrangements. In the self-employed category, male respondents (approximately above 40) show higher participation compared to female respondents (approximately around 20), highlighting that self-employment is a key activity within households, with participation present across respondents. The retired or pensioner category also shows notable participation, with female respondents (approximately around 65) higher than male respondents (approximately around 40), reflecting the presence of household members who rely on pension-related income. The findings indicate that

household members participate across multiple employment categories, including unemployment, self-employment, and pension reliance, while participation in permanent employment remains comparatively limited. This distribution provides insight into how household members contribute to income-generating activities within the study area.

According to the findings of the focus groups (2022) historically men were selected to undertake employment outside of the household, due to safety concerns for the women. They further explained that historically the external work was not associated with educational qualification but rather hard labour that was more suited for male members of a household. They also explained that more recently it is acceptable for both men and women can now work anywhere as determined by the 'capacity' and aspirations of the individuals. The 'capacity' according to the community entails the educational knowledge and social responsibilities of their family despite their gender. During the focus group discussion s, it was established that the higher rate of unemployment amongst females despite equal levels of education (Section 5.2.6) could be due to structured barriers in the labour market that result in gender discrimination that dictates that women are less likely to get secure stable and well-paid employment. Further in the surrounding rural area, females are more likely to obtain limited and informal work opportunities, and this means a lower female participation rate in the formal labour force. Over the period of the fieldwork activities, the researcher observed that the high unemployment rate of women in the formal labour sector, negatively impacts on the household income, while the large number of female-headed households more deprived, as they must make do on a limited income (mostly social grants), while carrying the full burden of the family responsibilities. The employment rates of women in the sample reflects the trend in many rural communities in South Africa and probably the main reason for the high number of female-headed households and the increased vulnerability risk to multidimensional poverty in such households.

Respondents shared that while the experiences of women employed in male-dominated workplaces and social networks have affected their opinions about the role women must play or continue to play in the household, the responsibilities in many of their households continue to be shaped by the apartheid legacy wherein men will leave

the house to go and work in the urban areas or far from home. The gender is considered as part of household composition rather than as a basis for comparison between groups. Different members within households contribute in various ways depending on availability, skills, and access to opportunities (FGD-All, 2022/2023). As a result, the level of employment within a household may influences its ability to sustain livelihoods and reduce vulnerability to poverty. The findings highlight that many households rely on a limited number of income earners. This pattern is consistent with rural livelihood studies, where household members often share economic responsibilities to sustain livelihoods (see Chapter 3). These findings are interpreted within the broader framework of household roles and socio-economic organisation discussed in Chapter 2.

5.2.8. Employment status and family role

Figure 5.10 presents the distribution of employment status across different family roles among participants in the sampled households in Tshaulu. The figure illustrates how various household members are engaged in different forms of economic activity. In rural South Africa unemployment leads to the reshaping of family roles, but also the reconsideration of household strategies and unfortunately this can also lead to the reinforcement of chronic poverty (Mduli-Maziya et al., 2024). Thus (un)employment status, family roles and poverty are very closely linked (and dynamic) as rural livelihoods depend on labour, social cohesion and resource distribution in the household (Mduli & Dunga, 2022; Dunga, 2025). Figure 5.10 presents the distribution of employment status across different family roles among participants in the sampled households in Tshaulu. The figure illustrates how various household members are engaged in different forms of economic activity. Figure 5.10 shows the distribution of employment participation across different family roles within the sampled households. Figure 5.10 shows the distribution of employment participation across different family roles within the sampled households.

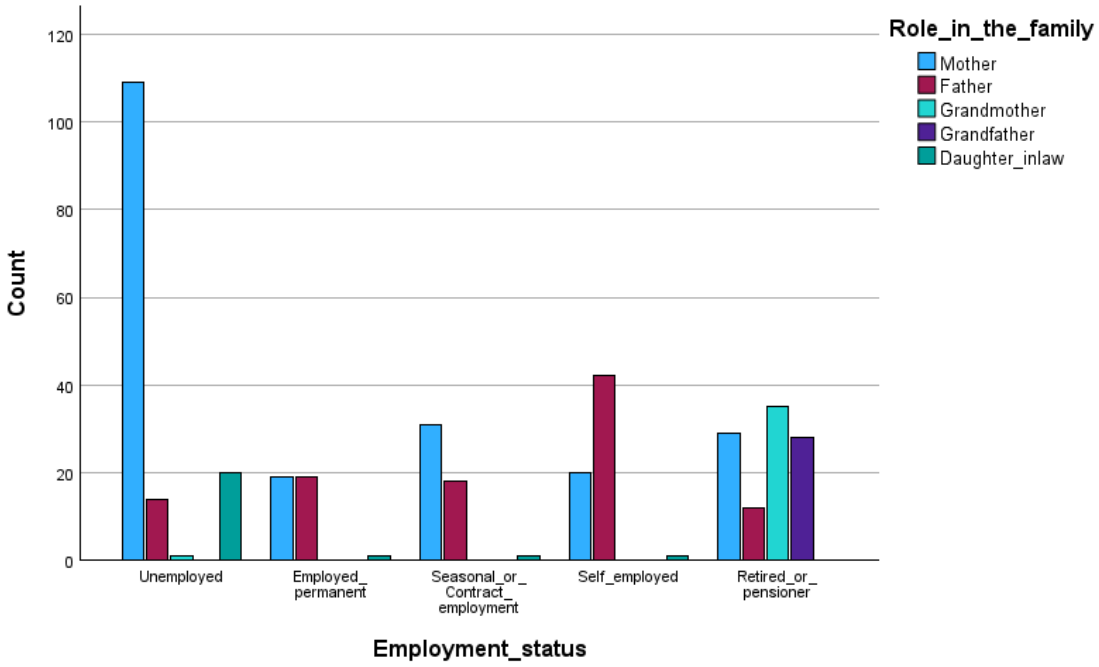

Figure 5.10: Role in the family and employment status of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The unemployed category contains the largest number of participants overall, with representation across multiple household roles. This pattern shows that unemployment affects household representatives more broadly, rather than being confined to a specific role within the household. The employed (permanent) category contains relatively low numbers of participants, with representation across different household roles. This pattern indicatesthat access to stable employment remains limited across household representatives within the study area. The seasonal or contract employment category shows moderate participation, with representation across multiple household roles. This pattern indicates that some household members are engaged in non-permanent forms of work as part of their livelihood activities. The self-employed category shows clear participation, with representation across different household roles. This pattern indicatesthat self-employment forms part of the economic activities through which household members contribute to livelihood strategies. The retired or pensioner category includes participation across multiple household roles. This pattern reflects the presence of household members who rely on pension-related income as part of household livelihood support. During the focus group discussion s and key stakeholder interactions during the duration of the fieldwork, respondents shared that traditionally adults were considered to be the breadwinners in the household, however, with the lack of stable and regular

employment opportunities in the immediate geographical area, the breadwinner migrates to the urban areas in seek of employment to support their families in the rural area. With this trend the breadwinner model collapses and is replaced by a multi-role survival model, where those who remain must redistribute roles according to need and not tradition. While the re-organisation of roles amounts to a coping mechanism the following are the felt implications:

- Women must take on more roles outside of the household and these could include unpaid care work, informal trading or subsistence farming.
- Grandparents could become the de facto head of households.
- Children and young adults adopt more adult responsibilities, and this includes some having to leave school to support their families in the household or migrate to urban areas in search of employment.
- The dependency ratio increases, as the households are larger due to extended families.

During the fieldwork the researcher observed how unemployment forces families to reorganise their roles, and this includes women and the elderly taking on more responsibilities. While this reorganisation is important, it often results in the reinforcement of vulnerability to poverty and can form the basis of the structural poverty experienced by the rural community. These patterns reflect how household roles are distributed among members, with emphasis on functional contributions rather than comparative gender differences.

5.3. Household dependents and household income

These patterns provide insight into how household members organise and share responsibilities to sustain livelihoods. The findings highlight that household members function within an interdependent system, where economic and domestic responsibilities are collectively managed. In this context, roles are interpreted in terms of household functioning rather than comparisons between gender groups. This collective organisation of roles contributes to household resilience and plays an important role in addressing poverty challenges. This is particularly relevant in larger households, where shared responsibilities are necessary to meet the needs of multiple dependents. The findings highlight that household survival depends on the combined

efforts of members rather than individual roles. This aligns with rural livelihood studies that emphasise collective household strategies in maintaining economic stability (see Chapter 3). These findings are interpreted within the broader framework of household roles and socio-economic organisation discussed in Chapter 2.

Household size and the number of dependents is critical factors influencing livelihood conditions, as they determine both resource needs and the capacity of households to sustain themselves. Household size is considered a key factor influencing livelihood conditions, as larger households increase dependency ratios and place pressure on available resources. In research on incomes sources and the actual amount of household income, Mathinya (2025), established that many South African rural households earn a total income that is well below the living income of approximately R230 - R250 per person per day. It is thus important to establish not only the source of income for the sample communities, but also the amount of income into the household. As most rural households consist of a number of people, many of which would fall into the potentially economically active age group, while some of the households have high dependency levels of individuals not earning an income, it is necessary to provide an analysis of the household dependents of the household representatives in the sample, before investigating the income amount of the households. These findings are therefore interpreted in relation to household structure and resource distribution, as discussed in Chapter 3. Building on these findings, the following section integrates household dependency levels with employment status and income to provide a more comprehensive understanding of household livelihood conditions.

5.3.1. Household's dependents

StatsSA (2024) reported that rural households in South Africa often include two or three generations and many non-working dependents (children and older persons), and these dependency ratios are well above the average dependency ratio in the urban household. These patterns are also linked to household size and dependency levels, which influence overall livelihood capacity and resource allocation. The research cited in this chapter mostly supports the argument that there is a consistent relationship between household size, dependency ratios and poverty. HSRC (2025) reports that a high number of dependents dilute the household income, and in

households that rely on earnings from agriculture (mostly rural) have a low income that is below the food poverty line, and larger household sizes in this type of setting pushes households into poverty. In addition, StatsSA (2024) maintain that female headed households that are very common in rural areas are more deprived across a multitude of poverty indicators as they support a larger number of dependants with fewer economic resources. StatsSA (2024) also reported that in a household with many dependants, the adults (especially women) have reduced opportunities to seek and maintain full-time paid employment as they have responsibilities in the household that focusses on unpaid care work. In section 5.2.3, the income source of the households in the sample survey is most through grants (ranging from child support, older persons and disability), however, if a household has many dependents, then the grant itself can be insufficient as the income must be spread across many dependents. Figure 5.11 illustrates the distribution of the number of household dependents within the sampled households in Tshaulu.

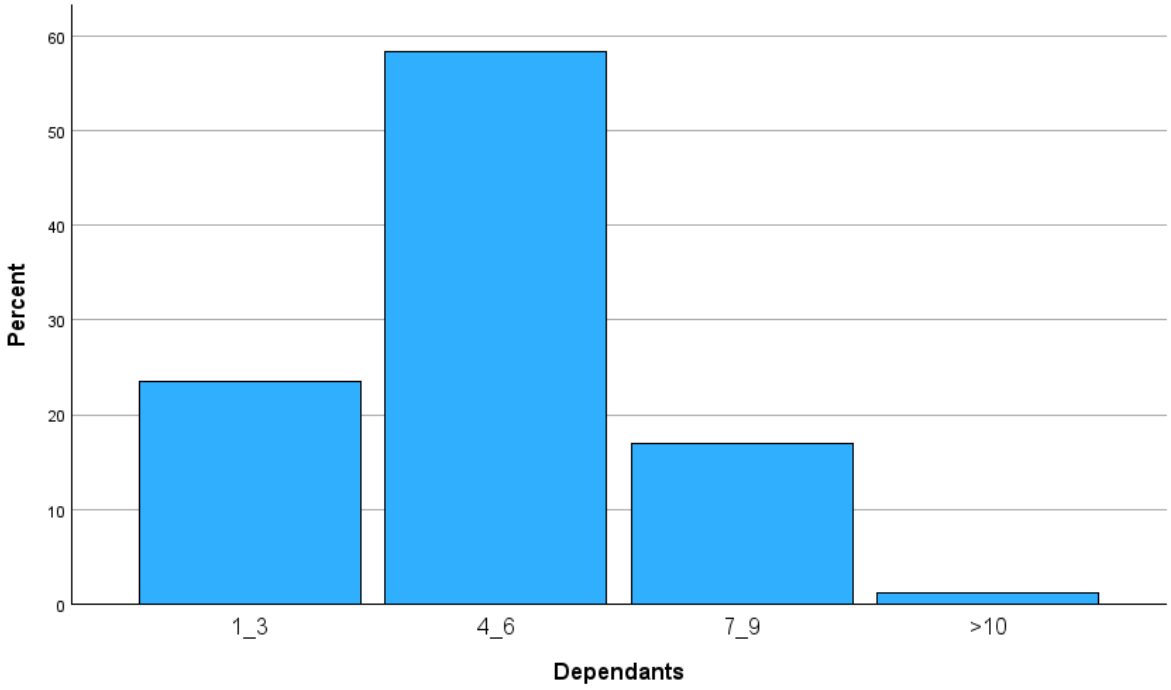

Figure 5.11: Dependants in the household of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

5.3.2 Income source and household dependents

The results show that most households (58.3%) have 4-6 dependants, followed by 23.5% of households with 1-3 dependants, 17% with 7-9 dependants, and 1% of the

households surveyed had more than 10 dependants. This distribution indicates that most households are characterised by moderate to high dependency levels, placing considerable pressure on available household resources. Higher numbers of dependents increase the demand for basic needs such as food, education, and healthcare, which may constrain the ability of households to maintain stable livelihood conditions. These findings highlight that household dependency levels play a significant role in shaping livelihood outcomes within the study area. This distribution provides important insight into the dependency burden carried by households in the study area. Higher numbers of dependents increase pressure on available income, which may limit the ability of households to meet basic needs and improve their socio-economic conditions. As a result, households with higher dependency ratios often rely on shared livelihood strategies to manage limited resources. The findings highlight that many households face significant dependency challenges that affect their economic stability. This pattern is consistent with findings in rural livelihood studies, where larger household sizes are associated with increased vulnerability to poverty (see Chapter 3). These findings are interpreted within the broader framework of household livelihood systems and socio-economic structures discussed in Chapter 2.

With high unemployment rates and a reliance on social grants as the sole source of income against the high dependency ratio of many households in the sampled villages, it is most likely that many households are vulnerable to poverty as their total income must be spread across several dependants. The fact that many of the households are female headed, means that they face reduced opportunities for full time and stable employment as they spend more time doing unpaid care work within the household. A closer analysis of the income source and the number of dependants in the household is reflected in Figure 5.12.

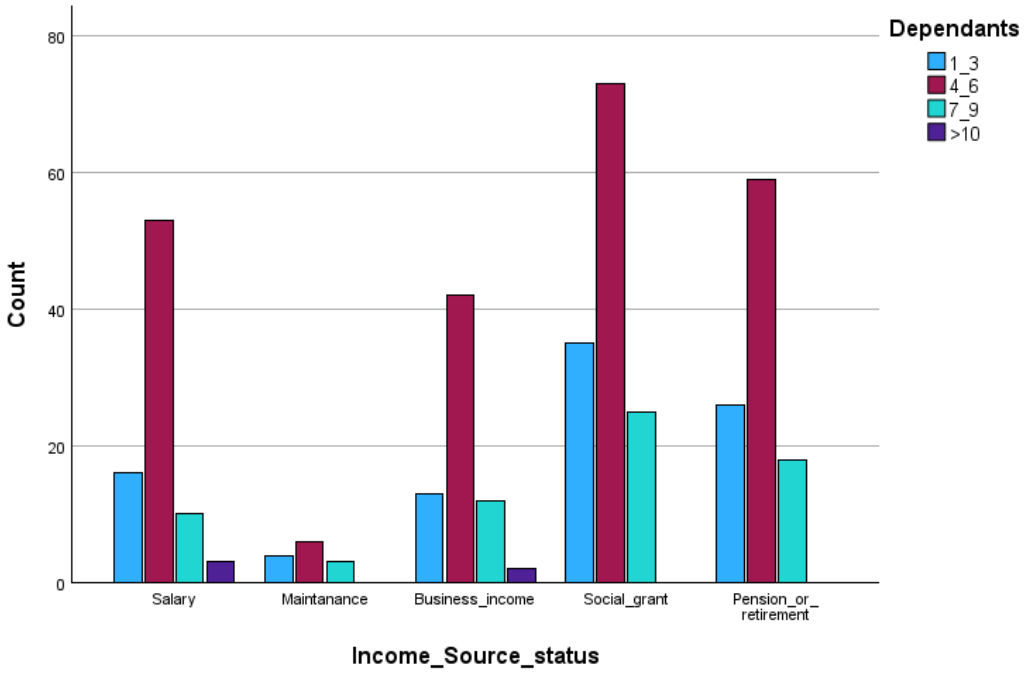

Figure 5.12: Income Source of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Households relying on social grants and pension income constitute the largest proportion across all dependency categories, particularly among those with 4–6 dependents. In contrast, households with salary, business, or maintenance income show comparatively lower count across the dependency categories. During the focus groups the households' representatives explained that most traditional households in the study area are large and multigenerational often consisting of the elderly parents, grandchildren, adult children and spouses and children's living together in the same households: A clan can be allocated a large portion of land so that all the children may get a portion of land from the parent or grandparent to maintain the whole family. In the study area access to land is also granted through elders in the family who have requested land before, this is done to promote mutual support for the household's dependants (Chief, 2022). A traditional household according to the elderly with a lazy parents and children are prone to poverty, in the indigenous households having many members of the household is the advantage to domestic chores and subsistence farming which helps in households' livelihoods maintenance (KSI, 2022; FGD ALL, 2022/2023). The large households place a significant pressure on limited resources as the majority rely on social grants and informal temporary jobs which the income must be shared with dependants on basic needs and food.

This distribution indicates that households with higher dependency levels rely more on social support income, which may place pressure on available resources when income is shared among multiple dependents. These findings are consistent with literature discussed in Chapter 3 and are interpreted within the framework outlined in Chapter 2. The findings between income sources and household dependents provides important insight into the economic capacity of households in the study area. Households with limited or unstable income sources may face increased pressure when supporting a higher number of dependents, which may reduce their ability to meet basic needs. This highlights the significance of household size, as income must often be distributed among multiple dependents, thereby affecting overall livelihood sustainability. As a result, households often rely on combined income sources and shared responsibilities to manage these pressures. The findings highlight that many households operate under constrained income conditions relative to their dependency levels. This may indicate that as dependency levels increase, households may experience greater pressure on available income, particularly where income sources are limited or unstable. While knowing the number of dependents in each household is important in poverty relief research, a clearer picture of the situation is obtained by establishing the income per household.

5.3.2. Employment status, household income amount and dependants

This section presents the findings on employment status, household income, and household dependency levels, and interprets them in relation to existing literature and the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2. The focus is on how these factors collectively shape household livelihood conditions within the study area. As explained in Sections 5.2.7 to 5.2.8, employment has the potential of reducing the likelihood of rural poverty, and household that rely on income from stable employment are less likely to be impacted by poverty. Figure 5.13 presents the distribution of household dependents across different employment status categories within the sampled households.

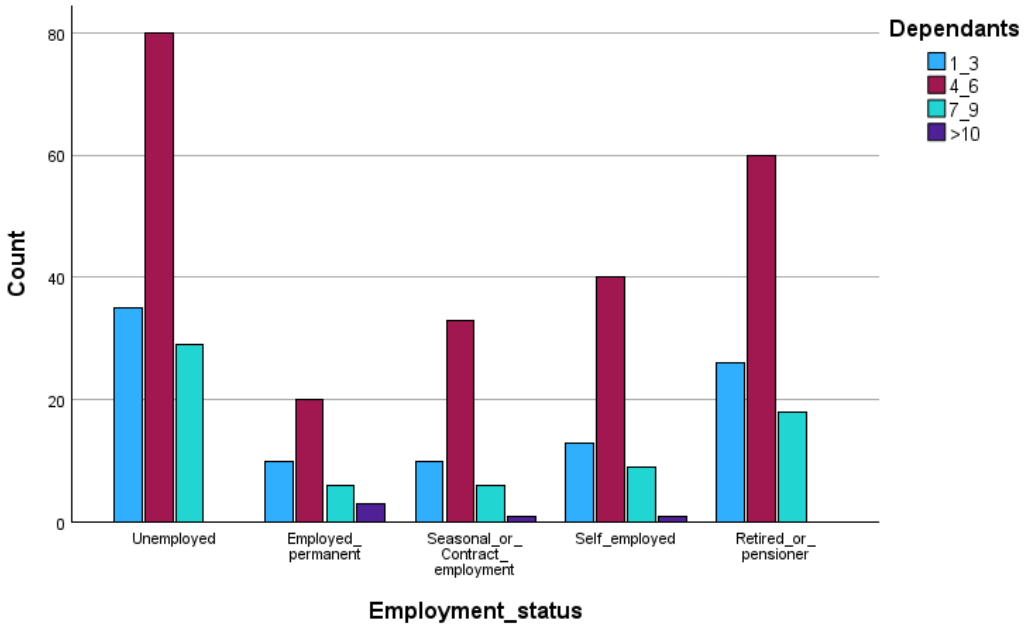

Figure 5.13: Employment status and dependants of households in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Figure 5.8 (Section 5.2.6) reflects that 36% of the household respondents were unemployed, while figure 5.12 (Section 5.3.2) indicate that 133 of the 400 people rely on social grants as their source of income, it is necessary to establish the employment status in correlation to household income to obtain a clearer picture of the situation in these communities. Figure 5.9 (Section 5.2.7) reflects that in all categories of employment status, (except those who are permanently employed) the household income is less than R6000, with a large component of these recording a household income of less than R3000 per month. Those who are permanently employed, or employed on contract, or derive their income from self-employment seem to have a higher household income more than R6000 per month. Figure 5.13

Figure 5.13 shows that the distribution of unemployed households have the highest counts across all dependency categories (approximately 80 households with 4-6 dependents), followed by retired or pensioner households (around 60 households in the same category). Seasonal or contract employment (about 33 households) and self-employment (around 40 households) also show moderate counts, while permanently employed households reflect comparatively lower counts (approximately 20 households with 4-6 dependents). This shows that households with higher dependency levels are more concentrated in categories with limited or less stable

employment, which may place pressure on available resources and affect livelihood stability. These findings are consistent with literature discussed in Chapter 3 and are interpreted within the framework outlined in Chapter 2. Figure 5.14 presents the distribution of household dependents across different income amount status categories within the sampled households.

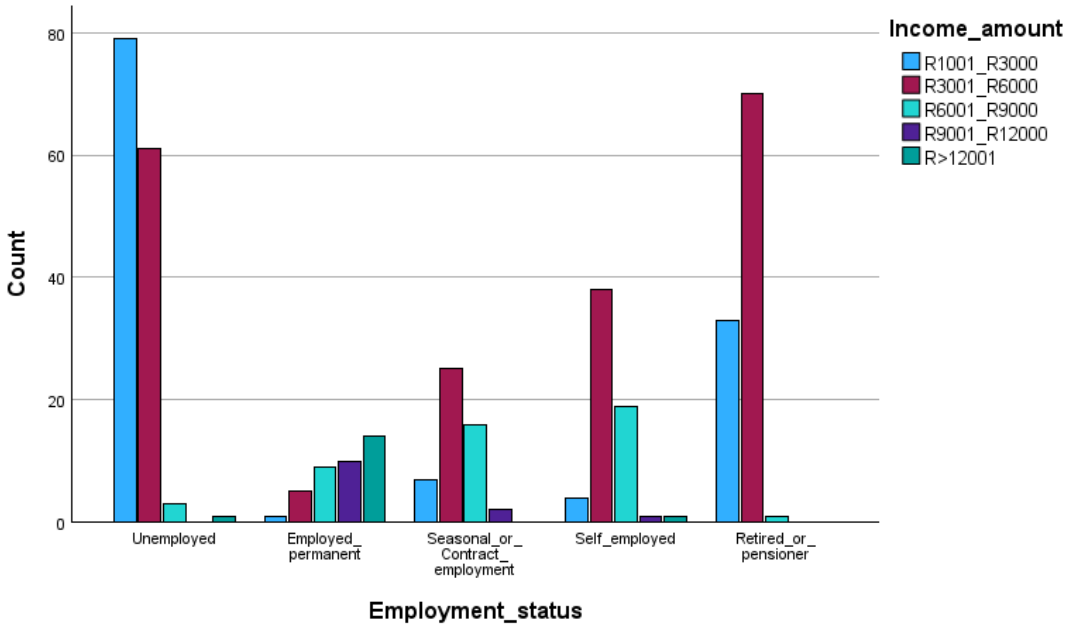

Figure 5.14: Employment status and income number of households in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Despite employment status, rural households in the village can source income to sustain their livelihoods. Most of household participants (49.8%) received income ranging from R3001 to R6000 monthly, followed by (31%), receiving R1000-R3000 monthly, (12%) receiving approximately R6001-R9000 monthly, (4%) receiving more than R12000, and finally (3.3%) receiving R9001-R12000. This combined relationship provides a comprehensive view of how employment and income interact with household dependency levels in shaping livelihood conditions. While household income is significant, its relationship with the number of household dependents is critical in understanding the vulnerability of a household to poverty (Section 5.3.1). Income and the number of economically active household members are important factors in poverty reduction (Molnar, 2009). Additional economically engaged household members contribute to a household's revenue generation, lowering the likelihood of poverty (Manlagñit, 2004). Similarly, the level, structure, and dynamics of

income in families with children are critical variables in reducing child poverty (Chen et al., 2021). the income distribution indicates that most households fall within lower income categories, which affects their capacity to meet basic needs.

Mathinya (2025) indicated that a living income of between R230 to R250 per person per day and if the daily income per person is calculated using the statistics provided in Table 5.13 and Figure 5.13, most households in the sample villages would be vulnerable to poverty. Families with four to six members earn between R3,000 and R6,000 per month, while families with one to three members earn between R1,000 and R3,000 per month, and families with seven to nine members earn between R3,000 and R6,000 per month. Social grants (retirement, social relief, disability, child, and other grants), salaries (temporary and permanent), business income (small business income), child support (child grants), and self-employment are all ways that a household can generate income. Households with limited employment opportunities and lower income levels face increased pressure when supporting a higher number of dependents. This combination significantly influences household vulnerability to poverty, as available resources may not be sufficient to meet growing consumption needs.

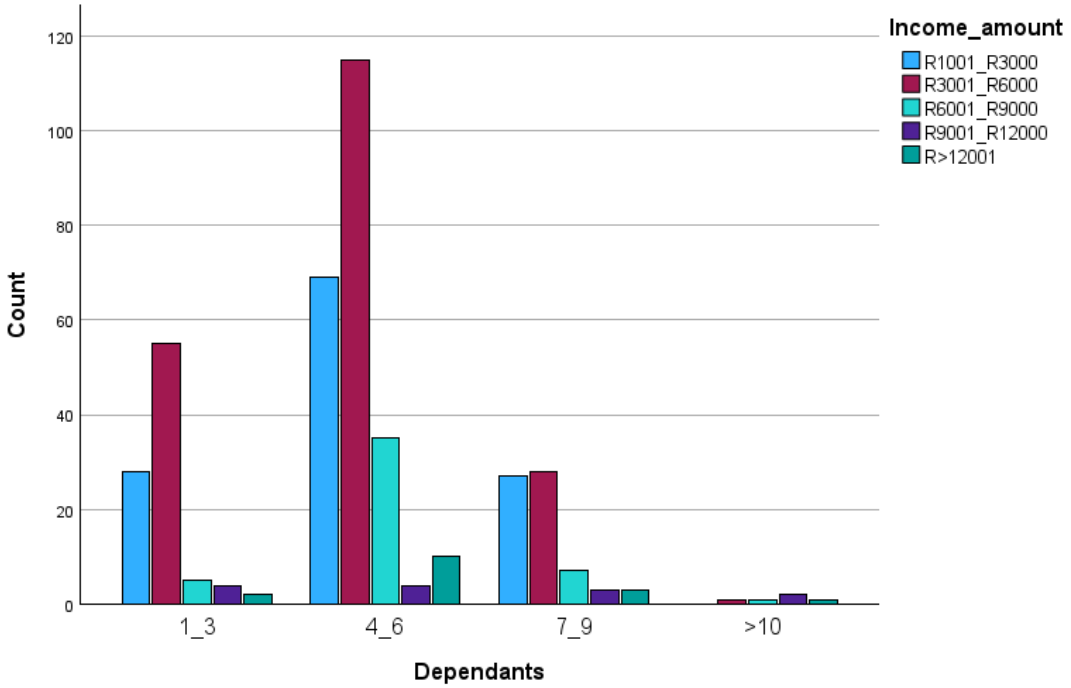

Figure 5.15: Income amount and dependants of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Respondents reported during the focus group discussions that unemployment or informal and seasonal work of members of their household increases their vulnerability to poverty and negatively impacts on food security, although in terms of the latter the respondents can rely on subsistence farming to supplement their food resources in their households. In their opinion their household income relies heavily on social grants and while they are thankful for these grants – the grants do not provide sufficient income to provide sufficiently for their family and thus the household represented, and household members are constantly trying to generate an income albeit from less formal or contract work. The larger the household the higher the dependency ratios and thus the more vulnerable larger household are to poverty. Although it should be once again mentioned that income is only one indicator of poverty and many rural communities such as those in Tshaulu use a wide range of indigenous knowledge systems, practises and culture to mitigate the various indicators of poverty in their community. For this reason, it is important that such practises are considered together with the information provided in this chapter in strategies to alleviate poverty.

The role of household size is therefore central, as dependency levels directly affect how income is distributed within the household. households often rely on shared livelihood strategies and combined contributions from members to manage economic pressures. the findings indicate that many households operate under constrained economic conditions relative to their dependency levels. This pattern aligns with rural livelihood studies, which highlight the combined effects of employment, income, and household size on poverty outcomes (see Chapter 3). These findings are interpreted within the broader framework of household livelihood systems and socio-economic structures discussed in Chapter 2.

5.4. Theory in relation to the socio-economic profile of the respondents

These findings are interpreted within the broader framework of household livelihood systems and socio-economic structures discussed in Chapter 2. These findings can be interpreted within the broader framework of household roles and socio-economic organisation discussed in Chapter 2. As explained in Chapter 2, Modernisation theory argues that poverty persists in communities that retain more traditional characteristics in their economic structures, social norms and levels of technological development. This theory maintains that development requires a shift towards modern values, more

industrialisation, higher levels of education and an integration into a market-based economy. When applied to the rural communities of South Africa such as Tshaulu modernisation helps to explain specific social-economic characteristics of households and how these influence their risk of poverty. The latter however has limitations, as proponents of the theory would then place the blame on the retention of tradition in households as the reason for a higher risk of poverty. Further the theory would ignore the fact that the inequalities that exist in the households of Tshaulu are structural and a legacy of apartheid. The use of the modernisation theory does however highlight the socio-economic characteristics that are linked to poverty risk and as such is of value for this thesis.

The second theory that underpins this thesis is the Social Role Theory, and in Tshaulu the gendered expectations of both genders are shaped by prescribed social, economic and cultural roles. The social constructs of both genders in Tshaulu shape the individual's economic opportunities, their access to resources and thus their exposure to poverty and in this way the theory provides a way to interpret the socio-economic data presented in this chapter and in this way allows for a better understanding on the risk of poverty of the different households depending on their socio-economic profile. The inclusion of this theory in the thesis allows for the analysis of how entrenched the social roles of individuals in the households of Tshaulu in creating barriers that can increase or decrease the poverty risk of households especially those who are headed by females or elderly members of the community.

The third theory that underpins the thesis as explained in Chapter 2, is the Intersectionality Theory and this provided for an analytical tool for understand why certain groups of households in Tshaulu are more vulnerable than others in the same community. Intersectionality provides for a better understanding on how and why certain groups in Tshaulu – especially the unemployed; female represented households or households head by the elderly are disproportionality poor. By applying this theory, the researcher was able to identify multiple variables such as the historical, political, economic and cultural factors that underly the risk of poverty in Tshaulu. The empirical findings presented above are consistent with existing studies on rural livelihoods, which emphasise the role of household structure, income sources, and dependency levels in shaping socio-economic outcomes (see Chapter 3). These

findings are further interpreted within the framework of household livelihood systems and socio-economic organisation, as discussed in Chapter 2. The findings demonstrate that employment, income, and household dependency levels interact to shape livelihood conditions and influence vulnerability to poverty. The results highlight the importance of interdependent household systems, where members collectively contribute to sustaining livelihoods under constrained economic conditions. Qualitative insights further supported these findings by illustrating how households adapt through shared responsibilities and combined livelihood strategies. the findings highlight that most households operate under limited economic capacity relative to their dependency levels.

The socio-economic profile of Tshaulu within the context of the four theories thus form the underpinning of the following chapters. The findings are interpreted within the broader theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2, particularly in relation to household roles and socio-economic structures, rather than direct comparison between gender categories. These findings reinforce the relevance of the theoretical framework in explaining how household structure and socio-economic conditions interact to influence livelihood outcomes. the discussion confirms that addressing poverty requires understanding household-level dynamics rather than focusing on individual characteristics.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter presented and analysed the socio-economic characteristics of households in the study area, focusing on the relationships between employment, income, and household dependency levels. The socio-economic profile is critical when studying the dynamics of poverty and roles of gender within a rural setting. This chapter was not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of traditional gender equality statistics, which focus on the numerical comparison between men and women in terms of access to resources or services. Therefore, the study focused on the in-depth understanding of the effect of socio-economic drivers of poverty and poverty alleviation in a rural area, as a foundation to following chapters that focus on the indigenous and contemporary gender roles in the poverty alleviation efforts in Tshaulu. The findings demonstrate that household livelihood conditions are shaped by the interaction of limited employment opportunities, constrained income sources, and varying

household sizes. Household size and dependency levels emerged as critical factors, as they directly influence the distribution and adequacy of available resources. As a result, households with limited income and higher dependency burdens are more vulnerable to poverty. The study highlights that households function as interdependent systems, where members collectively contribute to sustaining livelihoods under constrained conditions. These findings are consistent with existing literature on rural livelihoods and are further supported by the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2, which emphasises the importance of household-level socio-economic organisation. the chapter confirms that understanding poverty requires a focus on household-level dynamics, where employment, income, and dependency interact to shape livelihood outcomes. These findings are further understood within the broader framework of household roles and socio-economic organisation discussed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 6: HOUSEHOLD POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES IN TSHAULU

This chapter presents the findings on household livelihood conditions within the study area, with a focus on access to basic services, household roles, and income utilisation. Poverty remains a global challenge therefore understanding the effect of roles of gender in the indigenous and contemporary strategies of poverty alleviation remain crucial in the effort to alleviate poverty in marginal communities. The study incorporates focus group discussion alongside household's surveys and key informant's interviews to triangulate the data. The data presented were collected using household surveys, focus groups (FDG1 to FDG6, refer to Chapter 4 for a full description) and key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and then analysed in relation to the literature review. Data was analysed using the SPSS and content and descriptive analysis was applied. The sample consist of 453 participants with more females than males, reflecting the availability of married women within the households than males in the study area. Section 6.1 examines household access to basic services and needs, including food, water, and housing conditions. Section 6.2 explores the integration of indigenous and contemporary roles within households in the adoption of poverty alleviation strategies, while Section 6.3 analyses household income utilisation patterns. This section specifically focuses on household-level access to basic services and needs. The analysis is grounded in the household livelihood systems perspective, emphasising how households' access and utilise essential services to sustain livelihoods. The emphasis is therefore on household-level conditions, while gender roles are examined in detail in Section 6.2.

6.1. Households access to basic services and needs

This section presents household responses on access to basic services and daily needs, including food, housing, healthcare, water, sanitation, education, and electricity. While these findings are presented across multiple service categories, they collectively reflect overall household livelihood conditions. The discussion therefore highlights key patterns across services to avoid repetition and emphasise broader trends in access and quality. These indicators are central to understanding the quality of life within the household and reflect their broader socio-economic condition of the community. Respondents were asked to rate their households access to each service

or basic need. The findings also incorporate data from households' surveys (Annexure 5), focus group discussions (Annexure 3) and key Informant Interviews (KIIs) (Annexure 4) and the researcher own field observations.

6.1.1. Access to food

This section presents the analysis of the household representatives' responses on their access to food. Understanding the food access at the household level provides critical insight of households coping strategies in the community of Tshaulu. The distribution of household responses regarding access to food is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

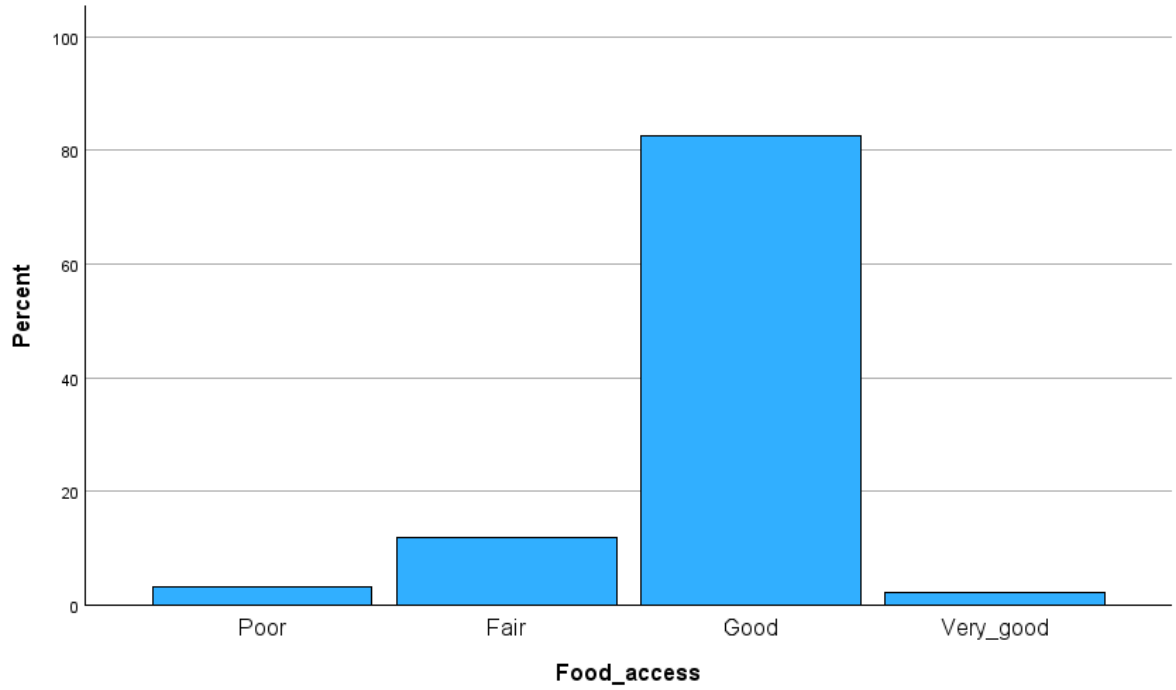

Figure 6.1: Households ratings on food access in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The results show that most households (82.5%) rated their access to food as good, followed by 12% who reported fair access. A smaller proportion of households rated their access as poor (3.3%) or very good (2.3%). As shown in the figure, food access in the study area is generally acceptable, although a small number of households continue to experience limitations, reflecting ongoing challenges in maintaining consistent food security. These findings are also presented in Table 6.1, which provides the detailed frequency distribution of household responses, while the figure offers a visual summary of the pattern.

Table 6.1: Households ratings on food access in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Food_access

	Frequency	Percent
Poor	13	3,3
Fair	48	12,0
Good	330	82,5
Very_good	9	2,3
Total	400	100,0

These results highlight that most household experience an acceptable level of food access, with a few reporting limitations. Focus groups (FDG5 and FDG2) participants confirm that household access to food is generally perceived as a good or fair. However, they emphasized the changing climate condition and rising food prices have made access more difficult for some households. It was also noted that many families rely on subsistence farming (Photograph 6.1), particularly maize cultivation (Photograph 6.2). The harvested maize is stored at a local mill grinder where households can later purchase it back at the discounted rate, making this an important community-based strategy for managing food access.



Photograph 6.1: Example of a backyard garden in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Photographer Todani D, December 2023)



Photograph 6.2: Example of dry harvested maize preparations in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Photographer Mukhwathi L, Feb 2024)

6.1.2. Access to housing or shelter

The access to housing or shelter is the critical component of wellbeing and key indicator of poverty. This section presents the analysis of households' responses regarding their access to shelter. Table 6.2 presents the frequency distribution of household responses regarding their access to housing or shelter. A total of 400 households responded to this question, about half of the respondents, 52.3%, rated their access as fair, while 44.5% rated it as good. A small percentage, 3%, rated their housing access as poor and only 0.3% indicated very good. These results shows that while most households have access to shelter, the quality of stability of household may be moderate, with few households reporting high satisfaction and a small portion still facing challenges.

Table 6.2: Households ratings on housing infrastructure or shelter of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Household_infrastructures_Access

		Frequency	Percent
	Poor	12	3,0
	Fair	209	52,3
	Good	178	44,5
	Very_good	1	,3
	Total		100,0

These findings on household infrastructures access indicate that while households generally have access to infrastructure, the quality and reliability of these services vary significantly across different dimensions.

6.1.3. Access to health services and facilities

The access to health services and facilities is a critical dimension of household livelihoods and is essential for the poverty reduction. In the area of Tshaulu, the availability and affordability of healthcare can influence the household decisions and standard of living. This section presents the households participants responses concerning their access to the health services and their perceptions on the accessibility of services. Table 6.3 present the frequency distribution of household responses regarding their access to health services and facilities.

Table 6.3: Households ratings on access to health services of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Access_to_health_services

		Frequency	Percent
	Poor	8	2,0
	Fair	210	52,5
	Good	181	45,3
	Very_good	1	,3
	Total	400	100,0

A total of 400 households responded to this question, about half of the respondents in the households, 52.5%, rated their access as fair, while 45.3% rated it as good, only 2% reported poor access, and 0.3% indicated very good access. This result indicates that although most households have some level of access to safe health services, a majority experience their health access at moderate while few rate this service as excellent. These findings highlight that although access to health services is available to most households, it is generally experienced at a moderate level, indicating potential challenges related to quality, availability, or accessibility of services.

6.1.4. Access to daily water supply

Water remains the most critical basic need of the community. Access to reliable water supply is fundamental to the household's survival and health particularly in rural areas where infrastructures may be limited. This section presents households responses related to the access to daily water supply focusing on availability and reliability. Table

6.4 and Figure 6.2 present the frequency distribution of 400 household's responses regarding their access to daily water supply.

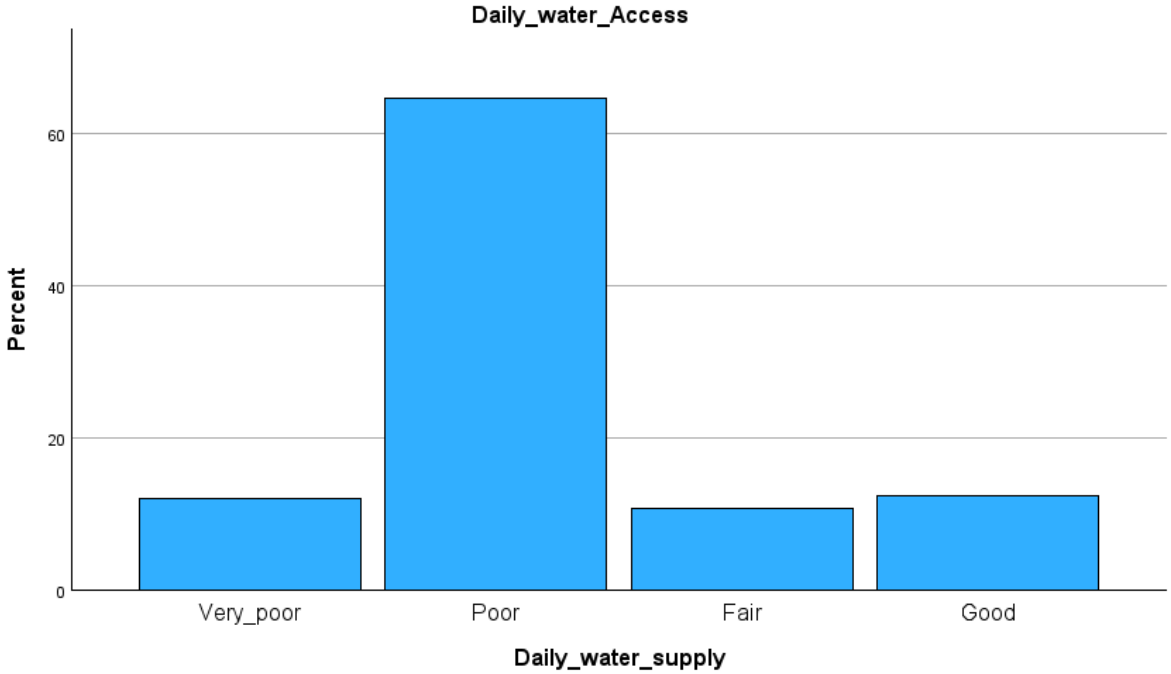

Figure 6.2: Households ratings on daily water supply of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

These findings are also presented in Table 6.4, which provides the detailed frequency distribution of household responses.

Table 6.4: Households ratings on daily water supply of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Daily_water_access

		Frequency	Percent
	Very_poor	48	12,0
	Poor	259	64,8
	Fair	43	10,8
	Good	50	12,5
	Total	400	100,0

6.1.5. Access to sanitation services

Most respondents, namely, 64.8%, rated their access of water as poor, while 12% reported it as very poor. Only 10.8% rated their access as fair and 12.5% rated it as good. These results indicate that a large proportion of household experience inadequate or unreliable access to daily water supply, with very few reporting acceptable level of access. During focus group discussions FDG1 to FDG6, participants explained that frequent water shortages long distance to communal taps, contributed to poor and very poor ratings. Observations confirmed that in some area's household shared single water point which brings water once or twice a week. This supports the findings by Tapela (2015) and Matimolane & Mathivha (2025) who noted that rural water access in South Africa villages remain inconsistent, particularly where infrastructure is not managed by the community. As shown in the Figure 6.2, access to water in the study area is largely inadequate, with most households experiencing unreliable or insufficient supply. This highlights water access as a critical constraint on household livelihood conditions.

This section presents the findings on the access to sanitation services as a critical aspect which facilitate the public health, and wellbeing of the households. Table 6.5 presents 400 households frequency distribution of responses regarding their access to sanitation services.

Table 6.5: Households ratings on sanitation of the house of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Access_Sanitation

	Frequency	Percent
Poor	10	2,5
Fair	163	40,8
Good	224	56,0
Very_good	3	,8
Total	400	100,0

The majority, 56%, rated their access as good, while 40.8% rated it as fair. A small proportion, 2.5% reported poor access and only 0.8% indicated very good. This result indicates that access to sanitation services is generally adequate for most households, although a significant portion still experience limitations. Focus group discussions revealed that most households rely on pit latrines, some of which are shared by

multiple families. Participants noted concern about hygiene, particularly during the rainy season when some pit latrines overflow and become inaccessible. Researcher observations confirmed that in some areas, sanitation facilities are located far from the main house and are not adequately enclosed. These findings highlight that access to sanitation services is generally adequate for most households, although a notable proportion continues to experience moderate limitations, particularly in relation to quality and accessibility of facilities.

6.1.6. Access to education facilities and support

The access to education and related support services is crucial factor in breaking the cycle of rural poverty. In this section households' responses frequency regarding their access to schools and educational support is presented in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6: Households ratings on educational facilities and support of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Access_Educational_facilities_and_support

	Frequency	Percent
Poor	16	4,0
Fair	142	35,5
Good	241	60,3
Very_good	1	,3
Total	400	100,0

Of the total household responses, most respondents rated their access to education as good (60.3%), followed by 35.5% who rated it as fair. A small proportion, 4%, reported poor access and only 0.3% rated it as very good. These results highlight that most households have relatively good access to educational services, although some still experience moderate and limited access. These findings highlight that most households have relatively good access to educational services, although some continue to experience moderate limitations, which may affect the overall quality and consistency of educational support.

6.1.7. Access to electricity

The access to electricity is a critical enabler of improved households living condition. This section analyses the household responses concerning their access to electricity focusing on availability in the rural households. Table 6.7 present the frequency distribution of household responses regarding their access to electricity.

Table 6.7: Households ratings on electricity access of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Electricity_access

		Frequency	Percent
	Very_poor	6	1,5
	Poor	16	4,0
	Fair	143	35,8
	Good	233	58,3
	Very_good	2	,5
	Total	400	100,0

Percentages reported in the table represent proportions of the total sample. Many respondents, 58.3%, rated their access to electricity as good, followed by 35.8% who rated it as fair. A small proportion reported poor 4% and very poor 1.5% access, while only 0.5% rated it as very good. The results highlight that electricity is generally accessible to most household, although a significant portion still experience challenges that affect reliability and quality of service. Focus group participants explained that while most households are connected to the electricity grid, load shedding and faulty prepaid meters often disrupt usage and availability. Others noted that electricity is reserved mainly for light when dark, as cooking of food was still undertaken in an open fire or a paraffin stove due to high cost of electricity. Researcher observation (Photograph 6.3) also confirmed instances where household have a stored firewood for household cooking and water heating system.



Photograph 6.3: Example of a firewood bundle for household in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Mukhwathi N, Feb 2023)

These findings highlight that electricity is generally accessible to most households, although a notable proportion experiences challenges related to reliability and affordability, which may limit its effective use in daily household activities. This variation reflects the functioning of household livelihood systems, where access to services directly influences resource allocation and coping strategies. The findings highlight that while households generally have access to basic services, the quality and reliability of these services vary across different dimensions. Access to food, education, sanitation, and electricity is relatively adequate, whereas water access remains a critical challenge. This indicates that household livelihood conditions depend not only on access to services but also on their consistency and ability to meet daily needs, which may influence household well-being and resource management.

6.2. Integrating the indigenous and contemporary roles of gender in household adoption of poverty alleviation strategies

This section presents how the rural household applies both traditional and/or modern approaches to effectively address household challenges in poverty. The study analysed households-level strategies used to alleviate poverty that are influenced by either indigenous or contemporary knowledge. The understanding of the indigenous

and contemporary poverty alleviation strategies and community knowledge sources presents a critical dimension for understanding and enhancing households' resistance in poverty challenges. Several studies have examined indigenous knowledge and how it affects poverty efforts in the rural or countries in the Global South. von Maltitz and Bahta (2024) argued that indigenous practice and knowledge are crucial for promoting women empowerment. In addition, the same authors emphasise that indigenous knowledge is undervalued and acknowledged that women play crucial roles in society, and that the decline in the use of indigenous knowledge is due to an adoption of more contemporary approaches. From the literature (Chapter 3), the researcher of this thesis generally accepts that indigenous knowledge does not necessarily promote poverty. The analysis is organized into the agricultural practices, social capital, entrepreneurship and employment and external support system.

6.2.1. Households' subsistence and commercial farming practices: the influence of indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems.

The agricultural activities remain central to household's livelihoods in the rural villages of Tshaulu. This section presents the extent to which households engage in subsistence and commercial farming and how this practice is shaped by the indigenous and contemporary knowledge or a combination of both. Some members of the community use the deeply rooted cultural practices of Tshaulu farming methods that reflects the intergenerational knowledge passed down through strong community traditions, while others adopt modern techniques and rely on external intervention and/or support. The section presents the analysis of household agricultural practices as a strategy for poverty alleviation focusing on the subsistence farming and commercial farming. The role of the indigenous and contemporary knowledge is assessed, and findings are separated by gender.

6.2.1.1. Subsistence farming: gender and knowledge system influence

Subsistence farming is widely practiced and a culturally embedded livelihood strategy across both males and female's respondents within the households. Subsistence farming (Photograph 6.4) is a type of agriculture where farmers grow crops and raise livestock primarily to meet the needs of their families and local communities (Fawzy, & Shedeed, 2020). The crosstabulation Table 6.8 shows the subsistence farming practice and type of knowledge system guiding the practice of subsistence farming.

Table 6.8: Subsistence Farming Practices and Knowledge of Influence of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Subsistence_farming * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application				
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Not_sure	Total
Subsistence_farming	Never	Count	0	3	0	25	28
			0,0%	10,7%	0,0%	89,3%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	7	1	0	0	8
			87,5%	12,5%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	347	4	13	0	364
			95,3%	1,1%	3,6%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	354	8	13	25	400

In terms of subsistence farming, most households (91%), reported that they have always engage in subsistence farming. Among these, 86.8% indicated that indigenous knowledge was the main source of influence in their farming practises, followed by 3.3% who indicated that they applied both indigenous and contemporary knowledge in their farming practise, and 1% reported that their farming was driven by contemporary knowledge. Only 2% of the household indicated that they sometimes engage in subsistence farming. Of these, 1.8% indicated they were influenced by indigenous knowledge and 0.3% were influenced by contemporary knowledge. A smaller group, 7%, reported that they had never engaged in subsistence farming. Among them, 6.3% were not sure of the source of knowledge that had influenced their activities and 0.8% reported contemporary knowledge as their point of reference. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between subsistence farming and the source of practical knowledge application ($\chi^2 = 376.647$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. This highlights that consistent engagement in subsistence farming is strongly associated with the use of indigenous knowledge systems. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as some cells have low expected counts.







Photograph 6.4: preparation and care of a vegetable garden in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Todani M, June 2023)
Photographs included with permission of the community members that can be identified in the photographs

Photographs included with permission of the community members that can be identified in the photographs. Indigenous knowledge systems are instrumental in achieving SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by promoting sustainable farming practices and enhancing food security (Kom et al., 2024). These results support the work of Rankoana (2022) who explains that indigenous knowledge significantly contribute to the subsistence farming by guiding small scale farmers in crops and livestock production. In addition, Rankoana (2022) added that indigenous knowledge sustains

food security and income generation. Figure 6.3 illustrates the gendered distribution of subsistence farming practices and knowledge sources.

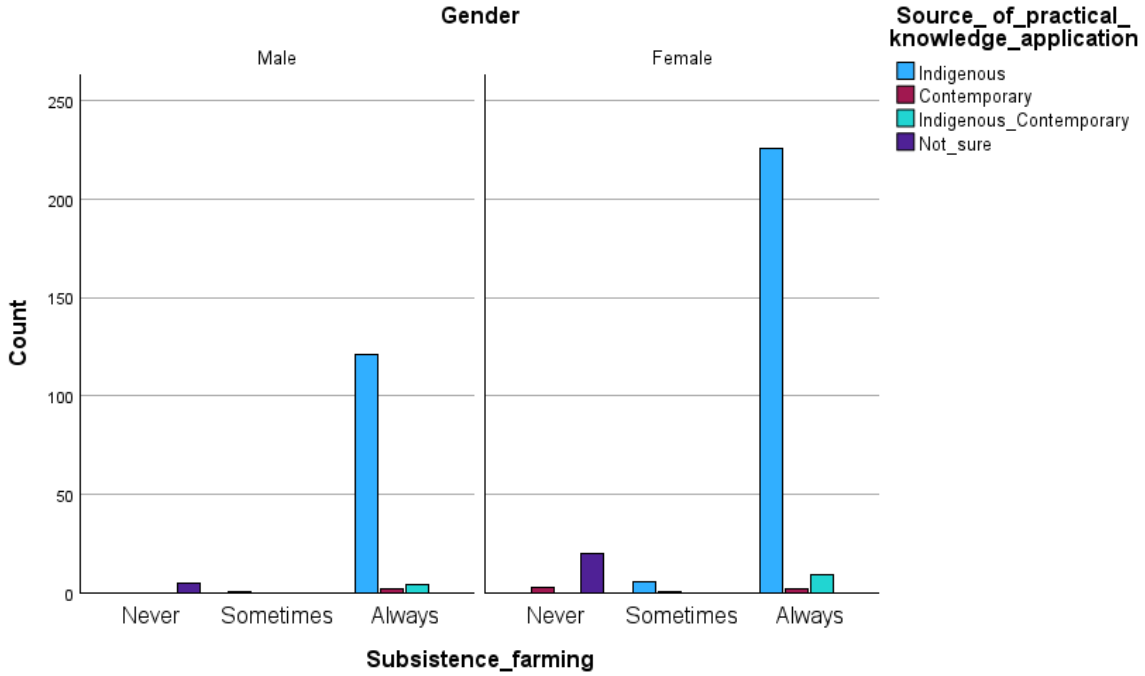

Figure 6.3: Gender, Subsistence Farming Practices and Knowledge of Influence of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

In terms of subsistence farming, most of the male participants always engage in subsistence farming and rely primarily on indigenous knowledge, with limited use of both indigenous and contemporary knowledge, or contemporary knowledge. A few male participants sometimes engage in subsistence farming and reported that this activity was mainly influenced by indigenous knowledge. Those who never engage in subsistence farming mostly indicated being not sure about the source of knowledge of the activity, followed by a small number who reported contemporary knowledge was the underpinning of subsistence farming.

In terms of the female participants (Figure 6.3) majority of the respondents indicated that they always engaged in subsistence farming, with the majority reporting that the knowledge of influence was that of indigenous knowledge, followed by both indigenous and contemporary knowledge, and then only a few indicting contemporary knowledge as the underpinning influence of the activity. A very small number of female participants sometimes engaged in subsistence farming, and they indicated that their

activities were mostly influenced by indigenous knowledge. Those who never engage in subsistence farming mostly indicated not being sure about the source of knowledge that informed their farming practises, while a few who reported indigenous knowledge.

These quantitative patterns were confirmed by focus group narratives, where participant describes subsistence farming as a cultural imperative, rather than a choice.'' *We farm because that's how our families survived always. And you don't learn farming from school, you learn it from your elders* (FDG2:TSH). This reflection shows that knowledge is not only practical but culturally symbolic an inheritance passed though family structures, reinforcing households' cohesion and resilience. The dominance of the indigenous knowledge in subsistence farming frequencies and both genders supports the view that subsistence farming remains the collectively practiced, culturally grounded livelihoods strategy central to poverty alleviation in the study area. The findings highlight that subsistence farming remains a culturally grounded livelihood strategy, with indigenous knowledge playing a central role across both groups.

6.2.1.2. Commercial farming and knowledge of influence

Commercial farming is widely discussed in the literature as a pathway for improving rural livelihoods and reducing the household's poverty. Studies by Eyasu et al., (2024); Muricho et al, (2015) and Zhou et al. (2018) shows that agricultural commercialisation enhances households' income and welfare, particularly amongst small holder farmers. These outcomes resonate with the goals of the SDG 1 (no poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), although the authors do not explicitly frame their studies within the SDG discourse. The respondents were asked to indicate whether they engage in the commercial farming as a source of household income and then had to reflect on the knowledge system that influences their commercial farming practices. Table 6.9 present the commercial farming engagement by households and the knowledge system practiced.

Table 6.9: Crosstabulation of households' engagement in commercial farming practices and knowledge of influence of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Commercial_farming_income * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application				
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Not_sure	Total
Commercial_farming_income	Never	Count	0	1	0	357	358
			0,0%	0,3%	0,0%	99,7%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	0	14	5	0	19
			0,0%	73,7%	26,3%	0,0%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	2	5	2	3	12
			16,7%	41,7%	16,7%	25,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	4	7	0	0	11
			36,4%	63,6%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	6	27	7	360	400

The findings reveals that most respondents (90%) reported that they never engaged in commercial farming practices to generate household income. This indicates that most of the agricultural activities remain subsistence farming. Only a small proportion (4.8%) reported engaging in commercial farming rarely, while 3% reported they only sometimes engaged while 2.8% always engaged in such farming. These low frequencies reflect that commercial farming is not a dominant livelihood practices in the study area. Among those who engaged in commercial farming, 6.8% indicated they were guided by contemporary knowledge systems, while 1.5% used indigenous knowledge and 1.8% used a combination of knowledge systems. Notably 90% of the respondents were uncertain of the knowledge systems they applied. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between commercial farming participation and the source of practical knowledge application ($\chi^2 = 459.545$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. This highlights that engagement in commercial farming is associated with differing knowledge systems, with contemporary knowledge more evident among the small proportion of participating households. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a substantial number of cells have expected counts below 5, which may affect the robustness of the test.

This contrasts sharply with the subsistence farming wherein the indigenous knowledge was clearly acknowledged and practised. They high level of uncertainty may highlight that people are not engaging in commercial farming, or it lacks cultural embedding,

which may limit sustainability and adoption. Figure 6.4 illustrates the gendered distribution of commercial farming participation and knowledge systems.

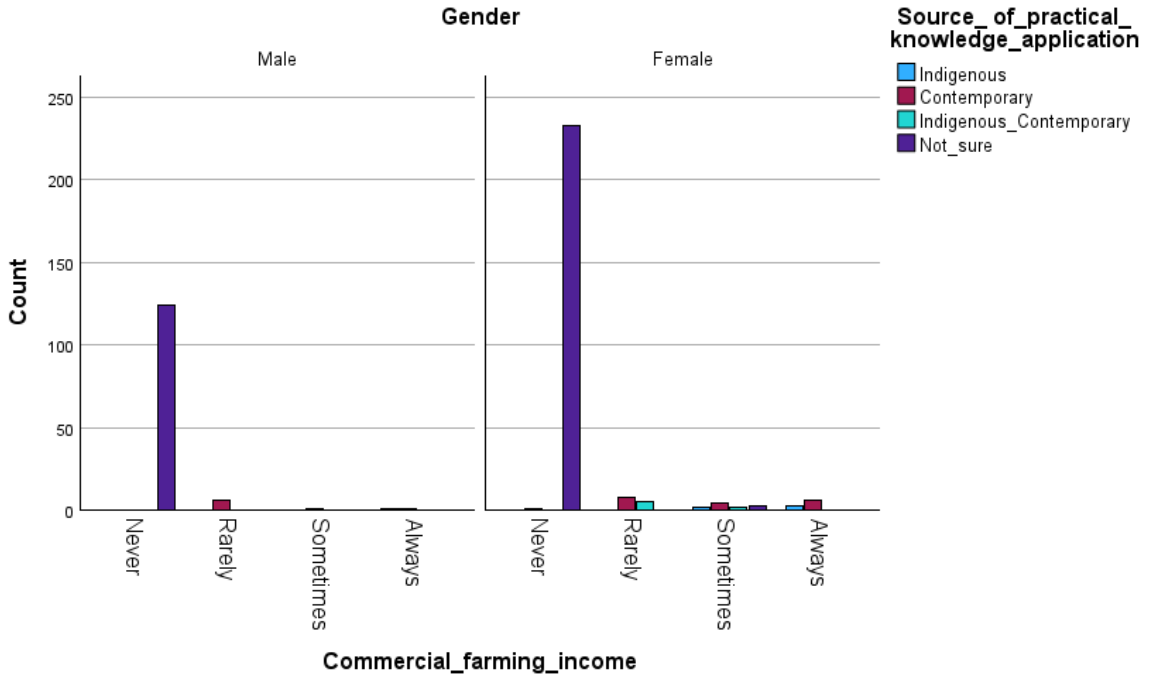

Figure 6.4: Commercial farming, gender and knowledge system of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Amongst the male's household's representatives (Figure 6.4), the majority reported that they never engage in commercial farming with most of them unsure about the knowledge of influence. A small number indicated a rare or occasional participation primary guided by contemporary knowledge while very few applied indigenous or combined knowledge systems. This reflects a low involvement and limited knowledge transmission in commercial farming among the males. Similarly, as depicted in Figure 6.4, most female respondents reported no participation in commercial farming, and the majority were uncertain about the type of knowledge application. A few female respondents indicated that they are engaging in commercial farming occasionally or consistently applying their contemporary, indigenous or both knowledge systems. These patterns highlight that for both genders; commercial farming remain marginal with a weak cultural or institutional anchoring when compared to subsistence farming. Researcher observations and confirmed via focus groups the geographical area is marked by the presence of family-owned plots averaging five hectares. The findings from FDG3: TSH and FDG4: HAB showed that community members were able to

access 80kg maize at a significantly reduced cost. After harvesting they take their maize to the local mill (NTK) where it is weighed and recorded. They can later purchase maize meal at reduced rate of R200 for an 80KG bag instead of paying retail price of about R800,00 for the same bag. This arrangement makes maize more affordable and ensures households food security through the year. The area has untapped potential for commercial farming in the area especially in terms of fruit tress such as mango, oranges and lemons and maize. Notably, indigenous knowledge continues to serve as a foundation of rural farming practices and remain a critical pillar of household food production.

6.2.1.3. Domestication and poultry and knowledge of influence

The domesticated livestock and poultry have long contributed to the household's livelihoods by providing food and income. Shikur (2023), study simulated results in Ethiopia indicate that indigenous livestock policies and management practices significantly increases rural household income and food security. The study examined households' participation in livestock and poultry farming and the knowledge system that informs these practices. Table 6.10 presents the cross-tabulation between household engagement in domestication and the source of practical knowledge application. In Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Table 6.10: Crosstabulation of Households Engagement in Domesticated livestock and poultry practices and knowledge of influence of sample villages

Domesticated_livestock_and_poultry * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application				
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Not_sure	Total
Domesticated_livestock_and_poultry	Never	Count	8	0	2	241	251
			3,2%	0,0%	0,8%	96,0%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	10	2	0	0	12
				16,7%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	2	3	0	0	5
			40,0%	60,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	125	2	4	0	131
			95,4%	1,5%	3,1%	0,0%	100,0%
	Often	Count	1	0	0	0	1
			100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	146	7	6	241	400

The results shows that 62.7% of households never engaged in the domestication of livestock and poultry, and most (60.3%) of these respondents were not sure of the knowledge source that influenced domestication. Of the notable proportion (32.8%) who had always engaged in the domestication of animals, with 31.3% using only indigenous knowledge, only 0.5% used contemporary knowledge and 1.0% had applied a combination of indigenous and contemporary knowledge. A small number (3%) of households rarely engaged in the domestication of livestock or poultry with 1.3% only sometimes 0.3% often. Across these categories the assumption that indigenous knowledge systems informed the practise remained the most cited, while those who believed either contemporary or a combined knowledge system had been applied in the practise. Overall, 36.5% of the sample used indigenous knowledge, 1.8% contemporary knowledge and 1.5% use combined knowledge. The high level of uncertainty (60.3%) on the type of knowledge applied could reflect a declining engagement in and possible loss of indigenous knowledge continuity over generations in many households. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between livestock and poultry domestication and the source of practical knowledge application ($\chi^2 = 472.160$, $df = 12$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. This highlights that engagement in domestication practices is associated with the type of knowledge applied, with indigenous knowledge being dominant among households that actively participate in livestock and poultry keeping. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a large proportion of cells have expected counts below 5, which may affect the reliability of the chi-square test. These findings suggest a declining engagement in livestock and poultry domestication, possibly reflecting changing livelihood patterns and increased reliance on alternative food sources. Despite this decline, indigenous knowledge continues to play a central role where domestication practices are still maintained. Figure 6.5 present the gender, domesticated livestock and poultry practices and knowledge of influence.

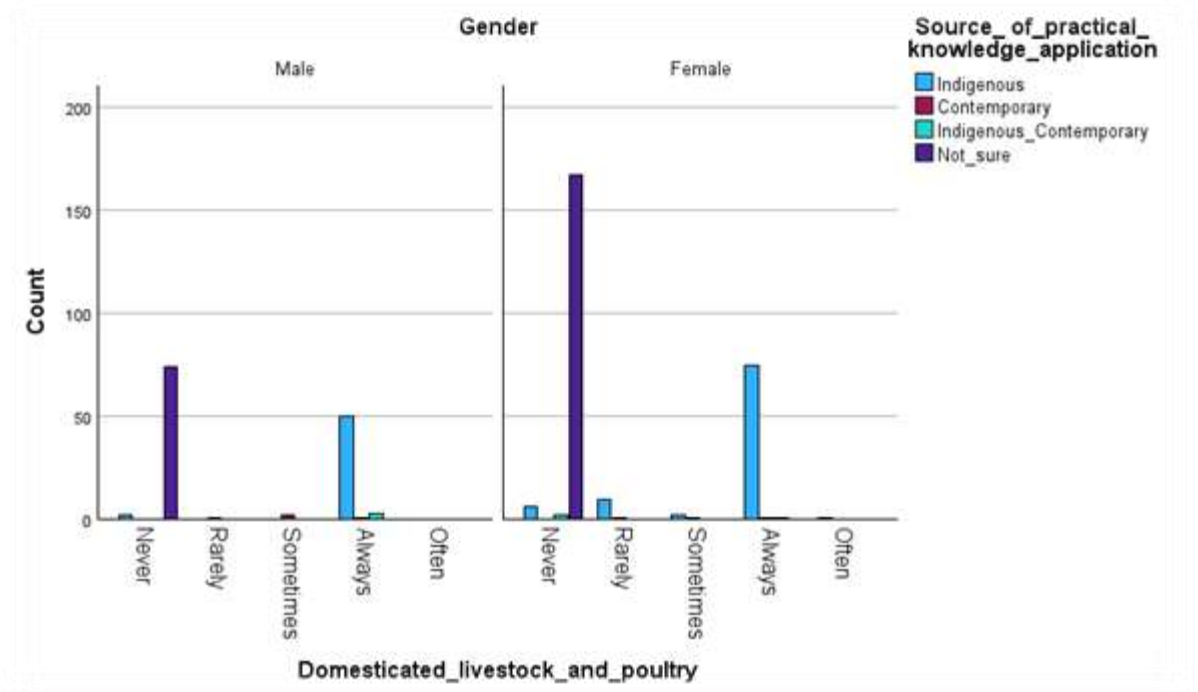

Figure 6.5: Domesticated Livestock and Poultry frequency, gender and Knowledge of influence of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Amongst the male household representatives most reported that they had never engaged in the domestication of livestock or poultry. A smaller number reported that they always engaged in domestication and were guided by indigenous knowledge, followed by very few males who reported that they rarely or occasionally engaged in domestication of animals. Amongst the female's representatives the same trend is visible, most of them never engage in domestication, and were unsure about the knowledge of the influence of domestication. A significant number of females reported that they had always engaged in the domestication of animals and indicated that principles of indigenous knowledge had influenced their practices. Minimal female participants noted that they rarely or sometimes engaged in domestication. These results show that where domestication still occurs, indigenous knowledge remains the dominant knowledge of influence. FDG1: TSH-W explained that while livestock was traditionally used to meet food needs, changing lifestyles and reliance on store bought meat have reduced activities related to household domestication. Indigenous knowledge continues to be transmitted through family and cultural practices, maintaining its relevance within the community.

6.2.2. Household social capital: donation, collective labour and borrowing

The social capital in form of the donations, collective labour, and borrowing remain the critical dimension of the community livelihoods. It shows the social cohesion, communal relationships and exchange through which households support each other during times of need. This section presents the households findings on the engagement in the donation, borrowing and collective labour.

6.2.2.1. Donation In a form of basic needs or services and knowledge of influence

This section present household responses regarding the receipt of donations to meet their basic needs such as food, and the knowledge systems that is perceived to influence such practices. Table 6.11 presents the cross-tabulation between household engagement in donations and the source of practical knowledge application.

Table 6.11: Cross-tabulation of household engagement in donation and knowledge of influence of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa
(Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Donation_in_form_of_basic_needs_such_as_food * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application		
			Indigenous	Not_sure	Total
Donation_in_form_of_basic_needs_such_as_food	Never	Count	1	378	379
			0,3%	99,7%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	4	0	4
			100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	4	2	6
			66,7%	33,3%	100,0%
Total		Count	9	380	389

In terms of donations in the form of basic needs such as food, the majority (97.4%) of participants had never received such donations. Despite not receiving donations, 97.2% of them were not sure of the knowledge systems that influenced the practise, while 0.3% indicated the underpinning of the practise was indigenous knowledge systems. Only 1% of the participants reported rarely receiving donations, and all of them were influenced by Indigenous knowledge. A small portion, 1.5%, reported always receiving donations, of these, 1% indicated Indigenous knowledge as the

influence, while 0.5% were not sure of the knowledge system of influence. In these instances, the participants did not indicate the contemporary knowledge. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between donation practices and the source of practical knowledge application ($\chi^2 = 285.876$, df = 2, $p < 0.001$), highlighting that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as 50% of the cells have expected counts below 5, which may affect the reliability of the test.

These findings indicated that donation practices are not common in the community, and the influence is largely unknown. The low percentages of the households receiving donation reflect a lack of the structural support mechanism. FDG2: TSH-F&M affirms that most participants had no experience of food donation, noting that support within the community when it occurs is usually informal and culturally rooted in the principles of *Ubuntu*. Such assistance though rare is often understood as a traditional moral obligation rather than formalised welfare practices. Amongst the male household's representatives, the majority reported never receiving donations and were mostly unsure about any knowledge system behind such practices. Only a few indicated always receiving donations and those attributed to the indigenous knowledge. Among the female's respondents the same trends were observed. Most had not received donations, and the few who rarely or always did report that it was influenced by indigenous or combined knowledge systems. The small portion of women receiving assistance reflected traditional values of care and sharing especially from relatives or neighbours. These findings shows that donations are not institutionalised or widely practiced in the community. Where they exist, they are viewed as the part of indigenous solidarity systems not as formal intervention. The similarity in responses across groups indicates that donation practices are not significantly differentiated by gender within the study area. This confirms Chowdhooree (2019) who noted that indigenous knowledge and its associated systems have the potential to address social issues and contribute to community resilience. However, the rarity of such donations and high level of uncertainty regarding the source knowledge shows that these practices are declining or inadequately supported in the modern context.

6.2.2.2. Borrowing from neighbours, friends or families, gender and knowledge of influence

Social relations and informal borrowing networks remain important coping mechanisms in rural communities. Research confirms that household borrowing is often shaped by trust, kinship and urgency of need (Chanda et al., 2025). This section presents the findings from households on their engagement with borrowing essential goods, money or food from neighbours, friends, relatives or institutions and explores the practical knowledge system informing this practice. The results are summarised in Table 6.12.

Table 6.12: Cross-tabulation of Households Engagement in Borrowing and knowledge of influence of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Borrowing_from_neighbours_friends_and_relatives * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application				
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Not_sure	Total
Borrowing_from_neighbours_friends_and_relatives	Never	Count	0	2	0	274	276
			0,0%	0,7%	0,0%	99,3%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	4	46	2	0	52
			7,7%	88,5%	3,8%	0,0%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	0	7	3	0	10
			0,0%	70,0%	30,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	5	53	4	0	62
			8,1%	85,5%	6,5%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	9	108	9	274	400

The findings on Table 6.12 shows that 69% never borrow to meet their households needs indicating that borrowing is not a widely used strategy. However, 15.5% of participants reported that they always borrow, followed by 13% who rarely borrow and 2.5% who sometimes do so. When asked about the knowledge system that influenced borrowing behaviour 68.5% were unsure. This was followed by the 27% who associated borrowing with more contemporary knowledge while 2.3% cited the driven force as indigenous knowledge and 2.3% indicated that this practise was informed by both knowledge systems. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between borrowing practices and the source of practical knowledge application ($\chi^2 = 420.302$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the relationship observed is statistically significant and not due to chance. This highlights that borrowing behaviour is associated with knowledge systems, although contemporary knowledge

appears more prominent among those who engage in borrowing. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a notable proportion of cells have expected counts below 5, which may affect the reliability of the test.

These results shows that while borrowing is present in the community, its use is inconsistent and the knowledge source behind the practise could not be clearly articulated by most participants. FDG5: HAB-M&F provided further insight. Participants explained that borrowing when it occurs it typically reserved for emergencies and not as a routine survival strategy. Although informal networks existed the communities were cautious and tried to avoid debt accumulation. Where borrowing occurs it is based on trust and social proximity, those who rely on private lenders often face deepening poverty, and borrowing is perceived as a temporary measure rather than long-term solution (FDG4: HAB). Among the male representatives the majority reported that they had never borrowed essential goods or food or other things from neighbours or from different sources and most were unsure of the knowledge that influenced their practise. A smaller portion indicated that they relied on borrowing and within this group, some indicated that the practise was influenced by either contemporary or indigenous knowledge, although such responses were minimal. Amongst the female's respondent the pattern was similar, with most individuals indicating that they had never borrowed. The knowledge of influence indicated by the female respondents was indigenous, contemporary or a combination thereof, although the majority remained unsure of the knowledge system that informed the practise. The findings shows that borrowing is not a dominant strategy among the households in this study. Where it existed, it is shaped more by necessity than by tradition or combined knowledge system. The limited use of traditional practices of mutual aid is fading or becoming informal. However, Sarker & Islam (2014) indicated that social capital and trust continue to play a central role in enabling the practise of borrowing in rural context. This reflects the enduring though evolving, role of communal networks in sustaining households' resilience.

6.2.2.3. The limited household participation in collective labour

Collective labour in rural communities reflects a traditional system of cooperation grounded in cultural norms and local knowledge. These practices have long been associated with indigenous forms of resource sharing, labour reciprocity and

communal support (Gogoi 2023). This section examines household participation in collective labour and its associated token of appreciation with the focus on the influence of indigenous and cotemporary knowledge systems (Table 6.13).

Table 6.13: Crosstabulation of Households Engagement in Collective Labour practices and knowledge of influence of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Collective_labour_tokens_of_appreciation * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application				
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Not_sure	Total
Collective_labour_tokens_of_appreciation	Never	Count	2	2	0	320	324
			0,6%	0,6%	0,0%	98,8%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	12	4	0	0	16
			75,0%	25,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	2	2	2	0	6
			33,3%	33,3%	33,3%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	47	7	0	0	54
			87,0%	13,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	63	15	2	320	400

As presented in Table 6.13 the results shows that 81% of the households never engaged in collective labour or a token of appreciation. A smaller proportion (13.5%) reported that they always participated in the practise, while 4% engage rarely and 1.5% sometimes participated. Regarding the knowledge system that informed the practise, 80% of respondents were unsure about the knowledge of application influencing collective labour. Only 15.8%, reported that their participation was influenced by the indigenous knowledge, 3.8% indicated contemporary knowledge while 0.5% noted that both indigenous and contemporary knowledge system were relevant to informing the practise. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between collective labour practices and the source of practical knowledge application ($\chi^2 = 518.550$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the relationship observed is statistically significant and not due to chance. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a large proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (62.5%), which may affect the reliability of the test. The results shows that most participants either do not engage in collective labour or no longer recognise the knowledge system linked to the practice. Focus group discussions confirmed that in households where collective labour still exists it is typically offered for specific purposes, for example, during harvesting or construction projects. In such projects the

participants receive traditional tokens such as food, beer or other goods for their contribution. However, this kind of labour exchange was occasional and was not a guaranteed source of any of the basic needs of the household. Amongst the male households' representatives, the majority indicated that they never engage in collective labour and most of them were unsure of the knowledge system that informed this practise. Those who reported that they always participated in the collective labour indicated that they were influenced by the indigenous knowledge practice. Amongst the female's representatives the same pattern was observed. The majority reported that they never engaged in collective labour, and the majority were also unsure of the knowledge system of influence. Those who reported always participating in collective labour mostly associated the practice of indigenous knowledge systems. These patterns confirm that while collective labour is still present in some households, participation is limited, and most were not aware of the underpinning knowledge system. The limited number of respondents who linked their participation in collective labour is like other research that highlighted the close connection between community-based development and the recognition of traditional knowledge systems (Magni, 2017). The limited recognition of collective labour indicates potential decline in the indigenous cultural transmission of collective labour practices.

6.2.3. Entrepreneurship, employment and external support

This section presents the extent and nature of household engagement in the entrepreneurial venture, access to employment opportunities and receipt of external support such as grant, food parcel and development aid. This section also includes the extent to which the indigenous or contemporary knowledge influence the access to entrepreneurial employment and external support.

6.2.3.1. Local Community Engagement in Small Business

This section examines households' participation in small business as a source of income used for basic needs and the knowledge system informing such practice. Table 6.14 presents the cross-tabulation between income from small business and the source of practical knowledge application.

Table 6.14: Crosstabulation of income from business and knowledge of influence of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Income_from_small_business * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application				
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Not_sure	Total
Income_from_small_business	Never	Count	2	0	0	304	306
			0,7%	0,0%	0,0%	99,3%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	3	26	4	0	33
			9,1%	78,8%	12,1%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	7	50	3	0	60
			11,7%	83,3%	5,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Often	Count	0	1	0	0	1
			0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	12	77	7	304	400

As presented in Table 6.14 the findings shows that 76.5% of respondents reported that they never earned an income from a small business venture. Only 15% indicated that they had always received income from a small business. A total of 76% of the respondents were unsure of the knowledge system that underpinned small businesses in the sample villages, while 19.3% indicated that they were influenced by contemporary, and 3% by indigenous knowledge systems and 1.8% indicated a combined knowledge system. These findings highlight that small business activity remains limited within the study area, with most households either not participating or being uncertain about the knowledge systems informing such ventures. Where participation does occur, it appears to be influenced more by contemporary entrepreneurial approaches than traditional knowledge systems.A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between engagement in small business and the source of practical knowledge application ($\chi^2 = 398.471$, df = 9, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the relationship observed is statistically significant and not due to chance. This highlights that small business participation is associated with knowledge systems, with contemporary knowledge more prominent among those who engage in such activities. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (50%), which may affect the reliability of the test. . FDG4: HAB supported this with participants noting that there are few local economic opportunities and limited investment in small business development. Although some families participated in informal business activities,

many business premises are rented by non-local or non-South African citizens. Reported barriers of creating their own small business ventures included the lack of capital, market, access and entrepreneur skills. The Figure 6.6 provides a breakdown of gender, income from small business and knowledge of influence.

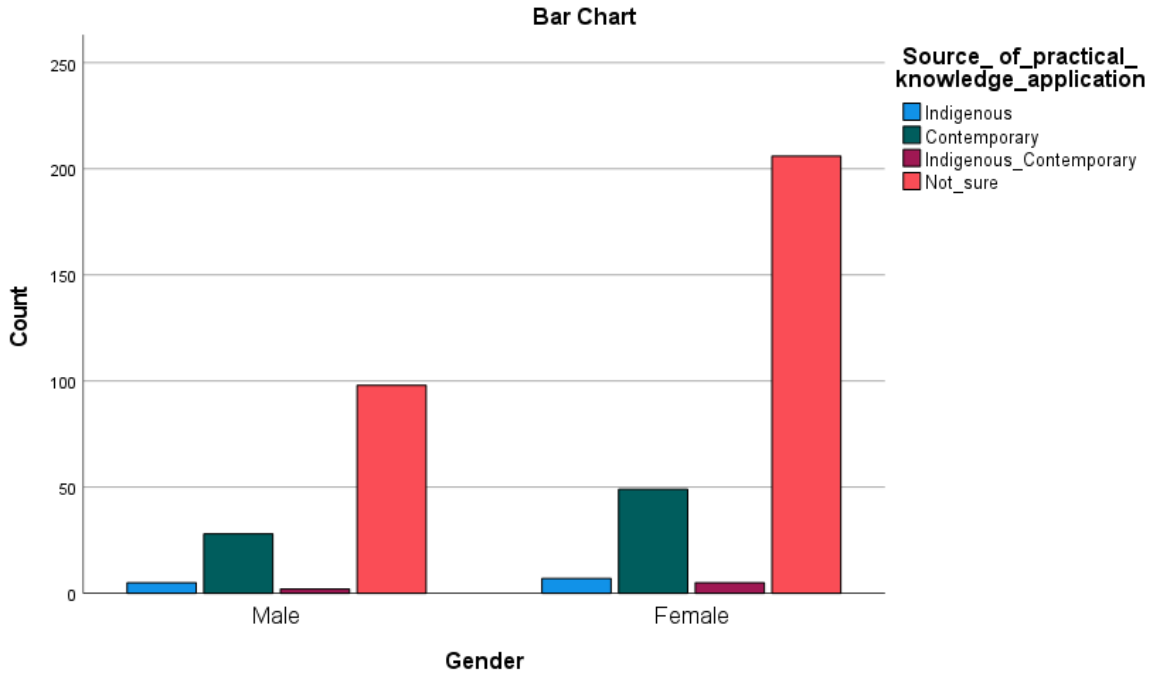

Figure 6.6: Income from small business, gender and knowledge of influence of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Amongst the male respondent the majority reported that they did not earn income from the small business and were in any event not sure of the knowledge that influenced the creation of such businesses. A smaller proportion indicated that they engaged in small business activities to earn an income, and some of these identified contemporary knowledge as the underpinning of the venture, while a few reported indigenous or combined knowledge as the knowledge source of influence. Among the female representatives the same pattern was observed. Most did not receive income from small business ventures and were also unsure of the knowledge of influence that underpins these ventures as a major source of income. A notable group indicated that they do earn from small business and that contemporary knowledge systems underpinned their activities, followed a statistically insignificant group of people that cited only indigenous or a blended systems of knowledge as the basis of the venture. The data shows that while small business is not widely practiced in the sample villages,

the minority of respondents who did participate, relied on both modern entrepreneur strategies and on traditional practices. These findings align with the Ratten & Dana (2017) who emphasise the value of indigenous knowledge in shaping the entrepreneurship landscape of traditional communities. It can be stated that both modern and indigenous knowledge systems supported the generation of income for community businesses in the sample villages.

6.2.3.2. The household's utilization of social grant

Social grants play is crucial role in sustaining the livelihoods of low-income households in South Africa. They are often the primary means of securing necessities such as food, education, healthcare and utilities, especially in rural and economically marginalized communities. It's indicated by Winchester et al. (2021) and Mtyingizane et al. (2020) that social grants serve as a buffer against poverty and food insecurity and support vulnerable population where employment opportunities are limited. Hall (2010) further affirms that many households rely almost entirely on this grant to meet essential needs. The African Social Security Agency administers a range of social assistance programs, including Child Support Grant, Disability Grant, Dependency Grant, Old Age Pension Grant, War Veterans' Grants, Foster Care Grants, Temporary Social Relief Measures, (Department of Social Development, Free State, 2022). This research examined the extent to which households depend on these social grants for basic needs, with the findings presented in Table 6.7.

Table 6.15: Crosstabulation of households' access to social grant by gender of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Social_grant * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application				
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Not_sure	Total
Social_grant	Never	Count	0	0	0	136	136
			0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	0	50	0	0	50
			0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	0	8	0	0	8
			0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	4	193	4	0	201
			2,0%	96,0%	2,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Often	Count	0	5	0	0	5
			0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	4	256	4	136	400

The findings indicate a varied pattern of access to social grants across households. A Pearson Chi-square test shows a statistically significant association between access to social grants and gender ($\chi^2 = 403.918$, $df = 12$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the relationship observed is statistically significant and not due to chance. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a substantial proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (65%), which may affect the reliability of the test.These findings point to the divergent pattern of social grant reliance, which were further contextualised through focus group discussions. Participants commonly stated that grants are mostly used for purchasing food for the household and meeting children's needs. However, disparities in application were noted: while some families consistently rely on grants, others receive limited or temporary grant support and thus did not prioritise grant income for essential spending.

The findings also show the limitations of social grant in fully meeting household needs FDG1: TSH and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)s. Focus group participants noted that most recipients rely on child support or disability grant which were insufficient when accounting for all basics services and rising living costs. These findings aligned with the work of Garidzirai & Chikuruwo (2020), who argued that although social assistance

improves access to food and services, it cannot fully compensate the broader structural poverty experienced by many rural households.

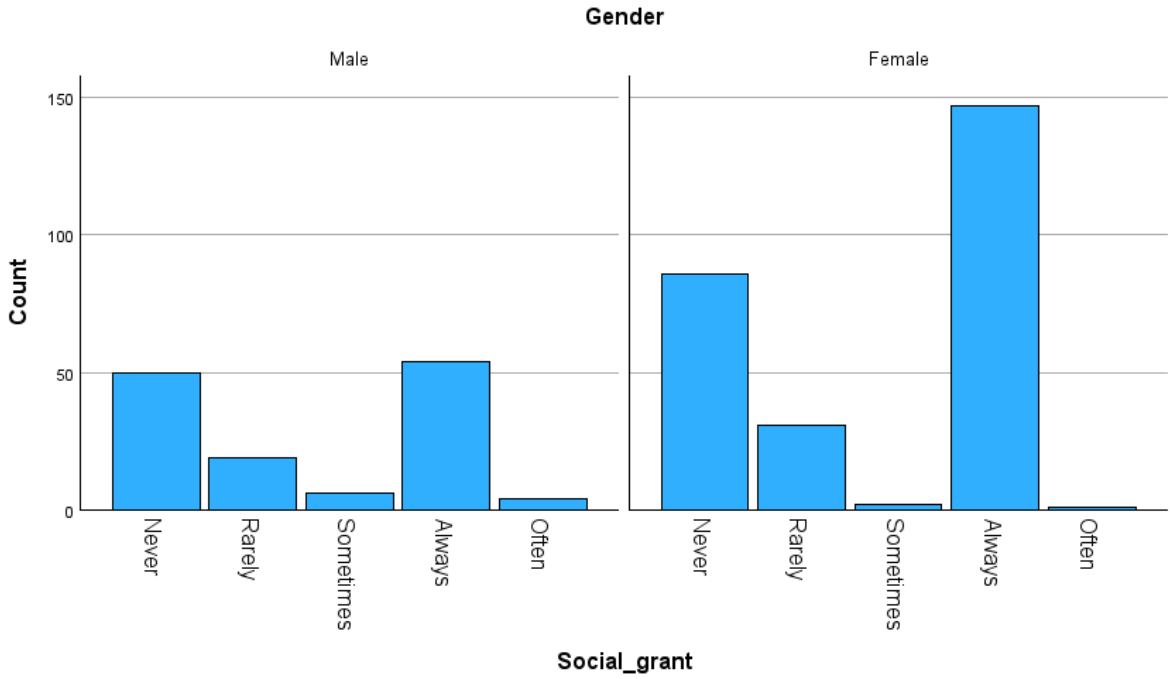

Figure 6.7: Social grant access and gender of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Figure 6.7 presents the gender distribution of household access to social grants. Among male household representative responses shows a mixed pattern. A significant number indicated that they do not have access to social grants, while a smaller proportion reported consistent or limited access. Some men indicated rare or occasional access to social grant. By contrast, access to social grant among female participants is markedly higher. The majority reported consistent access, with fewer indicating that they never received grants. Only a small number of women reported limited or uncertain access. The findings reflect differences in household access to social grants, with responses reported by both male and female household representatives. While access is evident across both groups, women more frequently indicate receiving grants, and this aligns to their caregiving responsibilities within the household. This does not imply a gender disparity, but rather highlights the household rules through which social assistant is accessed (FDG3:TSH) and their broader implication for their household resilience and poverty alleviation strategies.

According to the FDG4: HAB the social grants were utilised predominantly for acquiring household food and other essentials. However, the application of social grants for basic needs varies among recipients. While some always use the social grants for basic needs, others have never used the grant for such needs, and a small group rarely resorts to using the grant for necessities in the household. Yet, the question remains as to whether social grants can comprehensively address the challenges faced by households (Garidzirai & Chikuruwo 2020). According to the findings of this thesis, social grants are insufficient for meeting the basic needs of households. This is evidenced by the fact that most people receive temporary grants, child awards, or disability funds (FDG3: TSH). These results further support the findings of Garidzirai & Chikuruwo (2020) who noted that social grants alone may not be sufficient to cover all fundamental necessities. In addition, families frequently need to mobilize social networks and resources to obtain healthcare and other essentials (Gutura & Tanga, 2015). While the research for this thesis focused on the access to social grant within household, it did not disaggregate the specific types of grand accessed or aid their pattern of use within the household economy. Further research is thus needed to explore the types of social grant received and how they are allocated within the household.

6.3. Households' income utilisation pattern

This section focusses on how the households managed their finances, generated an income and sustained their household needs through more traditional and/or modern means. The findings in this section are interpreted through the household livelihood systems framework and Critical Theory outlined in Chapter 2, which emphasise how households organise, prioritise, and allocate resources within structurally constrained socio-economic environments. Household expenditure on basic requirements, as well as access to basic needs and services, are essential indicators of a household well-being. Income and household factors can predict increases in expenditure on housekeeping, childcare, and gardening services, although women's earnings have no impact on outsourcing (Kornrich & Roberts, 2018). Understanding household resource allocations, particularly for food insecure households, can contribute to the creation of effective strategies (Dominick et al., 2018). The findings further align with Social Role Theory, as household members undertake complementary responsibilities in managing and distributing available resources to sustain livelihoods. As already

explained the research sample consists of more women than men, and the data is analysed by gender. The value of the findings has thus more gender-based implications than for comparison. This study assesses the household's income spending on the necessities such as food, child support, households' maintenance, electricity, health services, education and transport, and social clubs or *stokvel*. In addition, the study also presents the access to basic services and needs such as the food, water, shelter, schools, health facilities and sanitation. This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of household livelihood systems by demonstrating how income utilisation is shaped not only by income availability but also by dependency pressures and household-level decision-making processes in rural contexts.

6.3.1. Income spending on food, access to food, income amount and dependents

This section examines household income as utilised towards basic needs, services and livelihoods maintenance. The household spending is examined in terms of income spending on food, child support, education, transport, electricity, household infrastructure, burial societies, and health services. The analysis is based on the qualitative data collected through the focus group and key stakeholder's interviews and the household survey questionnaires.

6.3.1.1. Spending on food and access to food.

Food expenditure is a primary component of households' budget. In the context of Tshaulu villages, pattern of spending on food not only household priorities but also the household food security. Table 6.16 presents the findings on the crosstabulation of access to food and households spending on food.

Table 6.16: Cross-tabulation of Households Spending on food and Access to Food of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Food * Food_access Crosstabulation

			Food_access				
			Poor	Fair	Good	Very_good	Total
Food	Sometimes	Count	0	2	10	0	12
			0,0%	16,7%	83,3%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	13	46	319	9	387
			3,4%	11,9%	82,4%	2,3%	100,0%
	Often	Count	0	0	1	0	1
			0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	13	48	330	9	400

In terms of household spending on food, most participants, 96.8%, reported that they spend most of their income on food. Among these, 79.8% rated their access to food as good, followed by 11.5% who rated it as fair and 3.3% as poor and. 2.3% is very good. A smaller potion 3% reported that they sometimes spend their income on food. Of these, 2.5% rated their access to food as good and 0.5% as fair. Only 0.3% of participants reported that they often spend their income on food and indicated that their access to food is good. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates no statistically significant association between household spending on food and access to food (χ^2 = 1.119, df = 6, p = 0.981), highlighting that the relationship observed is not statistically significant and may be due to chance. This indicates that higher spending on food does not necessarily correspond to improved access to food within the study area. The results should be interpreted with caution, as a proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (58.3%), which may affect the reliability of the chi-square test. These findings highlight that while most households allocate a large share of their income to food, this does not automatically translate into better food access. This indicates that factors beyond expenditure, such as food availability, pricing, and livelihood conditions, may play a significant role in shaping household food security.

6.3.1.2. Food spending and income amount.

The proportion of the household income allocation for food provides valuable insight on socio-economic status vulnerability. This section presents the different levels of income influence on food spending. This is presented in Table 6.17 offering an understanding of how income allocation shapes food security of households within villages of Tshaulu.

In terms of spending money on food, most participants (96.8%), reported that they always spend their income on food. Among these, 48.8% were within the R3001 to R6000 income range, followed by 29.8% in the R1001 to R3000 income group and 11.8% in the R6001 to R9000 run range and 4.0% in the more than R12,000 and lastly 2.5% in the R9001 to R12,000 range. A small proportion 3% reported that they sometimes spend their income on food. Among these, 1% fall were within both R1001 to R3000 range and R3001 to R6000 income range, followed by 0.8% in the R9000 to R12,000 and 0.3% in the R6001 to R9000 range. Only 0.3% reported that they often spend on food, with group falling within the R1001 to R3000 income range.

Table 6.17: Cross-tabulation of households' engagement in spending on food and income amount of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Food * Income_amount Crosstabulation

			Income_amount					
			R1001_R3000	R3001_R6000	R6001_R9000	R9001_R12000	R>12001	Total
Food	Sometimes	Count	4	4	1	3	0	12
			33,3%	33,3%	8,3%	25,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	119	195	47	10	16	387
			30,7%	50,4%	12,1%	2,6%	4,1%	100,0%
	Often	Count	1	0	0	0	0	1
			100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	124	199	48	13	16	400

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between income levels and household spending on food ($\chi^2 = 21.570$, df = 8, p = 0.006), indicating that the relationship observed is statistically significant and not due to chance. This indicates that household income levels are associated with patterns of food expenditure within the study area. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (60%), which may affect the reliability of the chi-square test.

These findings highlight that lower- and middle-income households allocate a substantial proportion of their income to food, reflecting the central role of food expenditure in meeting basic household needs. This pattern may indicate economic vulnerability, where a large share of income is committed to basic consumption, limiting the ability of households to allocate resources to other essential needs.

6.3.1.3. Income amount, food spending and dependents.

The household's income, food expenditure and the number of dependents is closely interlinked factors that influence food security. In extended family structures households like those found in the villages of Tshaulu, income must be stretched to support large number of dependents determining the resources allocation affecting the availability of food and basic needs. Figure 6.8 shows the frequency distribution of responses, on dependents, income amount and spending on food.

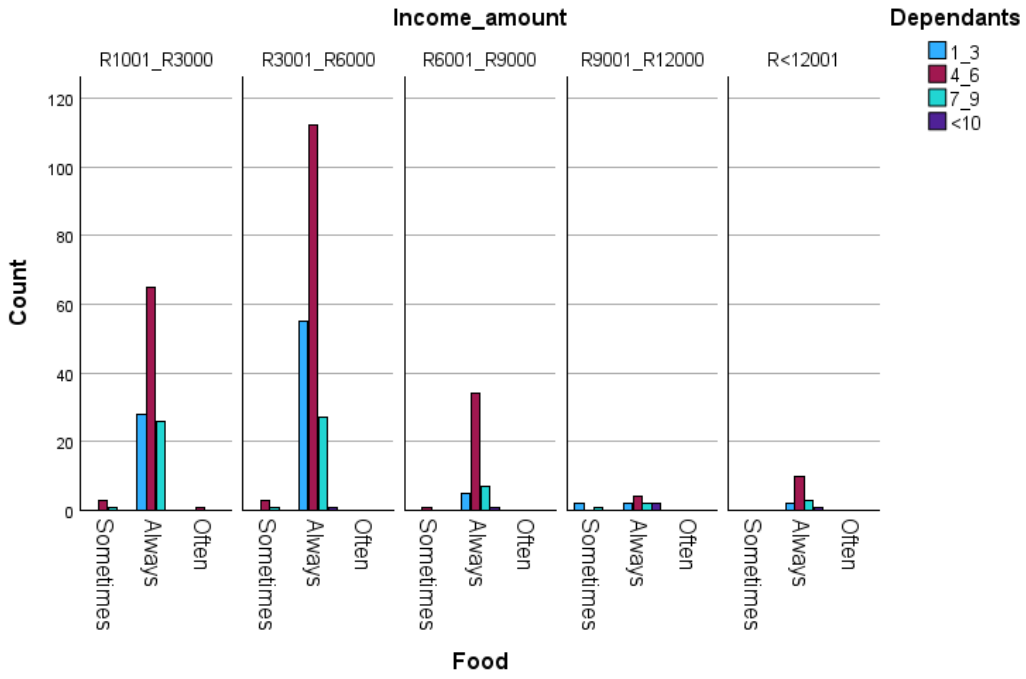

Figure 6.8: Frequency of Households Engagement in spending on food, Income amount and Dependents of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

In terms of food spending, across all income groups, participants with 4-6 dependents consistently reported that they spend most of their income on food. This trend is most prominent in the income groups between R3001 to R6000 and R1001 to R3000. Participants with 1-3 and 7-9 dependents also reported always spending a large proportion of them on food particularly in the range of R3001 to R6000 income group. A smaller number in this same income group reported sometimes or often spending their income on food. Participant in the R6001 to R9000, R9001 to R12,000 and more than R12,000 income group also showed food spending across all dependent categories but at a lower overall account. Household with less than 10 dependents were present across all food spending categories, with the majority concentrated in group that spent most of their income on food group. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between income levels and household spending on food ($\chi^2 = 21.570$, df = 8, p = 0.006), indicating that the relationship observed is statistically significant and not due to chance. This indicates that income levels influence patterns of food expenditure within the study area.

However, the strength of this relationship varies across different dependent groups, and the results should be interpreted with caution due to several cells having expected

counts below 5. This section explores the relationship between household income, the number of dependents, and access to child support. The main aim is to understand how income level affect household ability to support dependence and whether household rely on child support.

This section explores how income spending on child support, varies across different income levels. Table 6.18 presents the frequency distribution of responses on spending income on child support across different income category.

Table 6.18: Cross-tabulation of household engagement in child support spending and income amount of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Child_support_or_maintanance * Income_amount Crosstabulation

			Income_amount					
			R1001_R3000	R3001_R6000	R6001_R9000	R9001_R12000	R>12001	Total
Child_support_or_maintanance	Never	Count	43	68	13	3	3	130
			33,1%	52,3%	10,0%	2,3%	2,3%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	53	91	23	3	4	174
			30,5%	52,3%	13,2%	1,7%	2,3%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	4	12	3	1	3	23
			17,4%	52,2%	13,0%	4,3%	13,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	24	28	9	6	6	73
			32,9%	38,4%	12,3%	8,2%	8,2%	100,0%
Total		Count	124	199	48	13	16	400

In terms of child support or maintenance most participants (43.5%) reported that they rarely allocated their income to child support or maintenance. Among these, 22.8% fell within R3001 to R6000 income range, followed by 13.3% in the R1001 to R3000 group and a smaller proportion across other income brackets. A total of 32.5% of participants reported never spending their income on child support. In this group, 17% fell under R3001 to R6000 income group, followed by 10.8% in the R1001 to R3000 range. Another 18.3% of participants reported always spending on child support. Of these, 7% are in the range of R3001 to R6000 income brackets, followed by 6% in the R1001 to R3000 group. Only 5.8% of the participants reported sometimes spending on child support. These were spread across income categories, with 3% in the R3001 to R6000 group and one the 1% in the R1001 to R3000 group.

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between income level and household spending on child support ($\chi^2 = 22.035$, df = 12, p = 0.037), indicating that the relationship observed is statistically significant and not due to chance. This indicates that household income levels influence patterns of spending on child support within the study area. However, the results should be interpreted with

caution, as a proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (30%), which may affect the reliability of the test. These findings highlight that lower- and middle-income households show varied patterns of spending on child support, highlighting that competing household needs may influence how income is prioritised across essential expenditures.

6.3.2. Education, educational facilities access and dependents

This section explores the intersection between household access to educational facilities, the availability of educational support, and the number of dependents within the household. By analysing household patterns of educational funding alongside perceived quality of educational facilities, this section provides an insight into how families navigate access to learning opportunities under different income and household size conditions. Table 6.19 present the cross-tabulation of the household ratings on the access to educational facilities and the household spending on funding education and the number of dependents within the household.

Table 6.19: Cross-tabulation of households spending on education and access to educational facilities of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Educational_funding * Educational_facilities_and_support Crosstabulation

			Educational_facilities_and_support				
			Poor	Fair	Good	Very_good	Total
Educational_funding	Never	Count	4	67	93	0	164
			2,4%	40,9%	56,7%	0,0%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	0	44	106	0	150
			0,0%	29,3%	70,7%	0,0%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	2	21	0	1	24
			8,3%	87,5%	0,0%	4,2%	100,0%
	Always	Count	10	10	41	0	61
			16,4%	16,4%	67,2%	0,0%	100,0%
	Often	Count	0	0	1	0	1
			0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	16	142	241	1	400

In terms of educational funding. Many participants (41%) reported that they never spend their income on educational funding. Among these, 23.3%, rated their access to educational facilities as good, followed by 16.8% who rated it as fair and 1% as poor. Another 37.5% of participants reported that they rarely spent on educational fundings. Of these, 26.5% rated access to facilities as good and 11% as fair. A smaller proportion, 15.3%, reported that they had always spent part of their income on educational funding. Within this group, 10.3% rated their access to educational

facilities as good, followed by 2.5% who rated these facilities as poor and 2.5% as fair. Only 6% of participants reported that at times they had spent their income on educational services, of these, 5.3% rated their access to education as fair, 0.5% as poor and 0.3% as very good. A very small proportion of 0.3% reported often spending part of their income on funding education and rated their access to such facilities as good.

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between household spending on education and access to educational facilities ($\chi^2 = 93.351$, df = 12, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the relationship is statistically significant and not due to chance. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as some cells have expected counts below 5. These findings highlight that although access to educational facilities is generally good, many households do not consistently allocate income toward educational funding due to competing household priorities.

6.3.3. Transport and income amount

Access to transport is essential for households to reach schools, health facilities, employment opportunities or workplaces. In the study area the transport infrastructure is limited, and income levels may determine the extent to which households can afford travelling using own or public transport. The Table 6.20 presents the distribution of responses of households on spending on transport and income amount.

Table 6.20: Cross-tabulation of households' engagement in spending on transport and income amount of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Transport * Income_amount Crosstabulation

			Income_amount					
			R1001_R3000	R3001_R6000	R6001_R9000	R9001_R12000	R>12001	Total
Transport	Never	Count	46	61	16	5	1	129
			35,7%	47,3%	12,4%	3,9%	0,8%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	56	94	19	4	11	184
			30,4%	51,1%	10,3%	2,2%	6,0%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	5	11	5	1	2	24
			20,8%	45,8%	20,8%	4,2%	8,3%	100,0%
	Always	Count	17	33	8	3	2	63
			27,0%	52,4%	12,7%	4,8%	3,2%	100,0%
Total		Count	124	199	48	13	16	400

The data reveals that transport spending is generally low among the sampled households, with 32.3% indicating they never spend any amount on their income on transport and 46% rarely allocated their income to transportation. This pattern is

particularly evident among households earning between R1001 to R3000 and R3001 to R6000, where 11.5% and 15.3% respectively reported never having spent money on transport. Those who always allocated income towards transport consist only of 15.8% of the total sample, with the largest share within the R3001 to R6000 income brackets being 8.3%. The lowest level of transport spending is found in households with either very low or very high income, likely reflecting limited mobility needs or alternative access to transport. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates no statistically significant association between income levels and household spending on transport ($\chi^2 = 12.173$, df = 12, p = 0.432), indicating that there is no meaningful relationship between the variables within the study area. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (30%), which may affect the reliability of the test. The overall low spending on transportation may point out to rural households limited access to public transport, or their prioritisation of more immediate needs such as food and utilities (FDG5: HAB).

6.3.4. Electricity, income amount and dependents

Access to electricity plays an important role in supporting the wellbeing of the communities either in food preservation, education and other daily household functioning activities. The section presents the crosstabulation of the spending on electricity, income amount and dependents. The Table 6.21 present the frequency distribution of responses on the spending on electricity and income amount.

Table 6.21: Cross-tabulation of households spending on electricity and income amount of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023**)**

Electricity * Income_amount Crosstabulation

			Income_amount					
			R1001_R3000	R3001_R6000	R6001_R9000	R9001_R12000	R>12001	Total
Electricity	Never	Count	20	22	4	2	1	49
			40,8%	44,9%	8,2%	4,1%	2,0%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	33	62	13	2	3	113
			29,2%	54,9%	11,5%	1,8%	2,7%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	10	20	3	1	1	35
			28,6%	57,1%	8,6%	2,9%	2,9%	100,0%
	Always	Count	61	94	28	8	11	202
			30,2%	46,5%	13,9%	4,0%	5,4%	100,0%
	Often	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
			0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	124	199	48	13	16	400

Many (50.5%) households reported consistent spending on electricity, with 50.5%. This trend is especially prominent among household earning R3001 to R6000 who make up 23.5% of the total sample. Household with income between R1001 to R3000 and R6001 to R9000 also reflect some spending on electricity, with 15.3% and 7.0% respectively stating they always spent some of their income on electricity. In contrast, 12.3% of households reported they never allocated any part of their income on electricity. This group is concentrated mainly within the R1001 to R6000 range and thus reinforcing the connection between lower income and limited energy access. Notably, 28.2% reported that they rarely spend their income on electricity, and these were among lower to middle income groups. Only 0.3% present of respondents indicated they often spend income on electricity which may signal instability or inconsistent income stability.

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates no statistically significant association between income levels and household spending on electricity ($\chi^2 = 9.288$, df = 16, p = 0.901), indicating that there is no meaningful relationship between the variables within the study area. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a substantial proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (48%), which may affect the reliability of the chi-square test. These findings highlight that electricity expenditure is not strongly determined by income levels alone. Instead, it may reflect broader factors such as access to infrastructure, household energy needs, and the prioritisation of essential services within constrained household budgets.

6.3.5. Household infrastructure, access to infrastructure and income amount

Household's infrastructures maintenance forms a basic living condition that influence livelihoods. Table 6.22 shows how the households spend their income on infrastructure maintenance and in comparison, with their rating of their infrastructure access.

Table 6.22: Cross-tabulation of households spending on house maintenance of infrastructures and the access to infrastructures facilities of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

House_maintanance_of_infrastructures * Household_infrastructures Crosstabulation

			Household_infrastructures				
			Poor	Fair	Good	Very_good	Total
House_maintanance_of_infrastructures	Never	Count	7	53	27	0	87
			8,0%	60,9%	31,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	3	104	56	0	163
			1,8%	63,8%	34,4%	0,0%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	2	14	9	0	25
			8,0%	56,0%	36,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	0	38	85	1	124
			0,0%	30,6%	68,5%	0,8%	100,0%
	Often	Count	0	0	1	0	1
			0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	12	209	178	1	400

Most of the households (40.8%), reported that they allocated little to no budget to the maintenance of their household infrastructure. This group is mostly associated with households that rated their infrastructure as fair (26%) or good (14%), highlighting that they had maintained moderate upkeep despite limited budget allocation. A significant proportion of households (21.8%) never spent income on infrastructure maintenance, and this group predominantly rated their infrastructure as fair (13.3%) or poor (1.8%). By contrast, 31% of households reported that they were always able to allocate some of their household budget to infrastructure maintenance. Among them, the majority rated their infrastructure to be good (21.3%) or fair (9.5%), while notably very few households (0.3%) across all spending categories, rated their infrastructure as very good. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between household spending on infrastructure maintenance and access to infrastructure ($\chi^2 = 57.784$, $df = 12$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the relationship observed is statistically significant and not due to chance. This indicates that household investment in infrastructure maintenance is associated with improved perceptions of infrastructure access. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a substantial proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (60%), which may affect the reliability of the test.

Figure 6. presents how the household across different income level allocate income towards the maintenance of infrastructure and how they are spending their income and the access to infrastructure.

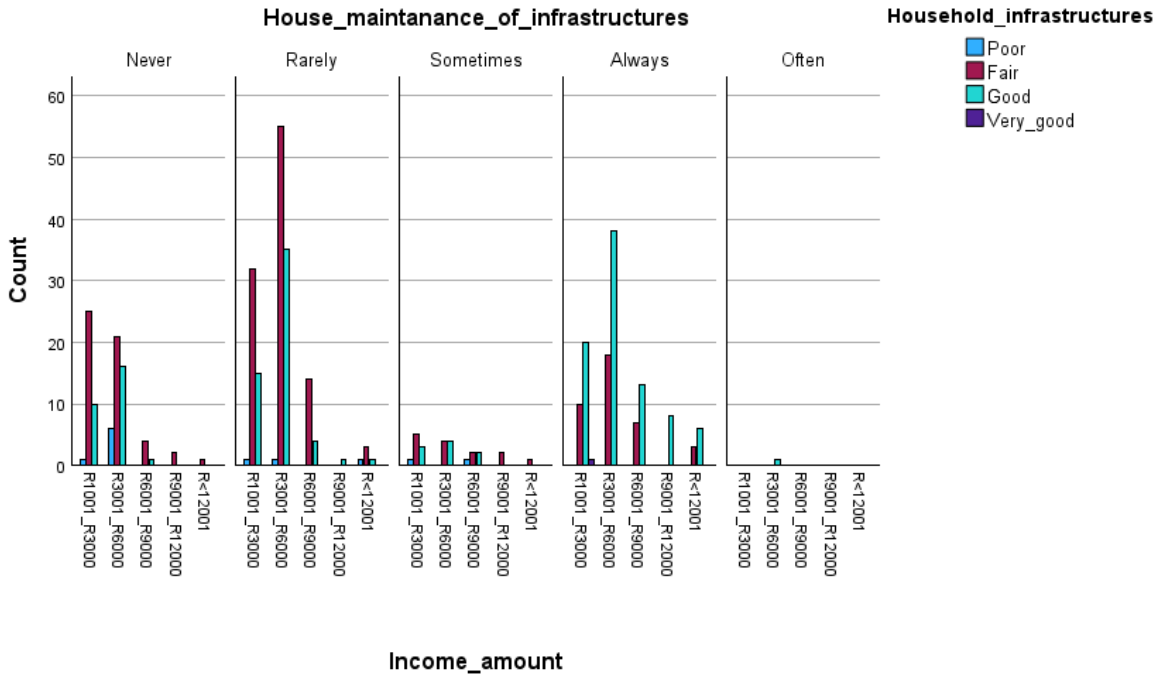

Figure 6.9 Frequency of household maintenance of infrastructure practices, against household income of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

6.3.7 Burial society, income amount and the dependents

Most of the households earning R3001 to R6000 and R1001 to R3000 reported regular spending on household infrastructural maintenance. In the group that earned between R3001 to R6000, the trend was split between those who reported rarely spending on maintenance and always allocating a budget for maintenance care with the former rating their infrastructure as mostly fair, while the latter gave rated their infrastructure as good. Similarly, households, earning R1001 to R3000 reported that they rarely spent their budget on maintenance of the infrastructure and largely rated the quality of their buildings as fair or poor. Households in the higher income brackets R6001 and above are spread across most spending categories, but those who permanently allocated money to maintenance of their infrastructure rating their buildings as good.These findings highlight that while infrastructure conditions may be maintained at moderate levels across households, consistent financial investment plays an

important role in improving infrastructure quality. However, limited income constrains the ability of many households to sustain regular maintenance.

The following section presents the relationship between household spending on burial society contributions, the income of the household, and the number of dependents. The aim is to understand how household prioritise barrier society payments as a basic social protection mechanism and whether spending patterns are influenced by income and household size. Table 6.23 explores how households across different income levels allocate income to social clubs such as burial society and stock farms. Better societies play a crucial role in community based financial support, particularly during the times of death and crisis.

Table 6.23: Cross-tabulation of social clubs and stokvel spending and income amount of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Social_clubs_of_burial_and_stokvel * Income_amount Crosstabulation

			Income_amount					
			R1001_R3000	R3001_R6000	R6001_R9000	R9001_R12000	R>12001	Total
Social_clubs_of_burial_and_stokvel	Never	Count	17	14	3	2	1	37
			45,9%	37,8%	8,1%	5,4%	2,7%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	58	90	17	2	5	172
			33,7%	52,3%	9,9%	1,2%	2,9%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	9	14	5	2	1	31
			29,0%	45,2%	16,1%	6,5%	3,2%	100,0%
	Always	Count	40	80	23	7	9	159
			25,2%	50,3%	14,5%	4,4%	5,7%	100,0%
	Often	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
			0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	124	199	48	13	16	400

Most of the household respondents, 43%, reported that they rarely spend income on burial societies and stokvel. This response is most prominent among these earnings of R3001 to R6000, 22.5%, followed by household in the R1001 to R3000 range 14.5%. The second most reported response is always spending on burial societies, recorded by 39.8% of the total sample. Within this group, households earn R3001 to R6000 about 20%, followed by those earning R1001 to R3000 about 10% of households. About 7.8% of the households reported that they sometimes spend income on burial societies. Most of these falls to R3001 to R6000 3.5% and R1001 to R3000 by about 2.3%. A total of 9.3% of households indicated that they never spend money on burial societies or stokvel. This group is concentrated among those earning R1001 to R3000 4.3% and R3001 to R6000 3.5%. Only 0.3% of the households

reported spending income on burial societies represented by one household in the <R12,000 income brackets.

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates no statistically significant association between income levels and household spending on burial societies ($\chi^2 = 15.931$, df = 16, p = 0.458), indicating that there is no meaningful relationship between the variables within the study area. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (44%), which may affect the reliability of the test. These findings highlight that participation in burial societies and stokvels is not strongly determined by income levels. Such contributions may be influenced more by social and cultural obligations, reflecting the importance of community-based financial support systems in times of need (FGD, 2022).

6.3.8 Health services, access to health facilities, dependents and income amount

Access to quality health services is the critical aspect of household well-being. Income levels and household's sizes also play a significant role in determining the access to health services. Table 6.24 shows the findings on how the household spend income on health services consultation and how they rate their access to the health facilities within their communities.

Table 6.24: Health Services Spending, Access to health Facilities of sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Health_services_consultations * Access_to_health_services Crosstabulation

			Access_to_health_services				
			Poor	Fair	Good	Very_good	Total
Health_services_consultations	Never	Count	6	171	136	0	313
			1,9%	54,6%	43,5%	0,0%	100,0%
	Rarely	Count	1	37	30	0	68
			1,5%	54,4%	44,1%	0,0%	100,0%
	Sometimes	Count	0	2	6	0	8
			0,0%	25,0%	75,0%	0,0%	100,0%
	Always	Count	1	0	8	1	10
			10,0%	0,0%	80,0%	10,0%	100,0%
	Often	Count	0	0	1	0	1
			0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	100,0%
Total		Count	8	210	181	1	400

Most of the households, 78.3%, reported that they never spend income on health services consultations. This group is most strongly associated with the household, rating their access to health services as fair 42.8% and good 34%. A small portion within this group of 1.5% reported poor access. The second most reported response is rarely spent on health consultations, accounting for 17% of the total sample. This household mainly rated their access as fair 9.3% and good 7.5%, with only 0.3% reporting poor access. Only 2% of households indicated that they sometimes spend income on health consultation. Within this group, most rated their access as good 1.5%, with a smaller percentage under 0.5% fair and 0% poor. About 2.5% of households reported that they always spent income on health consultations. Amongst these, most rated their access as good 2%, with a smaller number indicating fair 0.2%, very good 0.3% access. Lastly, only 0.3% of households reported often spending on health services and this was linked to good access to health services.

A cross tabulation between income level and household spending on health services consultations was conducted. However, the results revealed minimal variation across income groups, with 78.3% of households reporting that they never spend income on health consultation. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between household spending on health services and access to health facilities ($\chi^2 = 54.871$, $df = 12$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the relationship observed is statistically significant and not due to chance. This indicates that patterns of spending on health services are associated with perceived access to health facilities within the study area. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as a substantial proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (70%), which may affect the reliability of the chi-square test. Despite the low levels of direct expenditure on health services, the findings indicate that households rely heavily on publicly available health services. This reflects adaptive household strategies where limited income is prioritised for other essential needs, while health services are accessed through public provision.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored how the indigenous and contemporary roles of gender influence poverty alleviation strategies, income utilization and access to basic services of the five rural villages of Tshaulu. The findings shows that most of the households rely on the mix of traditional and contemporary practices when meeting their households'

basic needs, utilizing their income and describing their roles of gender in poverty alleviation efforts of their home. The study assessed the strategies of households and find that they are is dominated by the subsistence farming and households relying more on social grant with majority of houses with unemployment. Both men and women have been engaging in subsistence farming which was influenced by the indigenous knowledge transferred from one generation to another. Despite the gender of the participants majority has been spending on food, electricity and burial or stokvel, with limited number of households practicing domestication, commercial farming, collective labour, borrowing, and donations. In terms of most households shows that they have good access to food which could be linked to the subsistence farming and domestication of livestock which reduces the spending of the household's income on food. In terms of households' strategies on poverty alleviation is reduced via an indigenous knowledge wherein the household's needs are met based on the capacity not in terms of gender. Households have shared responsibilities to tackle poverty in the community, such as the men and women with children practicing subsistence farming, while women look after household's chores. While the indigenous knowledge shapes the knowledge that support households' resilience through farming and shared responsibilities, contemporary systems offer access to services like education and health care. However, the unequal income levels and size of households shape the access and spending pattern of the households. This insight highlights the importance of understanding knowledge system when addressing households' poverty especially in rural areas where indigenous knowledge remains the key knowledge of survival strategies. In the absent of either males or female's women or men who is available continue with the responsibilities. The next chapter examine the challenges and impacts of gender roles within the household's decision making and development strategies.

CHAPTER 7: UNDERLYING KNOWLEDGE PRACTISES THAT INFORM GENDER ROLES AND ACCESS TO SERVICES WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLDS IN TSHAULU

This chapter presents and analyses the household responses on indigenous and contemporary roles of gender in poverty alleviation. The gender roles from both indigenous and contemporary knowledge plays an important role in shaping poverty alleviation strategies within the communities. To examine community perceptions on the gender roles in poverty alleviation, a multi-method approach was adopted using the data collected from the research tools (explained in Chapter 4). The interpretation of the results was grounded on the understanding that household's roles in this study are shaped by both indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems viewed through the lens of shared capacity rather than gender comparison. To establish how gender roles are influenced by underlying knowledge systems the chapter include aspects on allocated roles; ownership; finance; education and training; and labour related activities.

7.1 Property ownerships, roles and knowledge of influence

The section presents the findings on property ownership within the households in Tshaulu, by highlighting evolving gender roles and how these have been influenced by indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems. The discussion includes the evolving property ownership; responsibilities within the households; decision-making; head households; and community leadership.

7.1.1. Owner of property and knowledge application

Property ownership particularly land ownership, is a critical determinant of household's socio-economic security. Gender and land ownership is a complex issue that significantly impacts socio-economic dynamics, particularly in agrarian societies and thus property ownership and rural poverty are strongly interconnected. As noted, Doss et al. (2015), the lack of clarity on measuring and interpreting the statistics on gender and land and this hinders the ability to address potential inequalities faced by both genders in many African countries. According to the findings on the study of Bokaba & Coetser (2025), in many indigenous and rural communities' colonial legacies have

entrenched a male dominated land tenure system relegating women to secondary roles with little formal control over assets such as land.

Prior research (Ajala, 2017) has also found that, women with land ownership are better positioned to generate income through agriculture directly contributing to household poverty alleviation. In addition, within the indigenous context, if women can have control over land or other assets it will support sustainable practices like agrobiodiversity management and will thus enhance food security and resilience (Cabrera-Pacheco, 2025). In southern Nigeria, Ewebiyi (2014) determined that land, houses, vehicles, motorbikes, and sewing machines are examples of assets that can assist in lessening the incidence, depth, and severity of poverty, if not specifically allocated to a particular gender.

The situation in Tshaulu in terms determining the effect of property ownership on the household's poverty alleviation is the focus of this section. A cross-tabulation between household property ownership and the source of knowledge influencing property ownership is reflected in Table 7.1. In Tshaulu, it was reported (33.5% of responses) that men are the dominant property owners under the indigenous knowledge system, and participants reported that, this reinforces the traditional structure where men are formally recognised as head of the households and the primary asset holder (FGD-TMW1 and FGD-HMW1).

Table 7.1: Cross-tabulation of property ownership and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023*)*

The_owner_of_the_property_or_assets_in_your_household * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application			
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Total
The_owner_of_the_property_or_assets_in_your_household	Men	Count	134	8	52	194
			69,1%	4,1%	26,8%	100,0%
	Women	Count	47	42	19	108
			43,5%	38,9%	17,6%	100,0%
	Men_and_women	Count	6	67	25	98
			6,1%	68,4%	25,5%	100,0%
Total		Count	187	117	96	400

In instances where women were listed as property owners, they indicated that this was informed by more contemporary influences (10.5%) or by a blended knowledge

system influence (4.8%). It was reported that, in many instances this ownership reflected the indirect access women would have through marriage, spousal rights or shared household arrangements rather than autonomous control (FGD-TMW1 & FGD-HMW1). Participants indicated that, this aligns with the cultural norms where women ownership is frequently mediated through male counterparts as highlighted by the local leader in Tshitumbe (KSI-Tshitumbe Head). Joint ownership by men and women is more frequently associated with an influence of contemporary knowledge system (16.8%) or joint knowledge systems (6.3%) indicating a community shift in terms of perceptions towards more inclusivity. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between property ownership and the knowledge system of influence ($\chi^2 = 154.666$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting that the observed relationship is not due to chance. However, this may still operate within the shared household logic where formal ownership is symbolic of unity rather than individual right (FGD-TW1; FGD-HW1; FGD-TMW and FGD-HMW1). These findings shows that while the contemporary knowledge system highlight a move towards more visible gender inclusivity, influence of indigenous and transitional systems continue to position men as the household representative that is the formal role that enables women indirect access to land and property through men (FDG-TW1; FGD-TMW1; FGD-TM1; FGD-HW1; FGD-HMW1-FGD-HM1). As such, property ownership remains embedded within male designated structures, even though women's use and contributions to land of the household are significant but often unrecorded. The results thus confirm that the observed patterns in cross-tabulation of property ownership within households is associated significantly with the type of knowledge system applied. These findings highlight that property ownership in Tshaulu remains strongly influenced by indigenous knowledge systems, which tend to position men as formal household representatives and asset holders. However, the increasing presence of joint ownership under contemporary and combined knowledge systems reflects a gradual shift toward more inclusive arrangements, though such inclusivity often remains embedded within traditional household structures. While indigenous knowledge systems typically associated with the men as formal household representative and assets holder, contemporary and combined knowledge systems are more likely to reflect the inclusive or shared model of ownership, though this inclusivity often remains symbolic or mediated through indigenous structures/systems that continue to shape household dynamics.

Figure 7.1 shows the gendered distinction in association between land ownership and the underlying knowledge system.

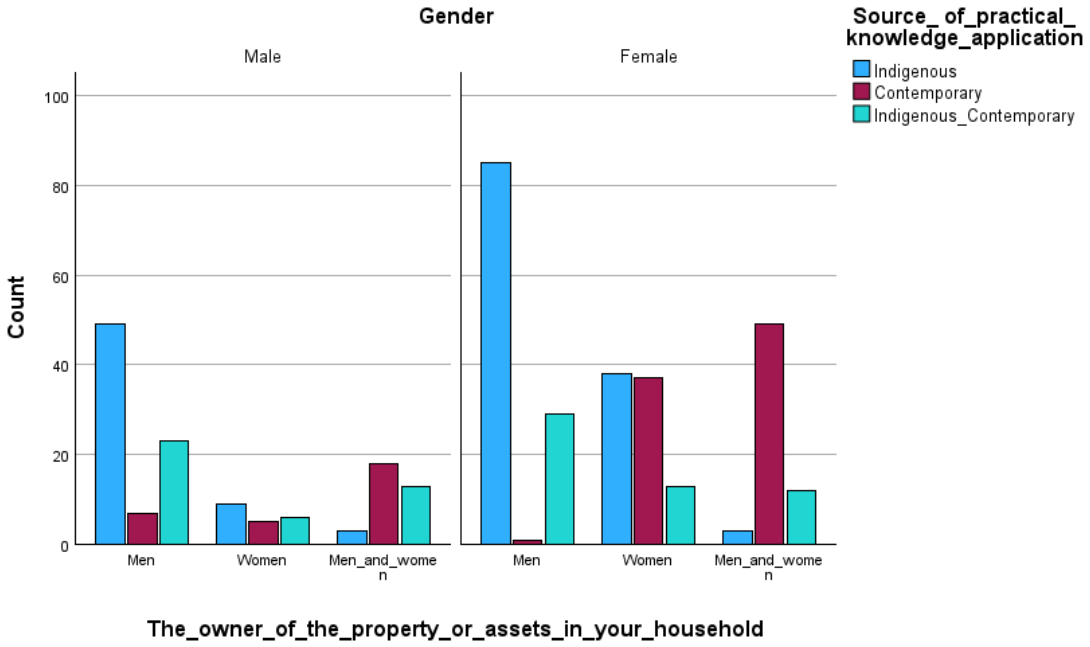

Figure 7.1: Gender, property ownership and knowledge system in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Among the male's respondent's indigenous knowledge systems was cited as the underlying reasons that dominated the category where men are reported as the owners of the property. Among the female's respondents shared ownership (men and women) under a more contemporary knowledge system is dominant, reflecting shifting perceptions that have been influenced by more modern values, while still culturally bounded within a households' logic.

A separate Pearson Chi-square by gender was conducted for males and females' respondents to assess the association between property ownership and the source of knowledge of influence. Indigenous societies often have distinct understanding of property and gender roles that differs from western norms (KSI-Habegwa-Village Head; KSI-Manzemba-Village Head).

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between property ownership and the knowledge system of influence for both male and female respondents. For male respondents ($\chi^2 = 35.856$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), the results indicate that the relationship observed is statistically significant and not due to chance. However, the findings should be interpreted with slight caution, as a small proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (11.1%). For female respondents ($\chi^2 = 120.885$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), the results also indicate a statistically significant association, with no violations of test assumptions. These findings demonstrate that property ownership patterns are associated with the knowledge systems influencing gender roles for both groups. The stronger chi-square value among female respondents highlights a more pronounced relationship, indicating that women's responses are more consistently aligned with specific knowledge systems compared to those of male respondents. These results highlight that both males and females' property ownership is significantly associated with the type of knowledge system that underscores the ownership, though the pattern and influence differ by gender. In Canada, the push of privatisation of indigenous reserve land is seen as a gendered tool of dispossession particularly affecting indigenous women (Hicks, 2018). In addition, Hicks (2018) also indicated that the neoliberal emphasis on private property and entrepreneurialism often overlooks the historical and ongoing gender impacts of colonialism. A study by Shiffer-Sebba & Behrman (2021) found that discriminatory norms and legislation, such as those governing inheritance and marriage, contributed to such disparities. Gaddis et al. (2022) showed that higher female property ownership has been recorded in American cities, but women are more likely to own lower-value residences, indicating persistent gender segregation. Lack of assets, particularly land, is a key source of rural poverty in Pakistan, with landless households experiencing the highest levels of poverty (Anwar et al., 2004). Rural areas feature a diversified population, with people from both upper socioeconomic categories and lower socioeconomic groups, emphasizing the presence of poverty in rural Britain (Cox, 1998). This differs from the findings presented in this thesis, wherein property ownership is based on the family interest. In addition, if the family have a lower value residence or no access to land that affects both men and women within a household. While the main analysis confirmed that property ownership is significantly associated with gender and specific knowledge systems, additional insight can be drawn by examining the respondent's marital status (Figure 7.2).

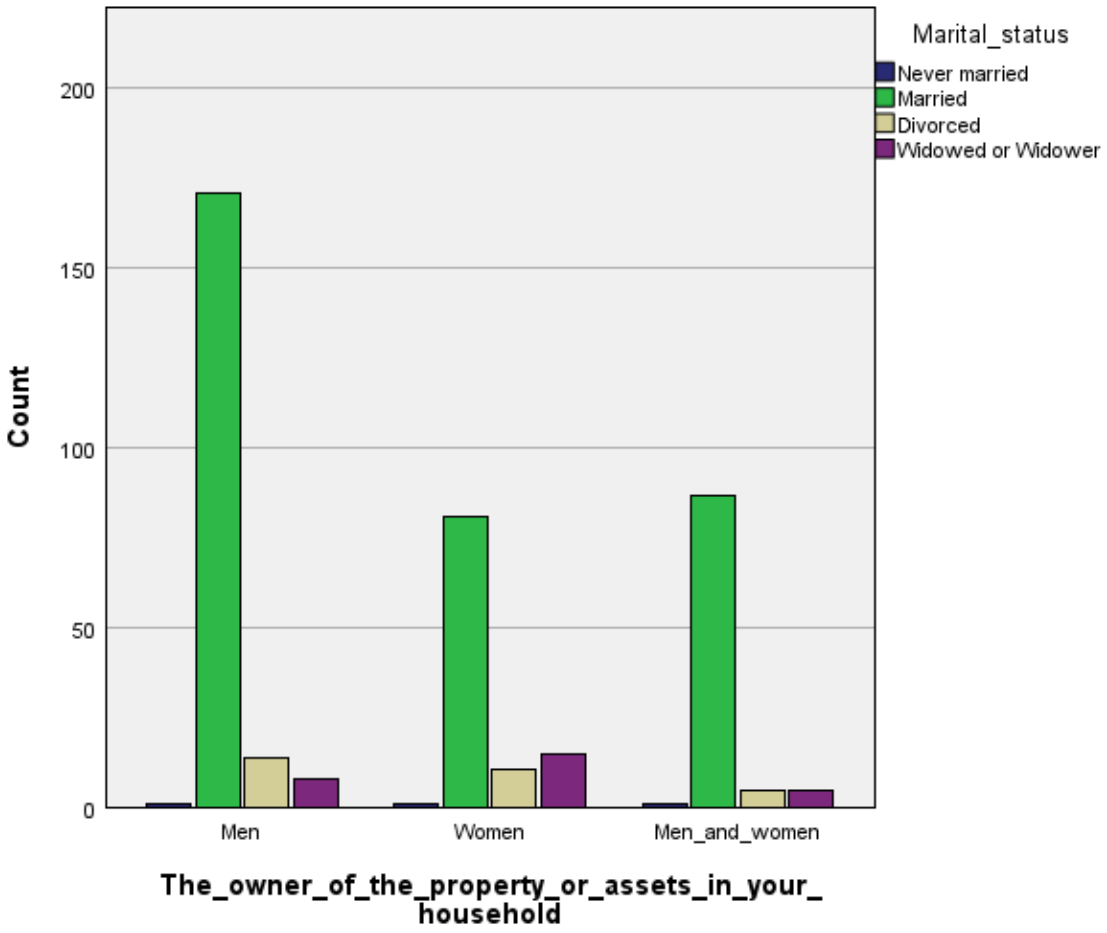

Figure 7.2: Distribution of property ownership by marital status and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

As shown in Figure 7.2, respondents' perceptions of property ownership differ across marital status groups. Among married respondents, the dominant perception is that men are the primary owners of property, followed by joint ownership between men and women, while female ownership is reported less frequently. Among divorced respondents, the pattern is less concentrated, with perceptions distributed more evenly across male, female, and joint ownership categories, indicating a more varied view of property ownership. Among widowed respondents, the number of responses is relatively limited; however, perceptions do not show a clear dominance of a single ownership category, with both male and female ownership being represented alongside joint ownership.

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between perceived property ownership and marital status ($\chi^2 = 13.874$, $df = 6$, $p = 0.031$), suggesting that perceptions differ across marital groups. However, the results should

be interpreted with caution, as some cells have low expected counts, which may affect the reliability of the test. The findings highlight that while men are widely perceived as primary property owners among married respondents, perceptions become more diverse among divorced and widowed groups, reflecting variation in household experiences and reporting patterns.

Notably such ownership is closely related to indigenous or combined knowledge systems where women often step into property responsibilities within the context of the absence, illness, or death of the husband (FDG-TMW1). It was reported that, this reflects a system based on households' presence and capacity rather than the formal or legal autonomy (FDG_HMW1; FDG-TMW1). These findings highlight that property ownership within rural households is shaped less by legal entitlement and more by the social roles, the presence and the household's responsibilities as land is viewed as communal property. This is aligned with Mekala (2024), who indicated that indigenous societies often view land as communal rather than private property which has historically supported more inclusive gender roles. This is also evident in India, where ownership of the land is predominantly communal with 88.32% of land owned by individuals or tribal communities (Walling, 2022). Walling (2022) also indicated that communal ownership is linked to the complex gender and power dynamics that affect ecological knowledge production and resource management. Scholars (Dagdeviren & Oosterbaan, 2022 Masuku, et al., 2023 & Tantoh, 2026) have highlighted that while in rural areas land ownership in South Africa often appears gender biased, participants reported that traditional systems allocate land to the male heads of the households for the benefit of entire family and not for personal gain (FDG-HW1; FDG-HMW1; FDG-TMW1; KSI-V1TSE). This communal approach reflects that indigenous knowledge systems emphasise family welfare and stewardship over individual ownership. In contrast, more modern and contemporary intellectual properties laws are designed to protect individuals granting them exclusive rights to their land (Rajasekharan & Souravi, 2017). In addition, Rajasekharan & Souravi (2017) indicated that the more modern approach does not align with communal ownership and traditions of indigenous knowledge systems that are passed down through generations within communities and families. This contrasting situation necessitates the re-evaluation of the Intellectual properties laws to better accommodate the unique characteristics of

indigenous knowledge in poverty alleviation strategies. The next section explores how the decision-making roles are influenced by knowledge systems.

7.1.2. The decision-making and knowledge of influence

Gender influences decision-making processes significantly. According to the research single women and women in joint households are less likely to engage in financial behaviour than their male counterparts (Wagner & Walstad 2023). Decision-making in terms of gender within the Tshaulu households assessed and analysed in relation to the practical knowledge applied and draws from indigenous, contemporary or a combined knowledge system (Table 7.2). The aim was to establish the knowledge system that influenced the dominant decision maker in the household (men or women or jointly).

Table 7.2: Decision-making by Knowledge of influence, and gender in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The_decision_making_in_your_house * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application * Gender Crosstabulation

% within The_decision_making_in_your_house

Gender			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application			
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Not sure
Male		Men	64,3%	16,7%	11,9%	7,1%
		Women	27,3%	39,4%	33,3%	
		Men_and_women	3,4%	79,3%	17,2%	
	Total		28,6%	49,6%	19,5%	2,3%
Female		Men	70,0%	10,0%	18,0%	2,0%
		Women	29,6%	40,7%	29,6%	
		Men_and_women	1,8%	81,7%	16,5%	
	Total		25,8%	51,7%	22,1%	0,4%
Total		Men	67,4%	13,0%	15,2%	4,3%
		Women	29,1%	40,4%	30,5%	
		Men_and_women	2,4%	80,8%	16,8%	
	Total		26,8%	51,0%	21,3%	1,0%

The analysis examines how perceptions of household decision-making differ between male and female respondents across knowledge systems. Among male respondents, the dominant perception is that decision-making is shared between men and women (43.6%), particularly under contemporary knowledge systems. Male respondents also associate men-only decision-making with indigenous knowledge systems, while

recognising women's participation to a lesser extent. Among female respondents, a similar pattern of shared decision-making is observed (40.8%), also strongly linked to contemporary knowledge systems. However, female respondents report a substantially higher proportion of women-only decision-making (40.4%) compared to male respondents, indicating stronger recognition of women's roles in decision-making. In contrast, men-only decision-making is least frequently reported among female respondents and is primarily associated with indigenous knowledge systems. Across both groups, contemporary knowledge systems are closely associated with shared decision-making, while indigenous knowledge systems are more commonly linked to male-dominated decision-making. Combined knowledge systems reflect more varied patterns, including both shared and female-led decision-making.

These findings highlight that while both male and female respondents recognise a shift towards shared household decision-making, female respondents are more likely to highlight the role of women, reflecting differences in perception across respondent groups. These findings highlight that while indigenous knowledge system continue to position men as the formal decision makers, in practice these decisions are done through consultation with family elders including women such as (*khadzi*, sister-in-law, mother-in-law *mazwale* and wife) (FGD-TMW1; FGD-HMW1). The men typically present the decision as the representative of the household, reflecting a collective family position rather than individual authority (KSI-V1-TSE; KSI-V2-HAB; FGD-HMW1).

In contrast, contemporary and indigenous knowledge systems promote more visibly inclusive or shared decision-making between men and women, though female led decision-making continues to be reported less frequently relative to other decision-making forms across all knowledge types. This aligns with the earlier findings on property ownership where men served as a representative of the household even when decision are taken collectively. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between household decision-making patterns and knowledge systems for male respondents ($\chi^2 = 62.893$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.001$), female respondents ($\chi^2 = 109.916$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.001$), and the overall sample ($\chi^2 = 174.577$, $df = 6$, $p < 0.001$). However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as 25% of cells have expected counts below 5. The findings highlight that both male and female respondents

predominantly perceive decision-making as shared between men and women, particularly under contemporary knowledge systems. In contrast, male-dominated decision-making is more associated with indigenous knowledge, while female respondents show stronger recognition of women's participation in decision-making. Figure 7.3 presents the visual graphs on decision-making and knowledge of influence female's household representatives.

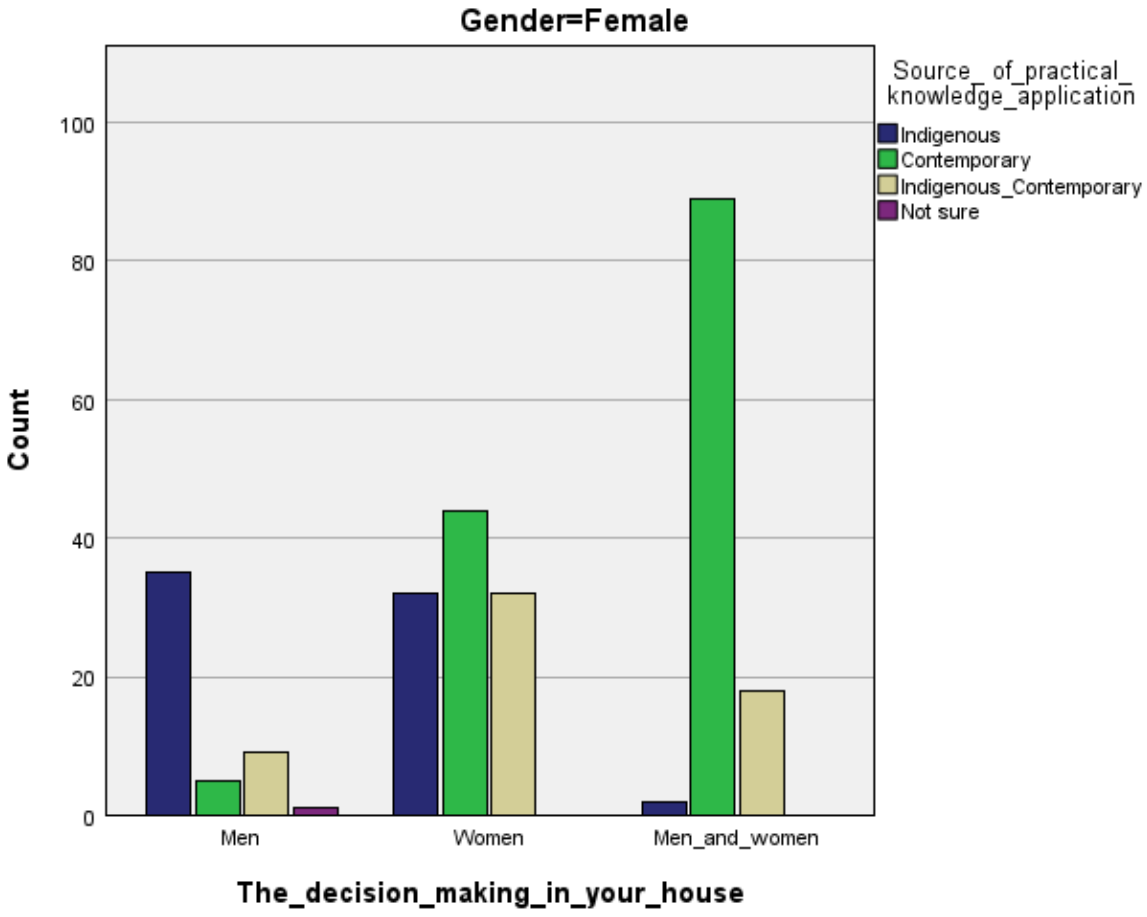

Figure 7.3: Female decision-making and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The trend in Figure 7.3 shows decision-making by men as the most reported in the households where the influence of indigenous knowledge systems dominated. In comparison, joint decision-making between men and women was far more prevalent in households influenced by a more contemporary knowledge system while female representative decision-making appears more evenly distributed but remains less frequently reported across all knowledge. The pattern aligns with the previous findings

on property ownership where men are often recognised as the formal household representatives even though decisions are shaped collectively. Figure 7.4 illustrates the cumulative percentage of reported gender for further analysis and understanding of decision-making roles (men or women or both) disaggregated by the gender and source of practical knowledge (Indigenous, contemporary, combined or not sure).

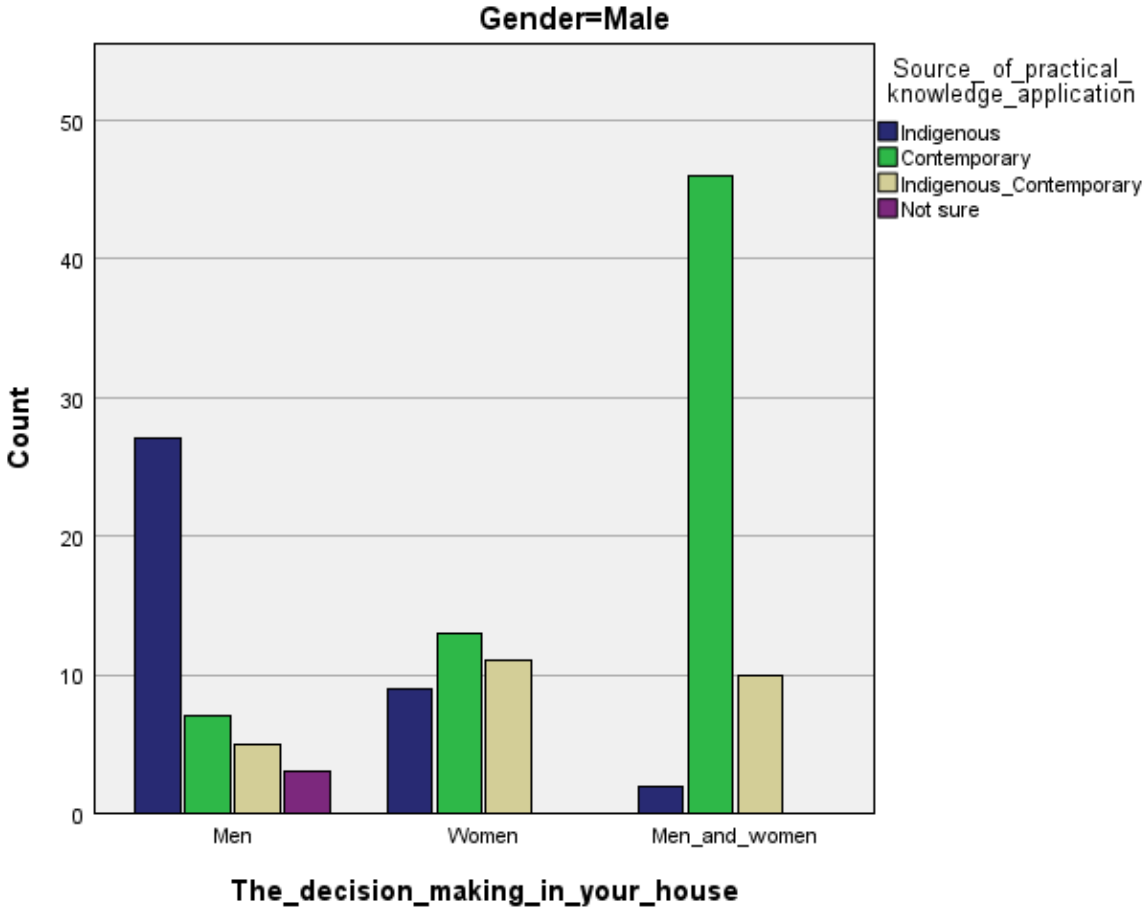

Figure 7.4: Male decision-making and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The gender separated analysis reveals that male participants most commonly associate decision-making with the men who were more influenced by indigenous knowledge systems (25%), though a large portion (70%) indicated that they were not sure of the knowledge system of influence, possibly reflecting the unspoken norms where male authority is assumed rather than consciously linked to the specific knowledge system. Among the male's participants joint decision-making is more frequently associated with the contemporary (22.5%) and combined knowledge systems (12.8%) highlighting an acceptance of shared roles. Among female

respondents they indicated that decision-making is dominated by men who were mostly linked to indigenous knowledge systems (60%). A large group indicated that there was joint decision-making in households where it was reported that more contemporary (33.8%) and combined knowledges (28.2%) were dominant. Female led decision-making appears in across all knowledge systems but is most associated with indigenous knowledge systems (10.3%), likely reflecting the consultative role of elder women such as *makhadzi* (sister-in-law), and *Mazwale* (mother-in-law) within traditional households (KSI-V4BUL; FGD-HMW1). Joint decision-making appears more frequently under the more contemporary and combined knowledge systems, while this may reflect increased recognition of shared roles influenced by modern knowledge practices, it also aligns with the long-standing traditional household practices where decisions though formally presented by men are shaped collectively. The influence of modernity is therefore visible not only in changing roles, but also in how both men and women interpret and report these practices. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between household decision-making patterns and knowledge systems for male respondents ($\chi^2 = 62.893$) and female respondents ($\chi^2 = 109.916$), as well as for the overall sample ($\chi^2 = 174.577$), all at $p < 0.001$. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between household decision-making patterns and knowledge systems for male respondents ($\chi^2 = 62.893$) and female respondents ($\chi^2 = 109.916$), as well as for the overall sample ($\chi^2 = 174.577$), all at $p < 0.001$. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as 25% of cells have expected counts below 5. These results support the descriptive findings, showing that both male and female respondents predominantly perceive decision-making as shared between men and women, particularly under contemporary knowledge systems, while male-dominated decision-making is more closely associated with indigenous knowledge systems. This is indicating a clear trend where joint decision-making is more frequently linked to contemporary and combined knowledge systems particularly amongst female respondents. Indigenous knowledge plays crucial roles in households decision-making process of rural households particularly in the shared responsibilities in maintaining households' livelihoods KSI-V5-TSA; FGD-TMW1). In Uganda, indigenous practices form the basis of local decision-making in enhancing food security and ensuring sustainable rural development (Tweheyo et al., 2024). Decision-making has been significantly influenced by more contemporary knowledge systems

which has offered a new insight where women and men are identified as key decision-makers of the households. While the indigenous knowledge systems provide a valuable foundation of decision-making in rural households the integration with contemporary knowledge systems offers opportunities for a more enhanced outcome. It was reported during the focus group discussion that men and women can debate an applicable solution to a particular issue, but after a conversation, one person must represent the family as the final decision-maker, and that person is a man of the house (FGD-HW1; FGD-HMW1; FGD-TMW1). This study confirms that indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems are associated with both men and women taking decisions in their households. Minasyan & Tovmasyan (2020), reported that there are significant gender disparities in decision-making processes, with women being more sensitive and men being more self-assured. While Kumar et al. (2021) indicates that nationality has a greater influence than gender in cooperative decision-making, with persons more likely to cooperate with partners of their own nationality. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between household decision-making patterns and knowledge systems for male respondents ($\chi^2 = 62.893$) and female respondents ($\chi^2 = 109.916$), as well as for the overall sample ($\chi^2 = 174.577$), all at $p < 0.001$. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as 25% of cells have expected counts below 5. These results support the descriptive findings, showing that both male and female respondents predominantly perceive decision-making as shared between men and women, particularly under contemporary knowledge systems, while male-dominated decision-making is more closely associated with indigenous knowledge systems.

While the findings indicate a high prevalence of joint decision-making within households, this does not necessarily imply equal authority. The results also show that men are frequently identified as final decision-makers, suggesting that decision-making processes may be participatory in structure but asymmetrical in power. This reflects a hybrid arrangement in which contemporary influences promote shared involvement, while indigenous knowledge systems continue to assign formal authority to men. This apparent contradiction highlights the importance of understanding household decision-making as a negotiated process, where participation and authority are not evenly distributed. Rather than representing a shift to full equality, joint decision-making may coexist with underlying gendered power structures that shape

final outcomes. This aligns with perspectives on gendered household power relations, which highlight that visible participation does not always translate into equal decision-making authority.

7.1.3. The head of the households and knowledge of influence

The association between the head of the households and the practical knowledge of influence was assessed to understand how leadership or headship in the home are shaped by the indigenous or contemporary or combined knowledge systems. Household head factors are important in predicting the likelihood of a household falling into poverty. Gender and family headship are difficult issues that differ across countries and settings. The gender of the household head also influences poverty rates, with female-headed households more likely to experience poverty than male-headed households (Jula & Beriso, 2023). This research for this thesis, assessed the gender of the household head in connection to knowledge systems application. The participants were asked to indicate the head of the household in terms of gender, and the then to indicate the knowledge of influence. The cross-tabulation (Table 7.3) of household headship and source of knowledge was then conducted.

Table 7.3: Cross-tabulation the head of household and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The_head_of_your_household * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

% of Total

		Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application			
		Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Total
The_head_of_your_household	Men	41,3%	1,5%	19,8%	62,5%
	Women	10,5%	6,5%	5,0%	22,0%
	Men_and_women	0,5%	11,5%	3,5%	15,5%
Total		52,3%	19,5%	28,2%	100,0%

The analysis of the cross-tabulation shows that men are most reported as the head of the households (62.5%) with most of these households aligned to indigenous knowledge systems (41.3%) followed by a combination of indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems (19.8%) and very few under contemporary knowledge systems (1.5%). This reflects the enduring influence of indigenous norms that position men as a formal household representative. In contrast, the female headed

households account for 22% of the total with their distribution more balanced across the knowledge systems, while 10.5% are linked to indigenous knowledge systems, and 6.5% to contemporary knowledge systems and 5.0% to combined knowledge systems. Additionally, joint headship (men and women) was reported by 15.5% of households to be predominantly associated with the contemporary knowledge systems, with 11.5% highlighting that shared leadership is more widely prevalent in contexts shaped by modern or blended influences. These results highlight the persistence of male dominated headship under indigenous norms while female and joint leadership structures become more visible where households draw modern or combined knowledge systems.

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between the variables ($\chi^2 = 177.711$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the observed relationship is not due to chance. The absence of expected counts below 5 confirms that the test assumptions are met, indicating that the results are reliable.

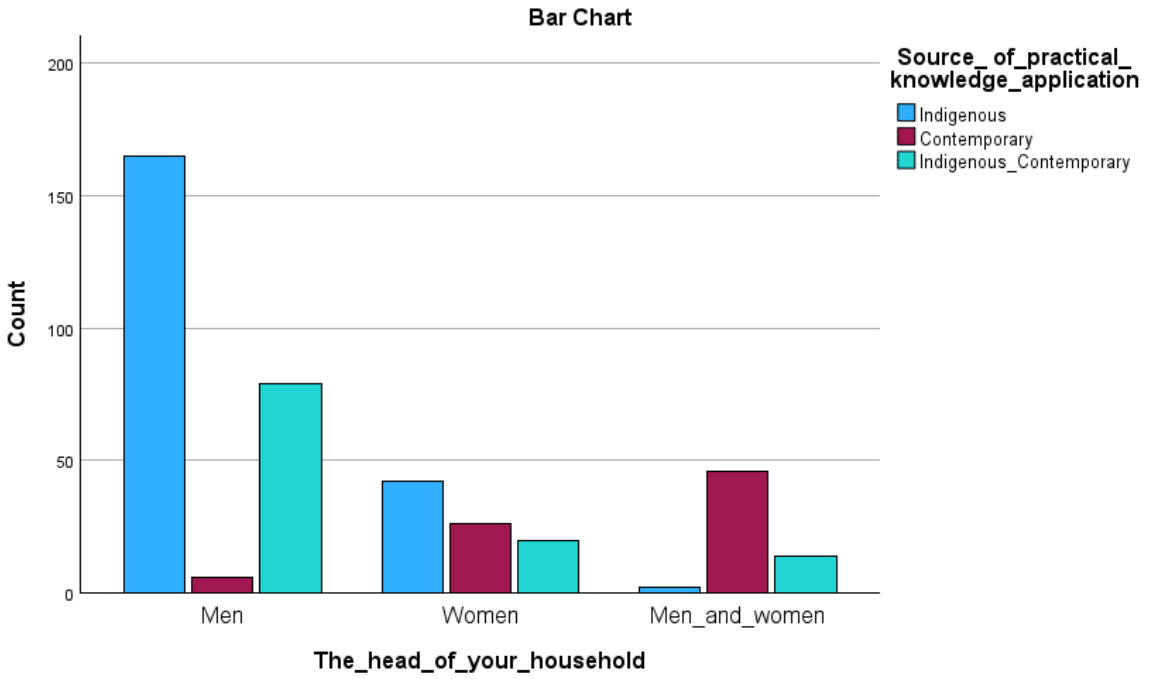

Figure 7.5: Distribution of household headship and knowledge of influence. in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Figure 7.5 visually presents the pattern shown in the cross-tabulation. The results highlight that male headed households are overwhelmingly associated with indigenous knowledge systems, while female headed, and joint headship families show stronger associations with the contemporary and combined knowledge systems.

The visual trends reinforce the interpretation that both traditional and blended knowledge system can accommodate shared roles, though they may express and record them differently. While the headship of the household is often shaped by the tradition and family structure the question of community leadership reflects the broader society values and evolving perception of gender roles. The head of the household in rural communities holds a multifaceted role that significantly impacts family dynamics. In many rural settings, women have increasingly taken on the role, often due to absence of male breadwinner (Leder et al., 2024). In Bogotá, single-parent households with male heads of family were studied, and it was found that these fathers had to adapt their roles and masculinity to fulfil the responsibilities of raising and caring for their children (Rodas et al., 2016).

7.1.4. Community leadership and knowledge of influence

This section explores the influence of different knowledge systems on those considered to be in leadership roles in the context of the wider community. The concept of headship has historical and political connotations, and efforts to reform family law in Sub-Saharan Africa have faced opposition due to the persistence of male headship (Folbre, 2019). Gender and leadership have been widely contested in recent years. Previous research has found that women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions, and gender role expectations might limit their leadership behaviours (Eklund et al., 2017). According to more feminist dominated literature, institutions and leadership have historically favoured masculinity, disadvantaging women in both overt and covert ways (Chin & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007). This thesis looks at gender and leadership in communities, with participants asked to indicate in terms of gender who is responsible for leadership and the source of knowledge influencing the leadership in terms of gender. The cross-tabulation in Table 7.4 reveals the striking contrast in perceptions of suitable community leadership roles.

Table 7.4: Cross-tabulation of suitable candidates for community leadership and source of practical knowledge in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Suitable_community_leadership_position_or_responsibilites * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

% of Total

		Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application			
		Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Total
Suitable_community_leadership_position_or_responsibilites	Men	16,3%	0,3%	5,0%	21,5%
	Women	1,8%	3,0%	0,3%	5,0%
	Men_and_women		65,3%	8,3%	73,5%
Total		18,0%	68,5%	13,5%	100,0%

Most of the participants (73.5%) that indicated that both men and women are suitable for community positions were associated predominantly with a more contemporary knowledge system (65.3%) and to a lesser extent by those influenced by more indigenous and contemporary systems (8.3%). In contrast, 21.5% of the respondents noted that men only make up suitable leaders, and these primarily were influenced by a more traditional knowledge system (16.3%). A very small minority (5.0%) of the respondents identified women only as suitable candidates for leadership positions and these were mostly influenced by contemporary knowledge systems (3.0%). The results reflect a clear shift towards more inclusivity in community leadership preferences particularly amongst those influenced by more modern or blended knowledge systems. While the norms of more indigenous knowledge systems still appear to favour male leadership the significant endorsement of joint leadership highlight that rural communities seem to be adopting more equitable and collaborative leadership ideals in terms of gender.

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between the variables ($\chi^2 = 297.587$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the observed relationship is not due to chance. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as 22.2% of cells have expected counts below 5, which may affect the reliability of the test. These findings strongly highlight that knowledge system plays a defining role in shaping leadership perceptions with contemporary and combined knowledge systems promoting inclusivity and indigenous norms maintaining traditional male centred roles.

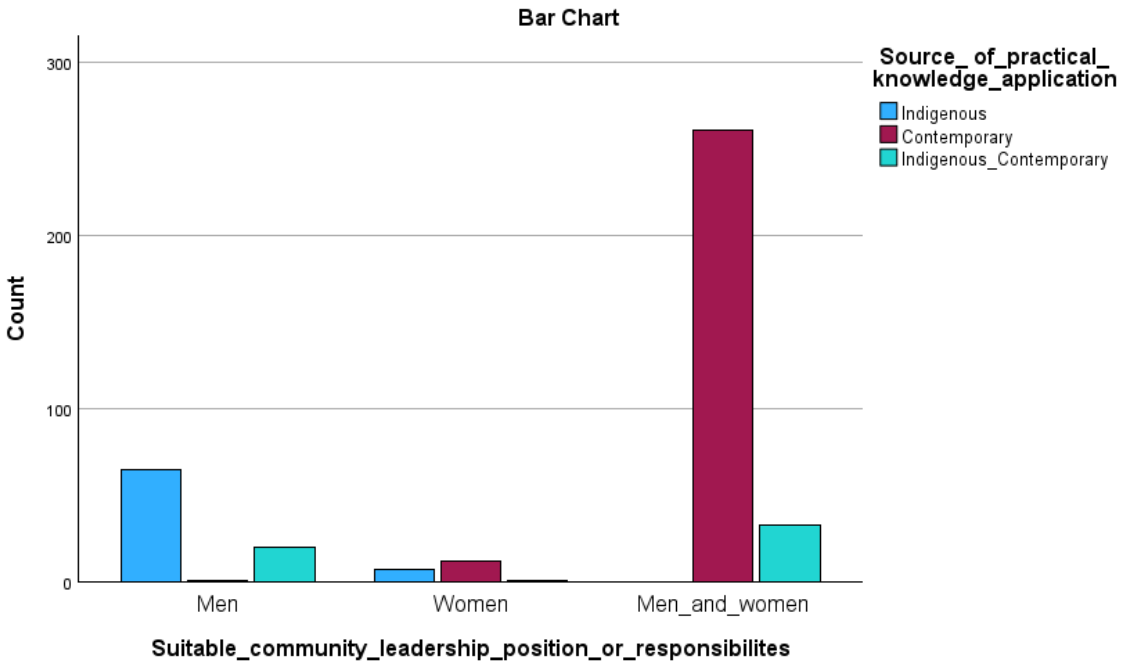

Figure 7.6: Distribution of suitable gendered leadership and associated knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Figure 7.6 illustrates the dominant view of the roles of men and women in leadership positions within the community. Most of those who favoured joint leadership positions were associated with more contemporary knowledge systems. Figure 7.6 highlights that this inclusive view is not only a dominant frequency (294 out of 400) but also a contrast to the more traditional viewpoints under more traditional knowledge systems where men only are largely seen as suitable for leadership positions. The presence of indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems also reflects a moderate openness to joint leadership, though this is to a lesser extent than in purely contemporary knowledge systems. According to the focus groups, women have been leaders in their society (FDG-HMW1; FDG-TMW1) for years and highlighted that indigenous knowledge systems do permit women to hold higher positions of leadership in their communities. This is particularly true for the leadership of this community, as, Tshaulu is traditionally led by a female chief (FGD-HMW1; FGD-HW1; FGD-TW1). It is important to consider how socialisation and cultural worldviews affect leadership style, and feminist leadership styles are frequently more transformative and collaborative than men (Blackmore, 2010). The tension between hierarchical and collaborative types of leadership is caused by the fact that corporate cultures frequently reflect social interpretations of gender norms (O'Connor et al., 2010). Despite advancements,

men continue to have relatively ‘easier’ access to positions of authority, and research from a variety of social science fields can help explain why this difference continues (Carli & Eagly, 2013). In this regard one can conclude that leadership positions are not about gender but the needs of a particular household to establish alternative contribution to society or households’ representation that is based more on capacity and availability, and not necessarily on gender.

7.2 Financial, education and training contribution roles and knowledge of influence

This section presents an analysis of household’s responses on the role of men and women in the financial, education and training sectors and the extent to which these roles are shaped by either indigenous or contemporary knowledge systems or both. The focus is not on gender equality as a modern construct but rather on how the indigenous communities allocate and share responsibilities in their respective poverty alleviation strategies. While it should be noted that indigenous knowledge systems often emphasise the complementary role rather than equal roles, the contemporary knowledge system introduces new expectations premised on individual rather than communal empowerment. By examining the financial provision, access to education and training and the knowledge system of influence, this section highlights the evolving dynamics of household’s capacity in sustaining livelihoods and reducing poverty.

7.2.1. Households financial support and knowledge of influence

Gender norms in household financial provision influence financial decisions and economic results significantly (Zaccaria & Guiso, 2020). This study assesses the household’s financial provision in terms of gender within the households. To comprehend the dynamics of gender and knowledge system of influence, the household's financial support was also assessed. The analysis of the cross-tabulation shows (Table 7.5) that men are most commonly reported as the primary financial supporters of the households (43.5%) with the majority of these cases aligned to the more indigenous knowledge system (33.5%), followed by those influenced by combination of indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems (8.0%), and relatively few (2.0%) respondents indicating influence of a contemporary knowledge system alone.

Table 7.5: Distribution of financial support and dominant influence of knowledge systems in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The_provision_financial_support_of_the_households * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

% within The_provision_financial_support_of_the_households

		Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application			
		Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Total
The_provision_financial_support_of_the_households	Men	77,0%	4,6%	18,4%	100,0%
	Women	36,4%	36,4%	27,3%	100,0%
	Men_and_women	0,5%	82,4%	17,0%	100,0%
Total		37,8%	43,5%	18,8%	100,0%

Table 7.5 and Figure 7.7, show the strong persistence of the traditional norms where financial responsibility is culturally assigned to men often as a symbol of leadership and of provision. In contrast female financial contributors account for only 11% of the total sample but the distribution across knowledge systems is relatively balanced; 4.0% of these women are influenced by a more indigenous knowledge system, while another 4.0% under contemporary knowledge systems and 3.0% under a combined knowledge system. This balance indicates that while fewer households rely on women as primary earners, their role is not restricted upon a single world view, and this may be an impact of the contextual shift related to female employment and absent of male contributors. The shared financial provision between men and women is reported by 45.5% of the households with the highest influence by contemporary knowledge systems (37.5%) followed by a small share influenced by both indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems (7.8%) and very few aligned with indigenous knowledge norms (0.3%).

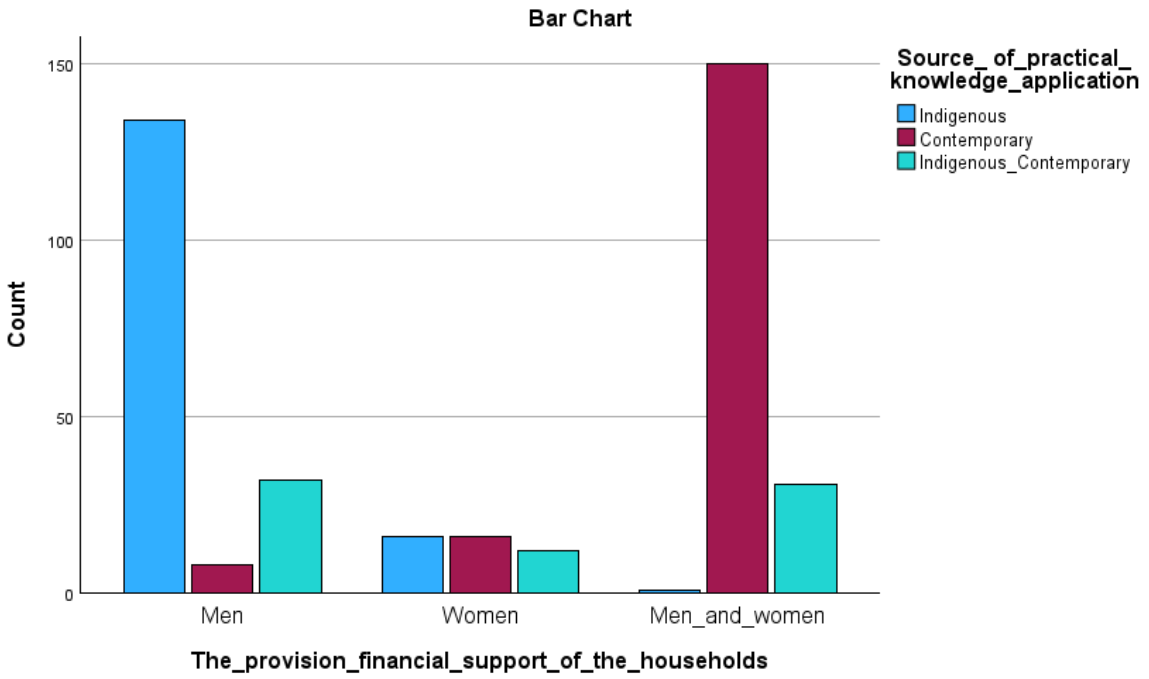

Figure 7.7: Household financial provision and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

It is also important to acknowledge that in households influenced by indigenous knowledge system norms even when women earn an income it is often managed by the men as a form of the traditional respect and symbolic headship (KSI-V1-TSE; KSI-V3-MAN; FGD-TMW1; FGD-HW1). This reflects the cultural practices where financial authority is formally associated with men even if women are the actual contributors. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between the variables ($\chi^2 = 264.214$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the observed relationship is not due to chance. The test assumptions were fully satisfied, with no expected cell counts below 5, confirming the reliability of the results. It is important to note that the economic roles of women may be underrepresented in formal reporting since the financial authority is symbolically linked to male headship. These cultural dynamics can obscure the true gendered pattern of financial contribution and decision-making within the household. Figure 7.8 shows the findings on the insight of how the households view the financial provision across different knowledge systems.

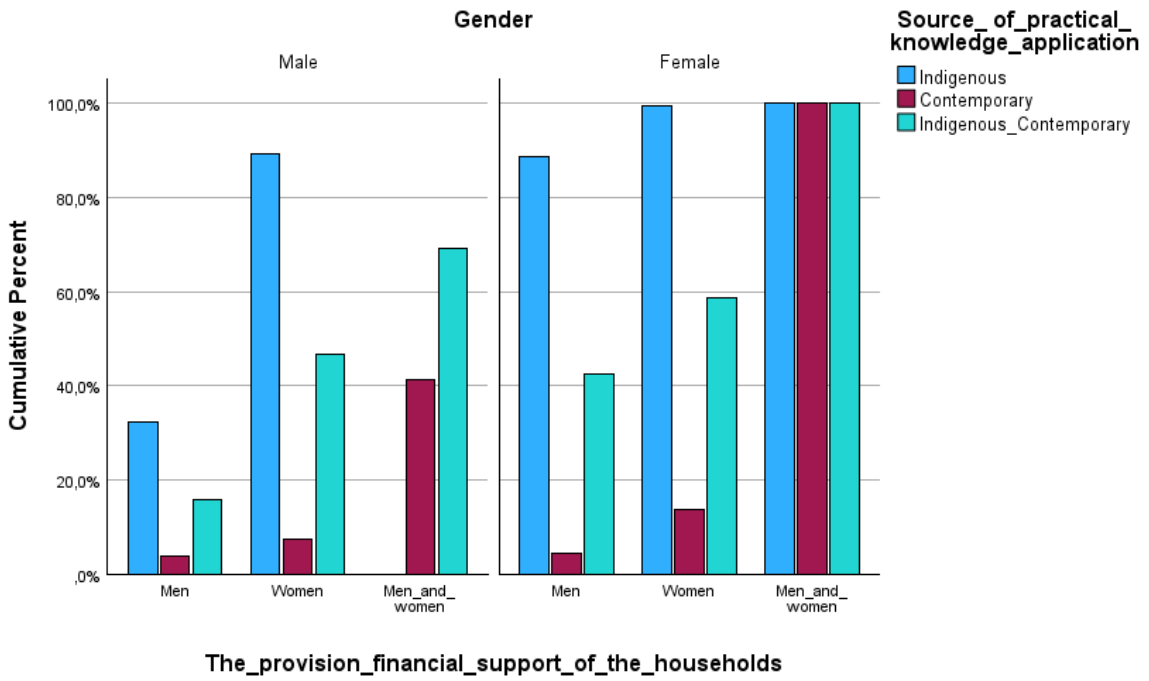

Figure 7.8: Household financial provision, gender and knowledge of Influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Male respondents influenced largely by indigenous knowledge systems tend to associate financial support as their responsibility, while those who indicated their influence more towards a combined contemporary and indigenous knowledge systems indicated shared financial responsibilities. Female respondents show even stronger support for joint financial roles particularly under the influence of more contemporary and indigenous knowledge systems. This shows that while indigenous knowledge roles still influence perceptions among men, their lived realities reflect the collaborative approach to financial support shaped by both cultural expectations and practical households needs.

The gender specific Pearson Chi-square results show a significant relationship between the indigenous knowledge system of influence and financial provision of the households. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between the variables for male respondents ($\chi^2 = 84.809$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), female respondents ($\chi^2 = 184.528$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), and the overall sample ($\chi^2 = 264.214$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the observed relationships are not due to chance. However, the results for male respondents should be interpreted with caution, as 33.3% of the cells have expected counts below 5, which may affect the reliability of

the test. The findings highlight that the distribution of responses differs across categories and varies between male and female respondents. A few participants in the focus groups believed that men are financial providers for their households, that were largely influenced by indigenous knowledge systems (FGD-HW1-FGD-TW1). It was reported that, most of the respondents in the focus groups believed men and women were financial contributors in the households that were strongly associated with more contemporary knowledge systems (FDG-TMW1; FDG-HMW1). A previous study (Gosh & Vinod, 2017) established that female-headed households have disadvantages in accessing formal financing and are more likely to rely on informal finance. Gender differences in financial inclusion in high-income countries in the Global North, are connected to occupational factors rather than institutional gender discrimination (Cornee et al., 2023). Overall, financial decision-making, and contributions have improved the level of poverty within the households since every gender now generally contributes to their households' basic needs.

7.2.2. Households educational training and training and knowledge of influence

The relationship between gender and education is complex, with gender having an impact on educational experiences and outcomes. In the Global South, there are persistent gender gaps in educational outcomes, with females consistently outperforming males in terms of grades and graduation rates (Van Hek et al., 2016). To assess the gender roles in education, the participants were asked to indicate if one gender was more suitable for formal education than another. The analysis of a cross-tabulation is presented in Table 7.6 and shows that the community perceptions of the acceptable gender for educational training and how these are shaped by the different sources of knowledge systems, i.e. indigenous, or contemporary or both indigenous and contemporary.

Table 7.6: Education, gender and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The_acceptable_gender_for_educational_training * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application * Gender Crosstabulation

% within Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application

Gender			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application			
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Total
Male	The_acceptable_gender_for_educational_training	Men	85,7%		37,5%	6,8%
		Women	14,3%	3,4%		3,8%
		Men_and_women		96,6%	62,5%	89,5%
Female	The_acceptable_gender_for_educational_training	Men	79,3%		15,4%	10,1%
		Women	17,2%	3,8%		4,9%
		Men_and_women	3,4%	96,2%	84,6%	85,0%
Total	The_acceptable_gender_for_educational_training	Men	80,6%		20,6%	9,0%
		Women	16,7%	3,6%		4,5%
		Men_and_women	2,8%	96,4%	79,4%	86,5%

A total of 86.5% reported that both men and women should have access to educational training. The response is dominantly influenced by those influenced by contemporary knowledge system (79.5%), followed by the influence from a more combined knowledge system and only 0.3% influenced by a more indigenous knowledge system. Only 9% of the respondents believed formal education should be reserved for men, with 7.2% of these were influenced by indigenous knowledge system norms, and a smaller influence from combined knowledge systems (1.8%) and no respondents from the contemporary knowledge system believed formal education should be reserved for men only. In contrast, 4.5% of the respondents (mostly influenced by a contemporary knowledge system) were of the opinion, education should be reserved for women only, and of that total 3.0% were influenced by a contemporary knowledge system, and 1.5% of the total subscribed to a more indigenous knowledge system, with 0% supporting the combined knowledge system. The results shows that while the indigenous norms still recognise men primarily for education training there is a strong and growing perceptions especially among those influenced by contemporary knowledge that education should be inclusive of both genders. Figure 7.9, show the visual presentation of the educational training and the knowledge of influence within the community. The highest count is amongst those who chose men and women under the contemporary knowledge. This has shown the support for shared educational roles

under modern influence.

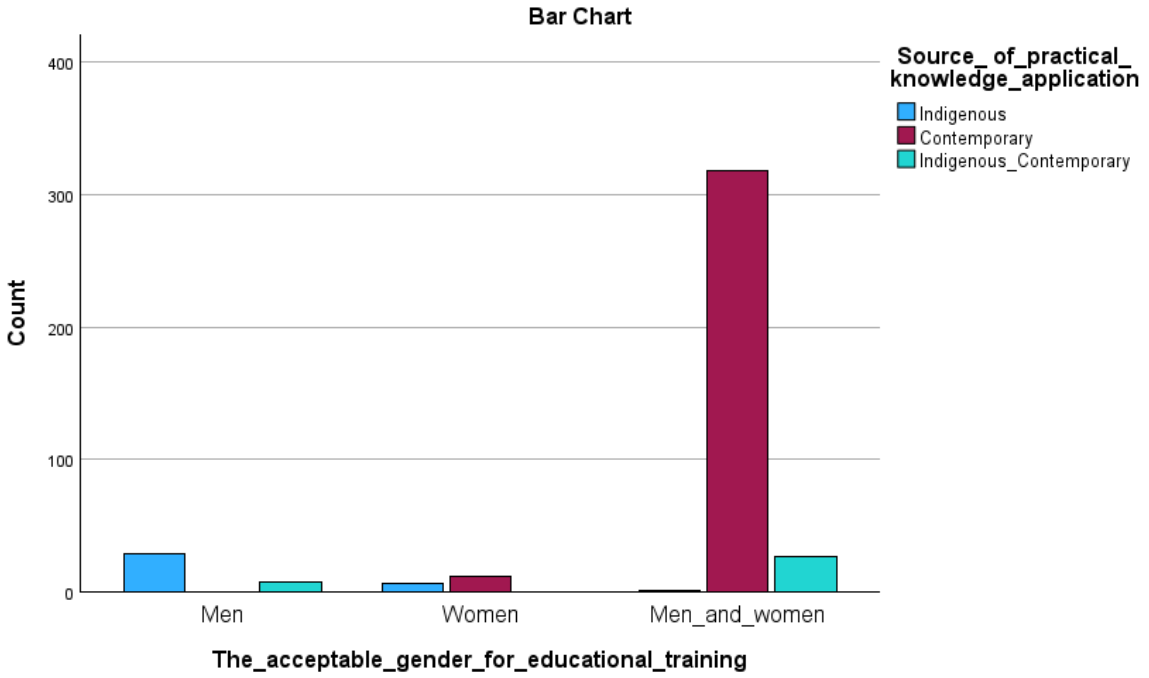

Figure 7.9: Education and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between the variables for male respondents ($\chi^2 = 93.617$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), female respondents ($\chi^2 = 196.207$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), and the overall sample ($\chi^2 = 286.581$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$). However, the results should be interpreted with considerable caution, as a large proportion of cells have expected counts below 5 (ranging from 44.4% to 55.6%), which may compromise the reliability of the test. As such, the findings should be viewed as indicative of a potential association rather than conclusive evidence.

Figure 7.10 depicts how the female and male household participants across different knowledge systems perceive the acceptable gender for educational training.

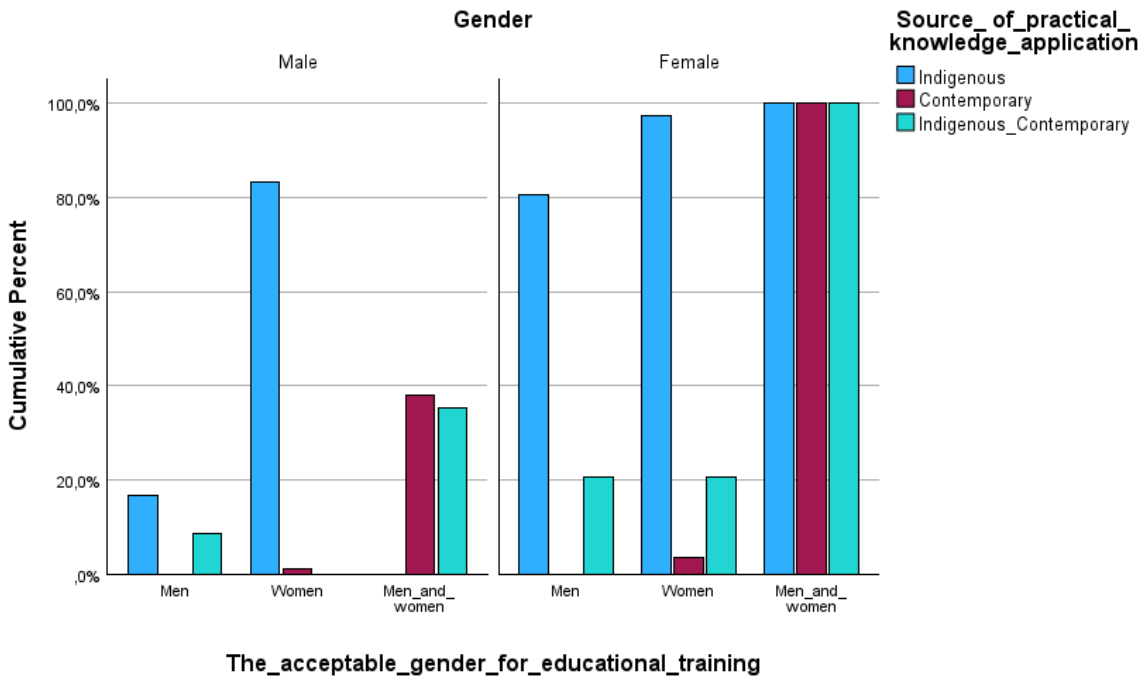

Figure 7.10: Gender, education and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Among the male respondents influenced by indigenous knowledge systems there is a stronger preference for women to receive educational training alone, compared to men. Those who are influenced by the contemporary knowledge systems preferred shared roles between men and women in terms of education. Interestingly, female respondents regardless of the knowledge system consistently support educational training for both genders. The pattern highlights that the female responses show more inclusive views on gender roles in education, while men still reflect some traditional biases that could be rooted in more indigenous thinking. The Most respondents, regardless of gender, believed both genders should be given priority in terms of attending school, and that this is influenced by modern knowledge (FGD-HMW1; FGD-TMW1). Following this is a small portion of participants' responses, that showed that only men were given priority and that this was related to indigenous knowledge systems (FGD-HMW1; FGD-TMW1). On the other side, participants' responses showed that both men and women are given priority in both indigenous and modern knowledge system contexts. Similarly, Kollmeyer et al., (2018) found that gender differences in education have been attributed to various factors, including differences in cognitive and socioemotional skills, socialisation, gender stereotypes, and interest in education. Gender and education are complex topics that require further research

to better understand the underlying causes and consequences of gender disparities in educational settings (Washington & Newman, 1991; DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013).

7.3 Labour and gender with knowledge of influence

This section examines the distribution of labour roles within the households and communities, focusing on how indigenous and contemporary knowledge system shapes perceptions of gender responsibilities. Labour in this context is not limited to economic production but extends to decision about mobility, acceptable gender for relocation or work. While indigenous knowledge systems traditionally assigned roles based on cultural norms of masculinity and femininity, they also reflect principles of shared capacity that ensures the survival and continuity of households.

7.3.1. Working away from home or relocation and knowledge of influence

This section analyses household responses regarding which gender is considered acceptable to work away from home or relocate for employment purposes, and the knowledge influences guiding these perceptions. Relocating for work may have gender-specific consequences on social integration and commuting for work-related reasons. A previous study should that when family factors are taken into consideration, in the gender gap in relocation the willingness between men and women becomes more significant (Benson, 2014). In addition, the literature also revealed that spousal qualities, such as career opportunities and community ties, play a substantial role in an employee's inclination to migrate (Ullrich et al., 2015 & Pluut et al., 2018). This thesis assesses the relocation for work by gender and how it has been influenced by indigenous and contemporary knowledge norms. The cross-tabulation in Table 7.7 show the household perceptions of working away from home or relocation for work against the knowledge of influence.

The data reveals that (58.5%) of respondents believe that both men and women should be able to relocate for work. This view is associated mostly with the contemporary knowledge system (55.5%) with none supporting this view from the group that was more strongly influenced by indigenous knowledge, while those supporting a combined knowledge system accounted for 3.0%. This finding shows that contemporary knowledge systems support more inclusive labour mobility. In contrast, 32.5% of participants still consider it only acceptable for men to relocate for work and

this is mostly influenced by those who follow a more indigenous knowledge system (26%). This reflects the influence of traditional norms where men are viewed as the primary earners and providers, while women are expected to remain home. Only 9.0% of the household's respondents supported that only women can relocate for work opportunities, and these were mostly influenced by the contemporary knowledge system (6.0%). This confirms that indigenous knowledge systems continue to reinforce male dominated labour roles while the more contemporary system promotes shared economic responsibilities and mobility for both genders.

Table 7.7: Gender, relocation and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The_acceptable_gender_to_relocate_for_work * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application * Gender Crosstabulation

% within Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application

Gender			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application			
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Total
Male	The_acceptable_gender_to_relocate_for_work	Men	97,4%		82,4%	38,3%
		Women	2,6%	11,5%		7,5%
		Men_and_women		88,5%	17,6%	54,1%
Female	The_acceptable_gender_to_relocate_for_work	Men	90,5%	3,4%	35,3%	29,6%
		Women	9,5%	9,7%	11,8%	9,7%
		Men_and_women		86,9%	52,9%	60,7%
Total	The_acceptable_gender_to_relocate_for_work	Men	92,9%	2,4%	58,8%	32,5%
		Women	7,1%	10,2%	5,9%	9,0%
		Men_and_women		87,4%	35,3%	58,5%

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between the variables for male respondents ($\chi^2 = 118.909$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), female respondents ($\chi^2 = 199.016$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), and the overall sample ($\chi^2 = 309.923$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the observed relationships are not due to chance. The test assumptions were largely satisfied for the female and overall samples, while the results for male respondents should be interpreted with slight caution, as 22.2% of cells had expected counts below 5. Overall, the findings indicate that the distribution of responses differs across categories and varies between male and female respondents. Figure 7.11 visually confirms the association between gender, relocation for work and knowledge of influence.

Among the respondents influenced by indigenous knowledge systems, men are viewed by the majority as the acceptable gender to relocate for work while women and

shared relocations roles received minimal support for this endeavour. In contrast those who are influenced by contemporary knowledge systems strongly support the relocation of both men and women reaching nearly 100% of agreement across all knowledge systems. The pattern highlights the trend that while men are still prioritised by indigenous knowledge practices, exposure to the contemporary knowledge clearly promotes the greater gender inclusivity in labour mobility.

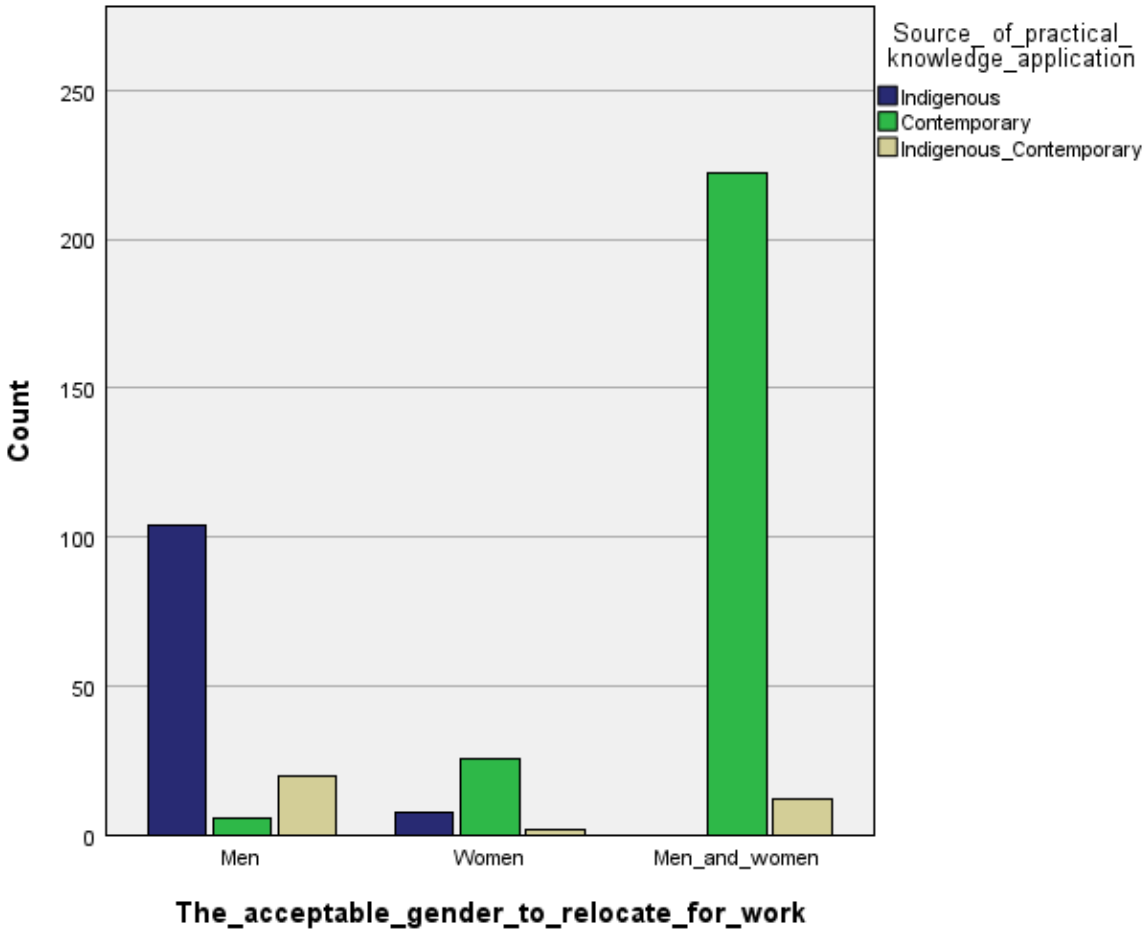

Figure 7.11: Relocation for work and knowledge of Influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Perceptions of job applicants' commitment to relocation and expected family resistance to the move are influenced by the applicants' gender and family structure variables (Allen et al., 2002). Couples' preference to relocate for their spouses' employment is explained by occupational segregation rather than overt gender bias. According to the participants in the focus group discussions, several factors are considered in terms of relocation. For example, in the more contemporary situation, both genders can relocate depending on who gets an opportunity or has the basic

requirements of the job (FGD-HMW1; FGD-TMW1; KSI-V5-TSA; KSI-V3-MAN). In addition, the focus groups respondents also revealed that it was through the apartheid era men were encouraged to relocate as the opportunities were more suited to men (hard labour) than for women. The focus groups discussions also revealed that more men were enticed to relocate than women during the apartheid era. The literature also revealed that the separation of women into geographically separated occupations has an impact on women's decisions to relocate (Baldridge et al., 2006). The existence of young children and the degree of relationships between the husband and children's communities are two additional family elements that reduce a woman's desire to move (Tharenou, 2008).

7.3.2. Household domestic chores and knowledge of application

This section explores the allocation of household domestic chores such as cooking, laundry, and cleaning, and examine how these responsibilities are influenced by indigenous and contemporary religious systems. Gender inequalities in household tasks have been studied in a variety of circumstances. According to research, women tend to face a greater burden of household labour, even as they increasingly enter paid employment (Ledent & Salembier, 2021). This thesis looked at the roles of men and women in household duties. This section presents the findings on household perceptions on who is responsible for household's tasks such as the laundry, cooking and cleaning and how this perception is influenced by knowledge systems (Table 7.8).

Table 7.8: Gender, domestic chores and knowledge of application in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The_responsible_person_for_doing_laundry_cooking_and_cleaning_in_your_house * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application Crosstabulation

% within Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application

		Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application			
		Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Total
The_responsible_person_for_doing_laundry_cooking_and_cleaning_in_your_house	Men		6,3%	2,4%	2,5%
	Women	100,0%	18,8%	89,3%	76,0%
	Men_and_women		75,0%	8,3%	21,5%

The findings shows that women remain the primary person responsible for the domestic chores with 76.0% of respondents indicating this to be the case and were notably supported by those influenced by indigenous knowledge systems (33.8%)

followed by influence from a combined indigenous and contemporary system (37.8%) and a small portion (4.5%) indicating contemporary knowledge as the reason for the allocation. This reflects the ongoing recognition that women central roles are in the household's care. Only 2.5% of respondents indicated that men alone are responsible for domestic chores, and these are mostly from those influenced by the contemporary and indigenous knowledge, and no support from those influenced by the indigenous knowledge. This shows that traditional views still position men in roles outside the routine of domestic chores or responsibilities. Interestingly, 21.5% responded that both men and women were responsible for the domestic chores, and these were mostly influenced by the contemporary knowledge systems (3.5%). This shift may reflect the growing tendency towards shared practical roles on domestic chores particularly amongst those exposed to changing norms. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between the variables ($\chi^2 = 234.939$, $df = 4$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the observed relationship is not due to chance. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as 33.3% of the cells have expected counts below 5, which may affect the reliability of the test. Figure 7.12 shows the statistical findings that confirm that the responsibility of women in domestic chores dominates across all knowledge systems. Interestingly, the shift toward shared roles is more visible under the more contemporary knowledge influence though still not yet widespread.

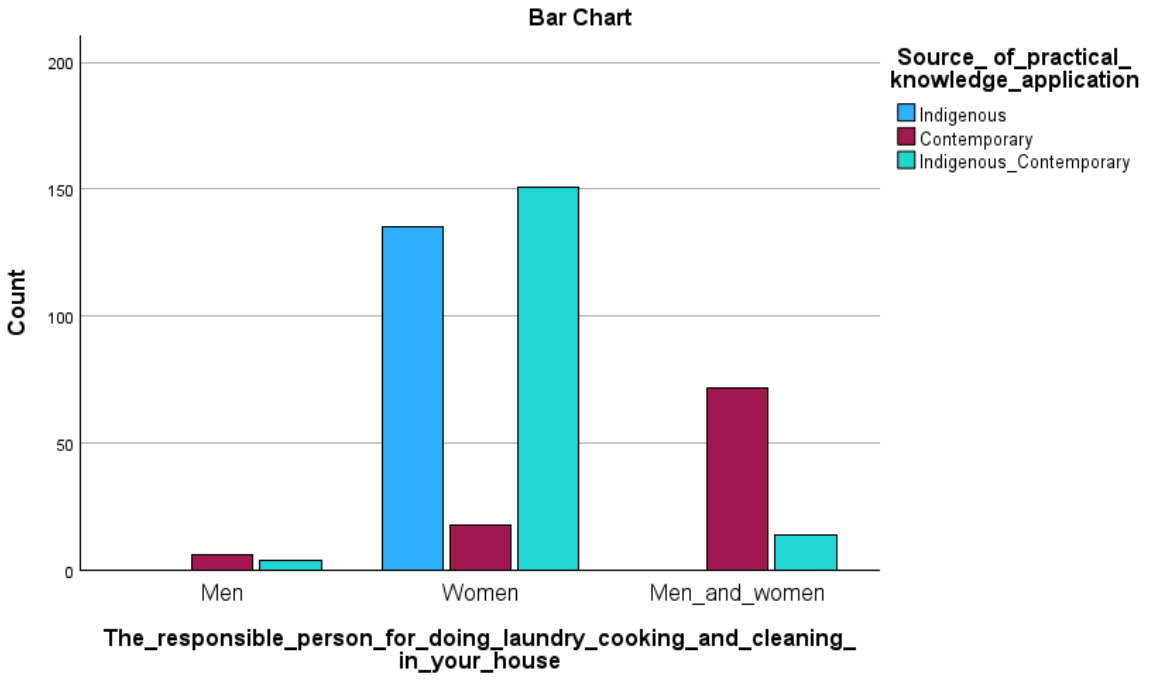

Figure 7.12: Domestic Chores and Knowledge of Influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

The findings demonstrates that domestic chore roles remain deeply rooted in traditional household arrangements where women carry domestic chores, however this is not necessarily as a burden or form of inequality. This has been respected and culturally acknowledged role within the collective functioning of the home (FGD-HMW1; FGD-TMW1). Where shared responsibilities appear, it often exists with traditional respect for these roles rather than replacing then entirely. According to the focus group discussion some of the elderly men believe that a man can do domestic chores as a sign of love for his wife, while others believe that men are not supposed to perform the domestic chores since it affects his credibility as a head or man of the house (FGD-TM1; FGD-HM1). In the indigenous system women are raised with the training of the expected responsibilities while men are trained according to their responsibilities (FGD-HMW1; FGD-TMW1). These roles have been shaped by the capacity and households shared responsibilities. In the situation that one member of the household is incapable or not available the other partner takes on full responsibilities of domestic and outbound activities to maintain the household livelihood (FGD-HMW1; FGD-TMW1).

The gender specific analysis was conducted and is reflected in Figure 7.13 and shows that both male and female respondents overwhelmingly view women as the primary person responsible for household chores particularly when influenced by indigenous knowledge systems. The male respondents showed a slightly broader view, especially those influenced by contemporary and blended knowledge systems where more of them supported the shared responsibilities between genders. Very few respondents were of the opinion the only men are responsible for household chores, and this view is uncommon in traditionally structured households.

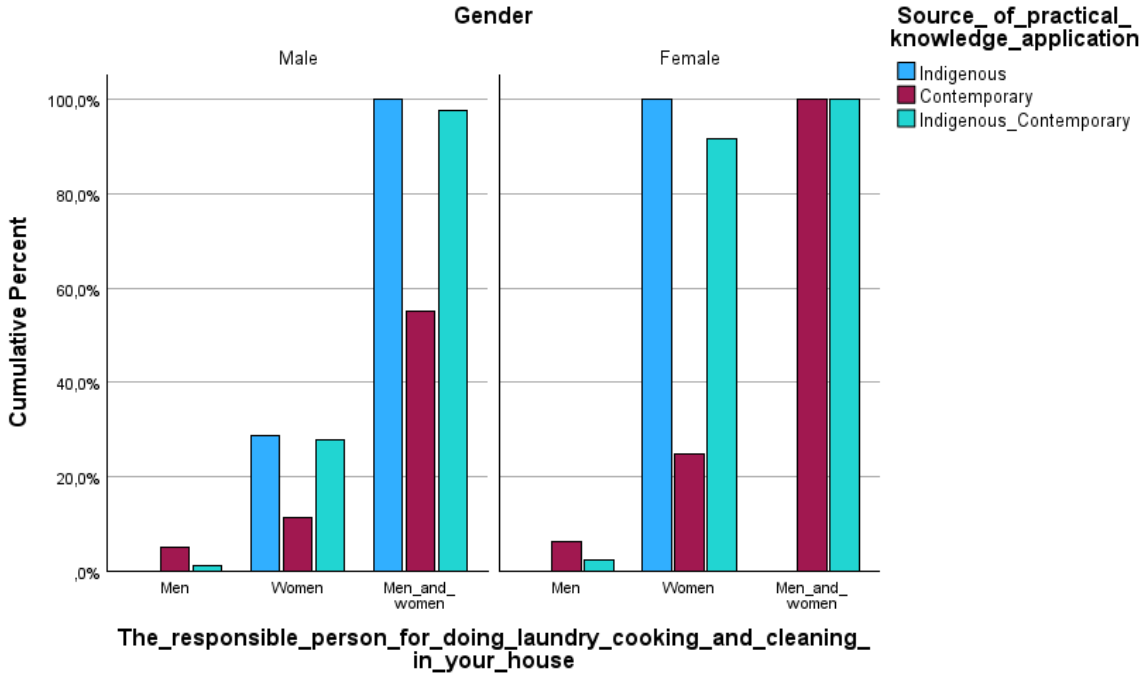

Figure 7.13: Gender, domestic chores and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between the variables for male respondents ($\chi^2 = 72.295$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$), female respondents ($\chi^2 = 170.419$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$), and the overall sample ($\chi^2 = 234.939$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the observed relationships are not due to chance. However, the results should be interpreted with caution, as 33.3% of cells across all analyses have expected counts below 5, which may affect the reliability of the test.Overall, the findings indicate that the distribution of responses differs across categories and varies between male and female respondents. In conclusion both men and women recognise domestic roles as influenced by the traditional and evolving knowledge system with

women showing stronger and more consistent views likely rooted in their lived household experiences.

There were just a few incidents reported where a man assisted with domestic tasks, hence the low percentage of responses indicating that fewer men are engaged in domestic activities FGD-TW1;FGD-HW1). This finding is consistent with that of Ledent & Salembier (2021) who found that women tend to bear a larger burden of domestic work, even as they increasingly enter paid employment inside or outside of the home. This unequal participation in household tasks can lead to work-family conflict, which affects both men and women (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). Traditional gender roles and gender ideology have a substantial impact on household labour division (Akanle, et al., 2016). However, there is evidence of progress, with some studies demonstrating an increase in men's participation in household tasks (Biachi et al., 2012). Co-housing initiatives have been suggested as a potential way to alleviate home hardship and promote gender equality in household responsibilities (Ledent & Salembier, 2021). Men's engagement in family duties remains low, emphasising the need for additional research and knowledge of the issues impacting responsibility sharing in households.

7.3.3 Subsistence farming and agricultural activities in the households and knowledge of influence

Agricultural activities and farming are closely connected with gender within rural communities. Studies on the gendered division of labour in agriculture have highlighted the contribution of women and the traditionally patriarchal nature of farming (Pfammatter, & Jongerden, 2023). Several studies have found significant differences in agricultural production decision-making processes between men and women (Bora et al., 2023; Yadeta & Abashula, 2019). The impact of gender on agriculture and farming was explored in this thesis. The findings on household agricultural and farming roles reveal significant patterns in gender expectations and the influence of indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems.

Table 7.9: Agriculture, gender and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Acceptable_gender_to_engange_in_household_agricultural_and_farming_activities * Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application * Gender Crosstabulation

% within Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application

Gender			Source_ of_practical_ knowledge_application			
			Indigenous	Contemporary	Indigenous_Contemporary	Total
Male	Acceptable_gender_to_engange_in_household_agricultural_and_farming_activities	Men	23,5%	3,3%	9,3%	9,8%
		Women	17,6%	3,3%	4,7%	6,0%
		Men_and_women	58,8%	93,3%	86,0%	84,2%
Female	Acceptable_gender_to_engange_in_household_agricultural_and_farming_activities	Men	11,1%	4,2%	0,6%	3,4%
		Women	27,8%	10,4%	7,9%	12,4%
		Men_and_women	61,1%	85,4%	91,5%	84,3%
Total	Acceptable_gender_to_engange_in_household_agricultural_and_farming_activities	Men	14,1%	3,8%	3,6%	5,5%
		Women	25,4%	7,7%	6,8%	10,3%
		Men_and_women	60,6%	88,5%	89,6%	84,3%

According to the cross-tabulation in Table 7.9, most participants (84.3%) agreed that both genders may engage in household agricultural and farming activities. Only 5.5% believed only men should be engaged in the household, and 10.3% believed this was the domain of women alone. This leans towards shared responsibility reflecting a collective household approach rather than individual gender assignments. Figure 7.14 reflects the engagement of agriculture and farming activities within specific knowledge of influence. Indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems dominate the justification for shared responsibilities accounting for responses for 56.3% for men and women roles. This indicates that rural households are not strictly adhering to traditional norms but are blending them with modern values to support inclusiveness.

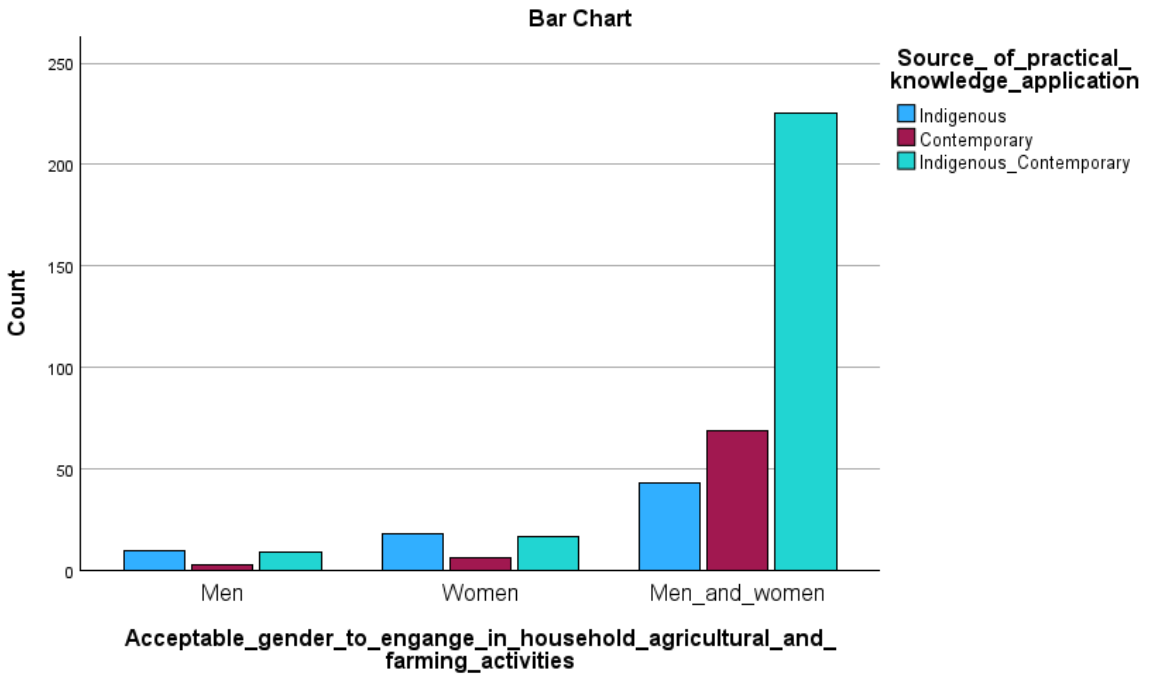

Figure 7.14: Agricultural Practice and Knowledge of Influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Figure 7.14 presents the acceptable gender to engage in agricultural activities as influenced by different sources of practical knowledge. The data shows that most of the respondents identify that both men and women should engage in household agriculture activities with strongest support from the combination of both indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems. A smaller number of participants supported the men only or women only engagement with slightly more support for women under indigenous and combination of knowledge systems of influence. Importantly this pattern doesn't necessarily reflect the shift brough by modernisation but rather a continuation of the longstanding indigenous practice where farming is family based carried out by both men and women (FGD-HMW1; FGD-TMW1). In rural communities this shared approach has historically been and remain a core part of household survival and food production (KSI-V1-V5_all villages). The strong support from blended knowledge systems may simply reflect the ongoing relevance of traditional norms even where contemporary influences are present.

Figure 7.15 present a gendered perspective on who is considered acceptable for activities in agriculture and farming in the households and the associated knowledge of influence.

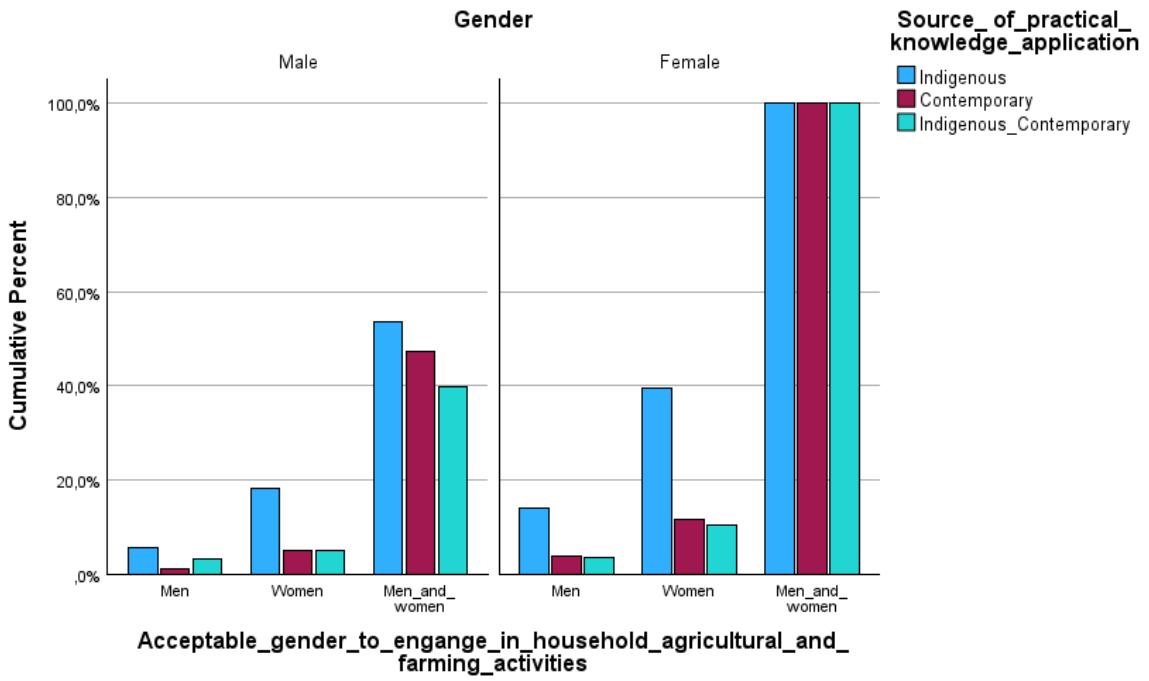

Figure 7.15: Gender, agricultural practice and knowledge of influence in sample villages in Tshaulu, Limpopo, South Africa (Source: Household Surveys, 2021-2023)

Across both genders of the respondents the dominant view is that both men and women may participate in household agricultural or farming activities. Among the female respondent this consensus (of joint men and women engagement in household agriculture) reaches 100% across all knowledge systems reflecting a strong belief in shared agricultural roles. According to the males' participants the view was slightly more varied. While the majority still support joint agricultural activities mostly associated with the indigenous knowledge systems (50%), followed by blended influences of both knowledge systems. A notable portion of the male respondents influenced by indigenous knowledge systems also indicated that only women (18%) as acceptable for agricultural activities highlighting a cultural recognition even in traditionally the structured context. These findings show that shared agricultural work is widely accepted in both gender and knowledge systems. In Zimbabwe, indigenous knowledge related to food preservation is characterised of the collective responsibilities with gender roles influencing the management and the dissemination of indigenous knowledge (Mashoko, 2022). The data reinforces the understanding that agricultural labour is a collective household activity not strictly guided by gender. A Pearson Chi-square test indicates a statistically significant association between the variables for male respondents ($\chi^2 = 10.664$, df = 4, p = 0.031), female respondents

($\chi^2 = 31.115$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$), and the overall sample ($\chi^2 = 36.589$, df = 4, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that the observed relationships are not due to chance. However, the strength and reliability of this association differ across respondent groups. The results for male respondents should be interpreted with considerable caution, as 44.4% of cells have expected counts below 5, indicating instability in the distribution. In contrast, the female and overall results show stronger and more reliable patterns, with only minor violations of test assumptions. These findings highlight that the observed association is more consistently reflected in the responses of female participants than male participants. This indicates that while variations in the distribution of responses exist across categories, the pattern is more stable and clearly defined among female respondents, whereas male responses appear more dispersed and less consistent.

Most of the participants show that men and women have been engaged in agriculture in both indigenous and contemporary society. In some incident the minority of men or women engage in agricultural activities alone. Agriculture has been practiced by both men and women in both indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems; this is essentially identical in both. Several studies have found significant disparities in agricultural production decision-making processes between men and women (Bora et al., 2023). Despite their importance in chores such as land preparation, harvesting, and storing, women's contributions to agricultural output are sometimes overlooked (Likoko, 2022). Farming distress is also gendered, with an emphasis on male farmers, while women farmers, farm workers, and Indigenous farmers remain excluded in farming and mental health research (Bryant, 2020). Gender dynamics in labour contributions among maize farming households have revealed that men dominate most tasks, except for planting/sowing, when women conduct most of the work (Hauwa et al., 2022). Tackling gender inequities and impediments in agriculture is critical for increasing agricultural output, revenue, and gender equality.

7.4 Conclusion

While indigenous knowledge systems are an asset for rural households it faces challenges such as erosion due to modernisation and lack of documentation. Efforts to preserve and integrate this knowledge with modern practices can enhance its utility and ensure sustainability. By recognising the value of indigenous knowledge systems. development practitioners and policy makers can foster more resilience and

sustainable rural communities. Indigenous and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation highlights the gender roles that are primarily affected by indigenous knowledge and are supplemented by gender roles that are impacted by modern understanding. It is crucial that we understand how indigenous knowledge systems shape communities and serves as a solid foundation for preserving collective knowledge. The results show an intriguing interaction between conventional wisdom and contemporary viewpoints that shapes these gender-based activities. Each community's own social structure emphasises a combination of traditional knowledge systems that has been passed down through the ages and forward-thinking ideas from the present. This thesis encourages the acknowledgment of the crucial role that indigenous knowledge systems play in communities when tackling attempts to reduce poverty. Communities shouldn't lose sight of their traditions, which have historically been quite effective in addressing socioeconomic inequalities and providing a major socioeconomic uplift. It would be extremely advantageous to promote the use of indigenous experience since it offers real-world solutions that are not largely dependent on theoretical constructions. It would also promote women's empowerment as equal involvement in sustainable development. Therefore, prioritizing indigenous wisdom with modern ways enables us to see poverty from a wider perspective, ultimately fostering inclusive progress within societies where formerly underserved populations may participate sustainably.

CHAPTER 8: COMPREHENSIVE AND GENDERED APPROACH TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES

This thesis assessed how indigenous and contemporary gender roles in the Tshaulu rural villages impacted on households' poverty reduction. Addressing this issue through this lens permits a comprehensive analysis of how households allocate roles in poverty alleviation in the community. It also provides insight into social interactions that can either facilitate or obstruct efforts to reduce poverty. The SDG Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063 and South African National Development Plan 2030 provide a global, continental and national road map for poverty reduction. Understanding the indigenous and contemporary gender roles in this endeavour is essential to reach sustainable poverty alleviation within rural communities such as Tshaulu. Research identifies many barriers such as patriarchal and socio-economic systems that could limit women's access to resources and in this way cause wage gaps and under-representation in low-paying jobs (Niumai, 2025). Niumai (2025) also notes that marginalised women face increase marginalisation within systems that are within patriarchal systems; a result of historical legacies; and economic deprivation.

The chapter provides a critical analysis of research findings in Chapters 5 to 7 against the theories explained in Chapter 2 namely: critical theory; intersectionality theory; social role theory; and modernisation theory, to support a more comprehensive approach to poverty alleviation strategies that reflects both indigenous knowledge systems and more contemporary knowledge systems Acknowledging systemic inequality (Niumai, 2025), notes that structural and historical forces shape social organisation, but indigenous gender relations emphasise reciprocity and shared responsibilities. In addition, this chapter critically interrogates how local practices in Tshaulu align with national development imperatives and provides recommendations on how to include more comprehensive actions for poverty relief within these development plans to reduce poverty levels.

8.1 Overview of the theories that underpin the analytical context of the research

8.1.1 Reviewing the critical theory as a pathway to arrive at the research findings

As explained in Chapter 2, Critical Theory enabled the researcher to critique society by combining normative views through empirical analysis of societal conflicts and contradictions (Celikates & Flynn, 2023). As such the theory serves as a robust analytical tool to exam household socio-economic profiles; access to basic services; and related gender roles that impact on livelihoods in the case study. The theory helps the researcher to challenge the more traditional assumptions and provides a lens through which the developer can evaluate power dynamics, social structures and the inequality that shapes the hurdles of poverty reduction. By focusing on the underlying community social, economic and institutional structures the critical theory may enable an understanding of how these factors influence livelihoods and impact individuals in households. Utilising critical theory as a method of analysis is a widely recognised practice in social studies, as it emphasises the need for considering power relations and the institutional practices that influence individual capabilities to access resources and achieved desired outcomes (Nef et al., 2023).

This study utilised critical theory to examine the results and efforts to alleviate household poverty, socio-economic challenges, the roles of both traditional and modern gender dynamics play in impact and challenges of poverty alleviation. This thesis employed critical theory as a reflexive, interdisciplinary, materialist and emancipatory framework to analyse the indigenous and contemporary roles of gender in rural households' poverty alleviation. As such the researcher used critical theory to examine how both indigenous and contemporary gender roles can aid poverty alleviation that had been shaped by historical, economic, and institutional factors within a typical household in Tshaulu. The advantage of this application is that revealed power structures, ideologies, and constraints that could shape findings. This research focuses on understanding systemic relations in household poverty efforts, showing how gender roles reflect indigenous and contemporary social practices and economic values in poverty alleviation and how gender roles have adapted to ensure the well-being of the household by reflecting on historical continuity and change. Organising critical theory with intersectionality theory, social role theory, and

modernisation theory, the study provides a multidimensional analysis of gendered poverty, enhancing understanding of how gender, culture, and social organisation interact in poverty alleviation in a rural village in South Africa, using the case study of Tshaulu Village.

8.1.2 Reviewing social role theory and the modernisation theory as pathways to arrive at the research findings

Chapter 2 alluded to the Social Role Theory, and this assisted the researcher in highlighting the differences and similarities in social behaviours between gender, by explaining how men and women in Tshaulu Village are allocated into their various societal roles. This was important as gender-related role models can significantly impact on economic (in)dependence, and this could influence poverty (Batthyany, 2008). Looking at the complexities of poverty through a more gendered lens can help explain why women are often more vulnerable to poverty risks than men (Melo, 2019; Chhachhi & Truong, 2009). To understand the societal dynamics involving gender in the case study, the Social Role Theory, provided the researcher with a critical framework for distinguishing the origin of gender roles and their persistence in the community. As proposed initially by Eagly (2013), this theory helped clarify the behavioural dissimilarities across gender of the respondents and their social roles in the Tshaulu community, and in this way helped the researcher understand how gender roles can impact on poverty alleviation and thus allowed the researcher the opportunity to offer insights and recommendations for poverty alleviation strategies in rural villages in South Africa. In contrast, the theory (Senden et al., 2019) also allowed the researcher the means to establish the more contextual elements such as cultural values in the case study, that could affect any assumptions formed from the observed role behaviours against more stereotype behaviours. Aligned to Wood et al, (1997), the applicability of Social Role Theory to contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation in Tshaulu, revealed that traditional gender roles are not recurrent obstacles to poverty reduction strategies.

As explained in Chapter 2, the Modernisation Theory, focusses on the shift from more traditional to more modern cultures as aligned to a concept of progressive development that sees modernisation as triggered by technological and value changes that guide the transformation of societies (Shah, 2024). In the theory, modernisation

Is considered to be a process that is triggered by changes in technology or values, leading to the transformation of traditional societies into modern ones. However, Modernisation Theory has faced increasing scrutiny because it did not anticipate the way in which underdeveloped nations would react to the incentives for progress towards a more modern society (Chaudhary & Kushi, 2015). Scholars have raised doubts about our understanding of the reorientation of societal practices and the ability of modernisation to lead to resurgences towards modernity (Efremenko & Meleshkina, 2014). Some argue that the normative model of modernity is a key issue in contemporary debates about modernisation (Kyianytsia, 2021). Despite the shortcomings, the modernisation theory provided the researcher with the insight to understand that gender roles are in various stages of transition within the same rural communities such as Tshaulu, and the influence of a multitude of knowledge systems should be acknowledged and as far as possible be accommodated in poverty alleviation strategies.

Integrating the two theories helped the researcher to justify the assertion that traditional gender norms and practices can coexist within a journey towards socio-economic transformation in poverty alleviation. Together these theories helped the researcher to explain how gender roles are constructed, maintained, and adapted over time due to of despite developmental changes. Social Role Theory helped to understand the assignment and negotiation of gender roles, based on the social expectations and shared responsibilities in the Tshaulu households where gender roles focus on cooperation rather than individual gain. By combining the two theories the researcher was able to clarify how gender roles evolve within a context of traditional and modern norms and influences. As the two theories allow for a different scale in investigating influence, namely macro-level (Modernisation Theory) and micro-level (Social Role Theory) internalisation of modernity within communities and households could be accessed. In this way the researcher was able to link household behaviour with socio-economic transformation and be able to show that gender roles can be adaptive in an evolving cultural context. The integration in the application of the theories allowed the researcher to conclude that ‘development’ in rural indigenous settings is a process of continuity and transformation and not a replacement.

8.1.3 Reviewing the intersectionality theory as a pathway to arrive at research findings

In Chapter 2, the Intersectionality Theory was explained as a way the researcher could obtain a more nuanced view of poverty, by considering the intersectionality of factors such as (but not limited too) gender, gender roles and socio-economic circumstances in the case study. The theory guided the researcher in the way systems related to indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems could have contributed to levels of inequality and possible vulnerability to poverty in Tshaulu. The Intersectionality Theory guided the researcher in describing how various social identities, such as gender and poverty, intersect to create distinct experiences of advantage, disadvantage, and discrimination in the Tshaulu households. This was vital to analyse the combined effects of gender and poverty on marginalised households in the case study. Incorporating intersectionality theory into the study's framework helped to address the nature of poverty within indigenous and contemporary contexts. It also contributed to understanding how poverty is experienced by different genders within indigenous and contemporary settings, and how these systems could have influenced the prevailing social and cultural dynamics in Tshaulu. In rural settings, gender and poverty are also shaped by age, education, and kinship, beyond mere gender identity and the theory enabled the researcher to acknowledge the varied realities within households instead of viewing them as homogenous. In addition, by adopting the theory, there could be closer alignment with the study's perspective of social reality as contextually constructed, illustrating how identities of the respondents in the case study had evolved through history and culture. Intersectionality helped the researcher underpin the investigation of diverse realities encountered in the empirical findings in Tshaulu and then make targeted recommendations in term of strategy that could better serve the achievement of global and national poverty relief strategies such those included in the United Nations Agenda 2030; the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and the South African National Development Plan 2030.

8.2 Analytical Framework of the Influence of Indigenous and Contemporary Gender Roles on Household Livelihood Systems and Poverty Dynamics

This study adopts a consolidated analytical framework to demonstrate how theoretical perspectives informed the interpretation of empirical findings and guided the analysis of household livelihood systems and poverty dynamics in Tshaulu. While Chapter 1 presented the overall conceptual orientation of the study, this framework refines and extends that perspective by explicitly linking theoretical foundations with empirically derived concepts and observed livelihood practices. The analytical framework is presented in Figure 8.1.

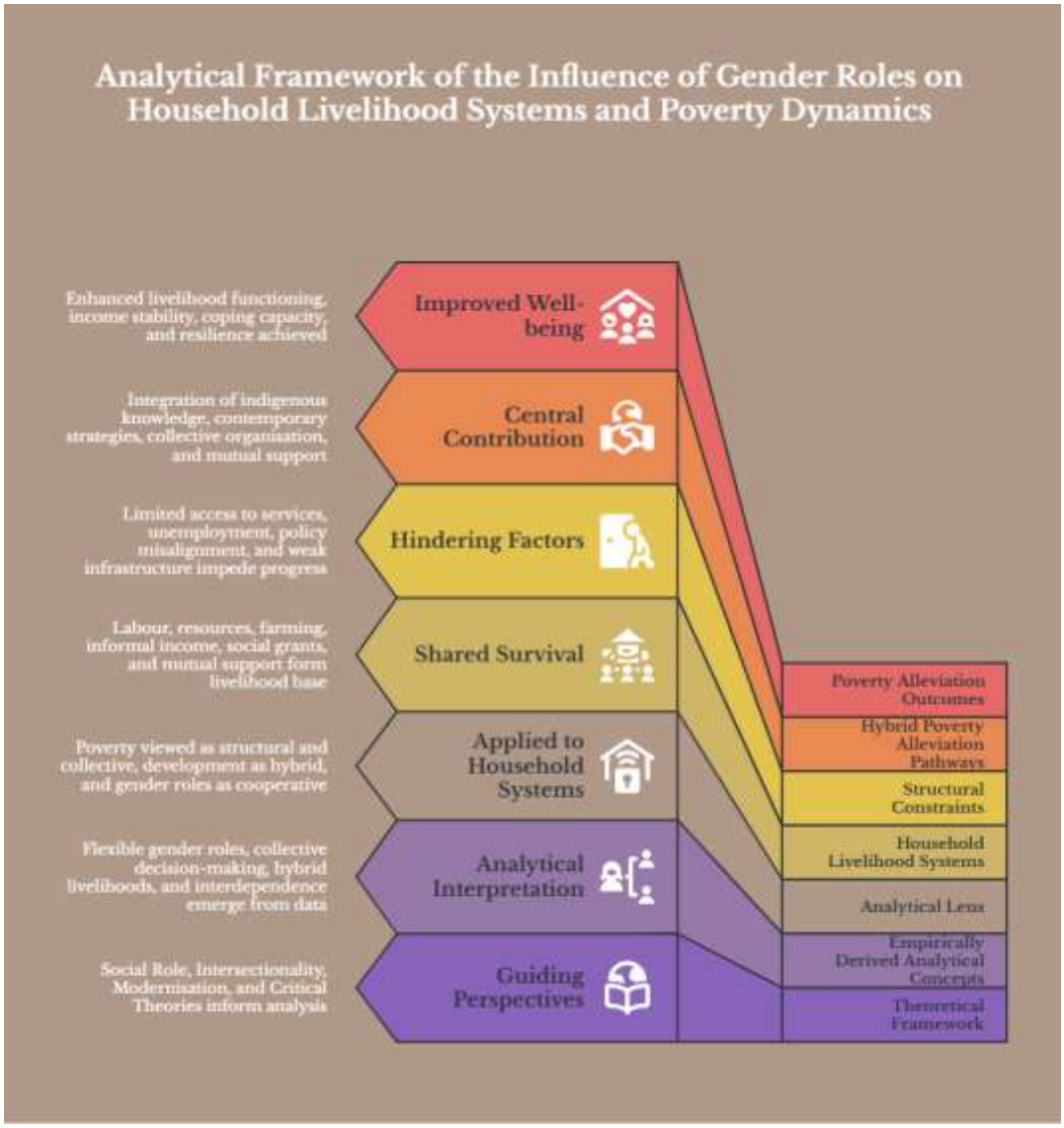

Figure 8.1: Analytical Framework of the Influence of Indigenous and Contemporary Gender Roles on Household Livelihood Systems and Poverty Dynamics (Source: Researcher, 2026)

The framework integrates four key theoretical perspectives Critical Theory, Social Role Theory, Intersectionality Theory, and Modernisation Theory as complementary analytical lenses. These theoretical perspectives guided the interpretation of the empirical findings presented in Chapters 5 to 7, enabling the identification of context-specific analytical concepts, including flexible and complementary gender roles, collective household decision-making, and the integration of indigenous and contemporary livelihood practices. These empirically derived concepts were used to analyse household livelihood systems in Tshaulu, which are characterised by shared labour, resource pooling, subsistence farming, informal income strategies, and collective coping mechanisms. The framework further highlights the influence of structural constraints such as limited access to basic services, restricted economic opportunities, and policy misalignment with household realities in shaping how households organise and sustain their livelihoods. Importantly, the framework demonstrates that the influence of gender roles on household livelihoods and poverty dynamics does not follow a linear or purely modernisation-driven trajectory. Rather, it emerges through hybrid pathways in which indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary development approaches interact within collectively organised household systems. These hybrid pathways reflect adaptive and context-specific strategies that enable households to navigate structural challenges and sustain their livelihoods. Figure 8.1 presents a visual representation of this analytical framework, explicitly illustrating the relationships between theoretical perspectives, analytical concepts, household livelihood systems, structural constraints, and the resulting livelihood and poverty dynamics. In doing so, the framework clarifies how key concepts were deployed to guide the analytical approach of the study. The analytical framework clarifies how gender roles influence household livelihood systems and, in turn, shape poverty dynamics. Flexible and complementary gender roles support shared labour and livelihood strategies, contributing to income diversification and household resilience. However, structural constraints such as limited services and employment opportunities can intensify gendered burdens, particularly for women, reinforcing vulnerability. The framework therefore makes explicit the link between gender roles, livelihood practices, and poverty outcomes, showing how poverty dynamics emerge from the interaction between gendered social structures, livelihood systems, and broader contextual conditions.

8.3 Linking empirical data to development theory and global to local development agendas

This section builds directly on the empirical findings presented in Chapters 5 to 7, allowing for an integrated interpretation of the results through the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 highlighted that global and local development agendas provided a guide towards inclusive growth, gender equality, and sustainable livelihoods in South Africa. However, their effectiveness in indigenous and rural areas depend on extent to which they align with local indigenous knowledge systems and gender practices. Integrating local indigenous knowledge systems into these agendas should provide for a more successful impact on community poverty practices. This chapter analyse the empirical findings related to the first three objectives and implies them to identify the challenges and impact of gender alleviation strategies (Objective 4). This is taken through a critical analysis against the four theories identified in Chapter 2. The section further identifies contextually grounded recommendations that may inform global and local development agendas (Objective 5). By bringing together the empirical findings, theoretical perspectives and development framework, which is to establish how different knowledge systems, norms and traditions can be infused into the development of more effective poverty alleviation strategies in South Africa. The integration of empirical findings with theoretical perspectives demonstrates how the results presented in Chapters 5 to 7 contribute to a coherent understanding of poverty and livelihood dynamics in the study area.

8.2.1 A critical assessment of the socio-economic profile of Tshaulu linked to development theories and agendas

This section examines and interprets the socio-economic context in which both indigenous and contemporary gender roles have been enacted in efforts to alleviate household poverty in Tshaulu. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for connecting the realities of rural households with the integrated theoretical and policy frameworks detailed in the previous sections. Building on the empirical findings presented in Chapter 5, the focus is not to restate descriptive characteristics, but to analyse how these findings relate to broader development frameworks and theoretical perspectives. The socio-economic profile of Tshaulu, (as presented in Chapter 5) reflects the multi-dimensional nature of the poverties within any rural context,

incorporating elements of both indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems, as further explained through the theoretical perspectives outlined in Chapter 2. Key dimensions such as income levels; occupations; age; marital status; education; household size and dependence levels interact to shape household livelihoods strategies. From an analytical perspective, these factors are not isolated variables but are embedded within gendered social structures that influence access to resources, decision-making processes, and livelihood opportunities. Furthermore, these dimensions interact with the gendered roles within households, influence how the households would organise and adapt their livelihood strategies when under condition of poverty.

8.2.1.1 Overview of the socio-economic profile of Tshaulu

Before providing a critical analysis of the socio-economic profile of Tshaulu against the comprehensive theoretical and development agenda context, a brief recap on the major socio-economic profile (Chapter 5) of the case study is provided. The respondents in the case study of Tshaulu Village were mostly aged between 30 to 49 years and thus reflect what is generally considered to be the most economically active age group in any community or household. Most of the households surveyed had between 4 to 6 dependents with a few having 7 to 9 dependents. In some household's grandparents filled the role of the main caregiver of children due to absence of their parents. The elders (aged 50 to 59 yeas) represented 30% of the respondents and it was noted that in the household they key members would play a critical role in providing advice on family decisions; ensuring the continuity of traditional practices and the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems.

Household composition, marital dynamics and gendered responsibilities

Most respondents were married and reported varied levels of family cooperation and shared responsibilities in a household. Respondents made it clear that household roles are adaptable and, in many instances, shared and this meant that either gender was able to represent the family; make economic decisions; deal with daily tasks all depending on circumstances of availability. Although it was reported by the respondents that in Tshaulu, men typically led the households as the head of the family, and he would normally liaise with local chief on land and resources. Thus, acting as a steward rather than exercising unilateral authority within the household. In

Tshaulu, both genders play key roles in resource management, food security, and communal support. Both genders generally coordinate household income, ensure food security, and the transfer indigenous knowledge. Widows or unmarried or never married individuals with children similarly bear full responsibilities in their household and the conclusion after consultation with respondents that household operations rely rather on the skills and capability of the individual rather their gender. This highlight that while leadership roles exist, they are embedded within cooperative household structures rather than rigid hierarchical systems.

Education levels and shifting knowledge systems

The formerly restricted rural educational access that dominated the apartheid years is slowing eroding in favour of the much-improved post-apartheid focus on rural education. Education levels were moderate in the community, with most having completed some level at a secondary school, fewer had their final secondary school certificates, and an even smaller number had obtained post school certificates, degrees, or diplomas. The literacy level in Tshaulu Villages seems to be rising as is reflected in the many older adults that had limited formal education and who thus rely on their indigenous knowledge and community learning, compared to the younger respondents who had higher levels of formal schooling. These evolving patterns depict the interplay between modernisation and more indigenous practises in households as a merger of formal education with customary practices to sustain livelihoods increases in the community. Despite better education levels, unemployment remains high amongst both genders, with many involved in informal or subsistence activities. High unemployment, particularly amongst men, women, and youth, is part of the broader economy of Tshaulu, where subsistence activities, caregiving, and informal shared duties are central. This pattern reflects a transitional interaction between indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems, consistent with modernisation theory, but also highlights the persistence of locally embedded practices.

Income sources and rural livelihood strategies

Most participants relied on social grants, which highlight a continued dependence on social protection mechanisms within rural livelihoods systems. with some receiving salary or stipends if they were permanently or temporary employed and even fewer

generated their earnings from small businesses. Social grants, farming, and small businesses are common income sources, reflecting adaptive rural survival strategies. It was noted by the respondents that dependence on social grants and pensions was not a sign of economic inactivity but rather an adaptive income strategy within the context of limited formal employment that was available in the community. This finding reflects structural constraints in employment opportunities, rather than a lack of economic participation by households.

Misalignment between household realties and policy poverty lines

The gap between formal education and job security underscores possible structural exclusions that often undervalue or undermine indigenous livelihood systems. Tshaulu households exhibit a socially cohesive, multigenerational structure where responsibilities are shared, and survival depends on cooperation. The findings demonstrate that indigenous communities are not abandoning traditions but integrating modern elements within current structures. As formal education broadens, these changes coexist with indigenous knowledge, community-based economies, and local decision-making frameworks. Overall, the socio-economic profile of Tshaulu provides a basis for understanding how poverty is experienced and managed within a rural context, and how development frameworks must engage more directly with indigenous knowledge systems and household-level dynamics to be effective.

8.2.1.2 Policy frameworks: Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063 and NDP 2030

The intersection of the households' social-economic profile with the socio-economic policy frameworks that are driven by the global to local development agendas such as the United Nations Agenda 2030; the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and the South African National Development Plan 2030 (NDP 2030), reveals a critical tension between the theoretical ideals and empirical realities. The NDP 2030 is influenced by the SDGs contained in the United Nations Agenda 2030, that aim for poverty reduction and inclusive growth through (but not limited to) the educational investment or improvement: equity; and employment creation.

According to the literature (presented in Chapter 3 and 5) *household income* as reflected by a monetary amount per person remains one of the important indicators of poverty. The UN Agenda 2030 aims at eradication of extreme poverty (measured as

people living on less than 1.25$ a day - based on US$ to ZAR in December 2025, this amounts to R21.70 x 31 = R672 per month. In contrast the NDP 2030 set a target of reducing the proportion of individuals living below the lower bound poverty line of R419 per person per month. Despite the ambition of the NDP 2030 to target the eradication of extreme poverty, the empirical evidence from Tshaulu found significant misalignment between planned objectives and the lived realities of households, as the minimum threshold of R419 per person per month falls short of the South African national minimum wage as well as the UN Agenda 2030 (SDG1). In Tshaulu, households with unemployed members have a monthly income which is between the R1001 to R3000, most of these households have between 4-6 dependents. If calculated at the NDP 2030 equivalent of the lower range of R419 x 7, the minimum monthly income of such a household should be R2933 per household. As the main source of income for households with unemployed members would be a variety of social grants that range from old-age, disability, child and temporary relief grants. This income level, while above the minimum extreme poverty line, but is far below what would constitute sustainable or dignified household livelihoods. Even among the self-employed and retired, income into the household is between R1001-R6000 with many in this category living below the minimum extreme poverty line. Only 16 respondents (Table 5.12) who were mostly in formal employment reported their earnings more than R12 000 per month, and these household were thus living above the upper limit of extreme poverty as declared by the UN Agenda 2030. These findings highlight that employment status remains one of the most decisive factors in income disparities and the persistence of low income amongst the unemployed and self-employed undermines the efficiency of the NDP 2030. Therefore, unless the UN Agenda 2030 and NDP 2030 are recalibrated to address the structural roots of unemployment, underemployment and household's indigenous livelihoods efforts to incorporate a more real income threshold the policies risk becoming aspirational rather than actionable instrument of social transformation. This highlights a misalignment between policy-defined poverty thresholds and the lived realities of rural households, suggesting that current frameworks may underestimate household vulnerability.

8.2.1.3 Application of theoretical frameworks to the socio-economic profile of Tshualu

Modernisation theory linked to the socio-economic profile of Tshaulu

The Modernisation Theory assumes that socio-economic transformation, industrialisation and formal employment may lead to the community development. The NDP 2030 was influenced by this logic and identifies job creation as the most effective weapon in the fight against poverty, yet the findings on households' income challenges this assumption. Despite the formal employment correlating with higher income of R12 000 and above most of the households remain in low-income range even when they engage temporarily on self-employed, semi-formal workers and retirees. This highlight that while the South Africa has achieved partial modernisation the benefits are unequally distributed, and economic growth has not translated into the inclusive household's welfare. This challenges the assumption within modernisation theory that economic growth and employment expansion automatically lead to poverty reduction. The NDP 2030 reliance on expanding employment opportunities has not adequately addressed the job quality, income security and how the informal sector can be integrated into these opportunities. The NDP 2030 vision of transforming the work force from a lower skill, lower wage to a higher skills and higher productivity economy remains aspirational due to lack of recognition indigenous knowledge practices but rather aiming to replace the traditional with the contemporary. The empirical findings expose the central tension within the NDP 2030 modernisation logic that job creation alone cannot reduce inequality if employment opportunities available to communities such as Tshaulu are low paying, insecure and demographically misaligned. The conclusion of the researcher is that modernisation in South Africa requires addressing the structural unemployment by infusing both indigenous and contemporary roles and practices into households' poverty alleviation and reducing demographic dependency and not merely increasing employment numbers.

The empirical evidence from the Tshaulu case study, challenges the effectiveness of these development agendas when applied in the community context that is still characterised by indigenous practices and lack of acknowledgement of the underpinnings of indigenous norms and practises that inform gender roles within these households.

Application of the social theory to household structures

The Social Role Theory indicates that social roles are tied to specific responsibilities allocated to the elderly; head of the households; and spouses in determining access to the land, resources and opportunities for household development. The theory thus helps to explain how income is aligned with these role expectations, however the empirical evidence points to the structural constraints of unemployment, inequality and inadequate recognition of indigenous efforts and limited social protection that limit social role mobility to effectively relieve the vulnerability of poverty within the households. In Tshaulu, the unemployed often occupy the dependant or marginalised roles within households and are confined to the lowest income due systemic barriers including the spatial exclusion, apartheid legacy of gender based polices in employment, limited social capital. Although these factors are addressed in the NDP 2030 through a call for an inclusive and integrated economy that addresses the legacies of apartheid and labour markets challenges. The empirical findings in Tshaulu confirm that persistent role differentiation, and the unemployed and underemployed remain excluded from the productive participation in the economy despite the policy commitment of decent work for all. Although the self-employed respondents occupied precarious roles as entrepreneurs, they remained vulnerable in terms of regular income, reflecting the NDP 2030, concern that small enterprises are under supported and thus unable to transition into better sustainable growth generating ventures. The retirees' low-income levels between R1001 to R3000 illustrate the inadequacy of social protection in preventing old age poverty despite the NDP 2030 target ensuring minimum social benefits. This indicates that social roles in Tshaulu are shaped not only by cultural expectations but also by structural economic constraints.

Intersectionality theory and collective livelihoods

The Intersectionality Theory indicates that socio-economic outcomes emerge from intersection of multiple social categories of gender, age and household structure. In South Africa this intersection is particularly relevant given the triple challenges of unemployment, inequality and poverty acknowledged the NDP 2030. While the Intersectionality Theory helped the researcher to understand how multiple demographic and socio-economic factors shaped household outcomes, its application in the Tshaulu Villages highlighted the collective nature of rural livelihoods as opposed

to an individual or gender-based distinction. In the case study, the individual in the households reflected actions of collaboration as a cooperative economic unit where members contribute to and benefited from shared resources and income streams. The designation of the household's head (often a male) is largely a representational role fulfilling administrative, social and traditional functions rather than an individual in private ownership or exclusive control over finance, decisions and income of the household. In Tshaulu, decision-making and resource sharing are livelihoods strategies that are jointly negotiated reflecting a collective approach to households' survival strategies towards sustaining their livelihoods. Households' well-being in rural depends on the collective livelihoods system and not on individual empowerment, and this characteristic is aligned with the NDP 2030 values that call for the need for strong and inclusive rural economies that value household's interdependence. Further, the NDP 2030, emphasise that rural livelihoods are sustained through diverse income sources including the farming, informal trading, social grants and remittance, and in application the application of the proposed strategies must serve to strengthen these multiple streams rather than treating individuals as isolated economic actors. Applying the Intersectionality Theory involves understanding the how factors such as household size, gender roles and age intersect with the employment and how these influence collective income capacity of the household. The cooperative economic unit in Tshaulu does not rely on gender differences, but rather on recognising the structural constraints such as underrepresentation of women and men in households' poverty efforts misaligning the traditional authority for within patriarchal systems in poverty. These may shape how the household's emergence from poverty or resilience against poverty take place. The empirical evidence presented from the case study demonstrated that household livelihood sustainability is rooted in the collective agency and not in individual accumulation or benefits within the households.

The socio-economic profile of Tshaulu provides a basis to critique external development models that misrepresent indigenous social systems as patriarchal or underdeveloped. The empirical evidence presented in the case study reflect an indigenous rationality that is built upon cooperation, representation and collective well-being rather than competition or individualism. The inherent intergenerational cooperation; the shared leadership; and the flexible role adaptations in the Tshaulu household provide a basis argument in terms of the limitation that the modernisation

discourse that indicates that progress can only link with more western or contemporary social patterns. This demonstrates that poverty in Tshaulu is not determined by a single factor such as gender, but by the intersection of social and economic conditions.

Critical Theory and challenging development assumptions

From a Critical Theory perspective, the findings highlight that the modernisation discourse linking progress to contemporary social patterns underscore the impact of historical legacies of inequality due to apartheid spatial planning and more recent neoliberal rural development models that have contributed to the undervaluation of indigenous practice and patterns as a measure of progress. The co-existence of traditional and contemporary elements of Tshaulu demonstrates that a hybrid form of modernity that is grounded in cultural continuity and local knowledge could provide major inroads to reducing poverty and vulnerability to poverty. It is the assertion of the researcher that frameworks such as the UN Agenda 2030; Africa Agenda 2063 and the NDP 2030 can only succeed in rural contexts such as Tshaulu if they fundamentally recognised and embedded indigenous governance and associated household systems as appropriate pathways to progress and development in the rural communities of South Africa. The empirical evidence from Tshaulu affirms that poverty alleviation efforts are more effective when built upon the traditional realities of shared labour, mutual dependency and collective survival. The indigenous household structures in the case study represent a context specific model of sustainable development that could be enhanced through appropriate changes to the NDP 2030. Discussions with respondents and stakeholders convince the researcher that pathways to sustainable development could be better enhanced through a system that allows gender equity and transformation to arise from strengthening the cooperative principle that have long sustained rural African household such as those in Tshaulu and not from imposing external gender or economic frameworks that are fundamentally routed in the contemporary knowledge system of modernity. This demonstrates that indigenous systems are not barriers to development but form a critical foundation for context-specific and sustainable poverty alleviation strategies.

8.2.1.4 Reframing rural poverty alleviation through indigenous systems using the case study of Tshaulu

The socio-economic profile of the respondents in the case study demonstrate that social structures, age distribution, and gender roles are outcomes of specific historical, institutional, and cultural systems, that unfortunately reflect and reproduce broader relations of power and dependency. However, in contrast to the deficit-based perspectives often associated with development discourse, the socio-economic profile of the rural households in Tshaulu reveals resilience and the ability to adapt even when social balance has been disrupted. These adaptive disturbed by offering models of cooperation that challenge individualistic conception of progress. Understanding the case study's socio-economic profile through an integrated theoretical lens of the four selected theories transforms what might appear as descriptive statistics into socially meaningful indicators of agency and structure.

The Theory of Intersectionality, in particular helps to explain how various identity socio-economic profile such as age, marital status, education, and household composition intersect to shape opportunities and participation rather than reflecting deficiency. Evidence from Tshaulu highlight that vulnerability is not determined by gender alone, but through the interaction between economic condition, indigenous norms and generational dynamics. The Modernisation Theory can partially account for these patterns, particularly in relation to process of transition through education and increased exposure to contemporary practices. However, this transition is uneven and may temporarily increase vulnerability as household's roles evolve. The younger and more educated respondents in Tshaulu act as agents of gradual change by engaging with modern technology, educational, and wage labour, whilst traditional norms continue to offer moral support and structural unity. From a modernisation perspective, the respondents who are younger and better educated could be seen the potential catalysts for social change as they could challenge and reshape traditional norms of authority within their households and communities. However, the socio-economic profile of Tshaulu challenges linear assumptions of modernisation theory, which suggest that traditional systems will inevitably be replaced by a contemporary knowledge system. Instead, the empirical evidence in Tshaulu suggested a coexistence of indigenous and contemporary gender systems, where indigenous practices adapt rather than disappear under modern influences.

In conclusion, the socio-economic profile of Tshaulu demonstrates how indigenous systems of shared responsibility are inherently aligned with the objectives of sustainable development when viewed through culturally contextualised framework. The empirical results reveal that these intersections foster mutual dependence and collective functioning, and in this way the evidence presented for Tshaulu challenges the individualistic approach of the UN Agenda 2030, specifically SDG 5 (gender equality) and mainstream gender policies, that focus on an individual gender empowerment.

Despite several shortcomings identified in the analysis in this section the empirical evidence from the case study does indicate some successes in terms of the global to local development agendas (UN Agenda 2030; AU Agenda 2063; and NDP Plans 2030). Modest progress is reflected in areas such as social protection SDG 1 (no poverty); SDG 4 (quality education); SDG 8 (decent work) and SDG 10 (reduced inequality), particularly through household's strategies and shared responsibilities. . This is further supported by the the increasing number of younger respondents have been able to obtain secondary, tertiary and higher education qualifications, when compared to their older generations. At the national level, the findings reflect the elements of the NDP 2030, goals of inclusive rural development, job creation and social cohesion, although this occurs within interdependent household's structures of Tshaulu. The AU Agenda 2063 through Aspiration 1 (Inclusive and sustainable growth); Aspiration 6 (People driven development rooted in African values) resonate strongly in Tshaulu where indigenous knowledge practices such as cooperation and community well-being guide the livelihood strategies in the household.

8.2.2 A critical assessment of poverty alleviation strategies of Tshaulu linked to development theories and agendas

The persistence of poverty in in rural South Africa highlight the structural nature of deprivation and inequality that the NDP 2030 seeks to address. While the NDP 2030 seeks to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality through inclusive growth, employment creation and human capacity development, evidence from Tshaulu reveals that household's wellbeing continues to depend on collective and adaptive livelihoods strategies rather than individual income gains. This section analyses the theoretical underpinnings of gender roles and poverty alleviation strategies in Tshaulu,

and how these reflect broader rural South Afracn Realities. In doing so, it highlights a critical gap between the theory, policy intent and households experience.

8.2.2.1 Overview of national and global poverty alleviation frameworks in relation to Tshaulu

Poverty alleviation in South Africa has evolved through a combination of social protection, rural development initiatives, employment creation programmes and policies with community-based livelihood interventions. These strategies are guided by United Nations Agenda 2030; the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and the South African National Development Plan 2030 (NDP 2030) including the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (Chapter 4). Despite commitment to reducing persistent income inequality in these development agendas, the lack of recognition of indigenous strategies and structural poverty, indicate that while these strategies have provided significant relief in some areas, their transformative impact has been uneven, particularly in rural areas such as Tshaulu, where households depend on collective livelihoods for sustaining their lives (cross reference to 8.2.1 and Chapters 4, 5 and 6). While social protection (including the social assistance programme, old age pension grants, child support grant and disability grant) has been one of South African most effective poverty elevation mechanisms since 1994, it provided a state controlled social safety net that reaches over 18 million beneficiaries. These grants play a critical role in sustaining rural households in Tshaulu and allows households the opportunity to save some funds that can serve as the foundational income of other livelihoods activities that the household can depend on. In Tshaulu as in other rural areas in South Africa, social grants are collectively managed within households and are used to purchase food; support education; invest in small scale agriculture; or subsidise informal trading while at the same time supporting the individual with need to be maintained. While grants are targeted at individuals, they serve an important household level economic function and contribute to community level circulation of cash and livelihoods maintenance. These align with the NDP 2030 vision of social development that ensures that no South African lives below a basic standard of dignity. Despite a positive financial contribution, social grants have limitations that lies in the dependency productivity gap. Thus, while the social grants help to protect households and individuals in Tshaulu from extreme poverty, the grants do not readily translate into a form of sustainable livelihoods, nor does it lead to the reduction in structural poverty. This highlight that while policy

frameworks recognise poverty as multidimensional, their implementation often fails to adequately capture collective and context-specific livelihood systems in rural communities such as Tshaulu.

Rural development and agricultural strategies

Agriculture and specifically subsistence farming that occurs in the case study, remains a cornerstone of rural poverty alleviation strategies in South Africa. Several programmes in South Africa aim (or have aimed) at land reform; small holder development; and food security initiatives. Examples provided in Chapter 3 include the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme, Land Redistribution and Agricultural Development (LRAD), and the Integrated Food Security Strategy that helps to strengthen rural livelihoods by improving access to land, credit and production support. As in the case of many development agendas in the Global South, while policy frameworks are well-intentioned, however there are challenges in terms of their implementation, such as limited technical support; inadequate access to market and weak institutional coordination and this significantly impacts on progress. Many rural households like Tshaulu, engage in subsistence and mixed livelihoods that reflect a combination of agricultural and non-farm activities to survive. This reality is reflected in the NDP 2030 (South Africa, 2011, Chapter 6) that envisioned vibrant and equitable sustainable rural communities, not plagued by poverty. The findings of the case study (Chapter 4) reflect that in households that depend on small scale agriculture or informal work earn between R1001 and R6000 and depending on the number of dependents in these households, they could be vulnerable to poverty. Given that many respondents depend on agriculture, the researcher recommends that agricultural and rural development policies should shift towards a more integrated livelihood system that combines improved agricultural support in combination with infrastructural investments, better market related linkages and a boost in community-based enterprises to support a stronger and broader household economy. This reflects a gap between policy design and implementation, particularly in addressing the realities of small-scale and subsistence agricultural systems.

Fragmentation and gaps in policy implementation

The review of poverty elevation strategies as presented in Chapter 4, revealed that South Africa has developed a broad and multidimensional policy frameworks to reduce poverty. However, Orlandi & Rabie (2023) explained that the effectiveness of the implementation of the policy framework (specifically the NDP 2030) has been limited due to fragmentation; short term orientation; and the lack of a contextual element that truly reflects rural realities. One of the key observations that the researcher made while interacting with key stakeholders in Tshaulu was that there is indeed a fragmentation in terms of policy implementation within the different levels of government and this is further influenced by weak institutional capacities and most importantly there is insufficient integration of livelihood systems into the framework. While the NDP 2030 and associated frameworks all articulate progressive goals, their implementation tend to treat poverty as an individual income deficiency rather than structural and collective livelihood challenge as is the case in Tshaulu. The overview of South African poverty alleviation strategies highlights the depth of states commitment despite the persistence of systemic barriers. The rural households in Tshaulu, continue to rely on the collective and diversified livelihoods that include the blending social grants, informal work; subsistence farming; and remittances to keep themselves from poverty. After careful consideration within the context of the empirical evidence gathers from Tshaulu, the researcher recommends that for the NDP 2030 to truly achieve its transformative vision, poverty reduction efforts must evolve towards an integrated household centre model that will strengthen community agency, enhance productive capabilities and embeds rural economies within broader national development trajectories, and in this way recognise the indigenous knowledges practises that have evolved over to time to reduce poverty. Despite South African comprehensive framework for the poverty alleviation, including social protection, employment creation and rural development and local economic empowerment programmes, the persistence of multi-dimensional poverty and inequality indicates that the implementation of the framework has not fully realised the transformative goals envisioned in the NDP 2030. This fragmentation limits the effectiveness of integrated poverty alleviation strategies, particularly in rural contexts that rely on interconnected livelihood systems.

8.2.2.2 Evaluating the effectiveness of poverty alleviation strategies in Tshualu

The following section critically evaluates the effectiveness of this strategy and racing structural poverty, with reference to household livelihoods which continue to depend on collective and diversified income rather than formal wage employment.

Multidimensionality of rural poverty

Poverty alleviation effectiveness cannot be evaluated solely through income metrics. In rural South Africa, poverty manifests through interlinked dimensions such as limited access to productive assets; poor infrastructure; underdeveloped market; and unequal resource distribution (rural and urban areas); and unequal educational opportunities; and employment. Unfortunately, programme evaluations still rely on narrow monetary threshold and in this was overlooks the lived realities of households that sustain themselves through multiple non-wage livelihoods sources. The empirical findings revealed that while certain interventions such social grants and temporary employment in the public works programme, have improved household consumption and short-term welfare, they have not significantly altered the structured determinants of poverty such as employment informality; asset exclusion; geographic and indigenous knowledge marginalisation.

Social protection: strengths and limitations

Social protection (grants) remains South Africans most visible and successful poverty reduction tool. Household receiving multiple grants are better positioned to meet their basic daily needs with a portion remaining that allows them to invest portion of their grant income into small scale farming; education; and other agricultural activities. However, it was noted in Tshaulu that the effectiveness of this social protection is primarily consumptive rather than transformative. The grants provide stability and social cohesion but do not significantly expand the productive capacity and the empirical findings aligned to StatsSA (2022) confirmed that over 60% of grant receiving households in South remained below the upper bound of World Poverty Line. The NDP 2030 recognises this limitation and calls for linkages between social protection and sustainable livelihoods, yet the implementation hereof has been fragmented. In practise, grant recipients are seldom integrated into enterprise development, agricultural extension and cooperative support programmes. This

highlights the limitation of relying on income-based indicators to capture the full extent of rural poverty. The result is reflected in Tshaulu where there is a protective but not progressive welfare system, one that sustains livelihoods but does not fundamentally alter the poverty dynamics. The NDP 2030 (NDP, 2011) ambition to reduce unemployment by 6% by 2030 remains unmet, primarily because the programmes address symptoms rather than the structural causes such as the spatial mismatch between jobs and people, skills deficit and low rural industrialisation. Their effectiveness therefore lies in alleviating short-term poverty rather than enabling structural transformation. This indicates that social grants, while effective as a protective mechanism, are not sufficient to address the structural drivers of poverty.

Household-level hybrid livelihood strategies in Tshaulu

The household of Tshaulu use multiple strategies to address poverty and they do this by combining indigenous knowledge systems of shared household's responsibilities with the more contemporary approaches that are supported by development agendas. This covers subsistence farming, livestock and poultry domestication, collective labour, donations and borrowing, small businesses, commercial farming, social grants, and employment. Their poverty alleviation strategies, amount to local households blending traditional knowledge systems with modern interventions to sustain their livelihoods. Subsistence farming and animal domestication was central to household food security in Tshaulu. Families in the community sustain themselves by growing maize, and vegetables, raise livestock and poultry for own consumption and for an income and for traditional obligations. These practices enhance the typical household in Tshaulu in terms of self-sufficiency and decreased reliance on external markets. Collective labour, donations, and borrowing reflect a long-standing indigenous mutual assistance system in the community. Households often support each other in farming activities and in construction and they do this without the exchange of money but rather, following entrenched indigenous practices of resource (asset) sharing. In Tshaulu the practise of donations and borrowing within their own community ensure that no household in Tshaulu faces a crisis alone. These practices maintain the communities' cohesion and reinforce the philosophy of shared survival. Though less common now, these practices assist in maintaining social cohesion during hardship. In terms of the more contemporary strategies of poverty alleviation in Tshaulu, there

are small businesses and farming practises that generate income, these are often family-run with all members contributing. Social grants aid livelihoods and are supplemented by limited temporary or permanent jobs to reduce financial vulnerability. Collectively the indigenous and contemporary knowledge system in Tshaulu presents a hybrid model of poverty alleviation that blends traditional self-reliance with modern social protection, and the community have been very successful in balancing both systems for their survival and stability. This reflects a hybrid livelihood system in which indigenous and contemporary strategies coexist to sustain household resilience.

Gendered dimensions of livelihoods and poverty alleviation

From a more gendered perspective, the women In Tshaulu lead income diversification through savings cooperatives (stokvels and family burial society) and food processing, while both genders partake in farming and wage labour. Economic strategies in Tshaulu are household-based and gender-coordinated, reflecting indigenous shared obligations especially in times of absence of any gender, and represent a hybrid form of economy adaptation in terms of gender, where traditional values of cooperation coexist with the modern oriented practises. The strategies employed by households in Tshaulu to sustain their livelihood's and reduce vulnerability reflect a complex interaction between indigenous knowledge system and shared community intervention and adaptive modern innovations on household's livelihoods. This suggests that gender roles in Tshaulu are flexible and adaptive, rather than rigidly defined.

Indigenous social support systems

In addition to the numerous economic strategies to relieve poverty households in Tshaulu exchange labours, food and resources through informal arrangements based on neighbourhood and traditional obligations. The collective labour and rotational labour systems in exchange of basic needs not always monetary ensures that households support each other. These practice shows that poverty alleviation in indigenous context is fundamentally social and relational not merely economic. This indicates that poverty alleviation in this context is fundamentally social and relational, rather than purely economic.

Education as a transformative and adaptive strategy

Education also emerged as both a transformative force and an adaptive mechanism within household poverty alleviation in Tshaulu, where an increasing number of both males and females have achieved matric, higher certificates and degrees which influence their participation in temporary and permanent employment, local leadership and community-based education initiatives. This shift illustrates the intersection of modernisation and gender dynamics, where education expands role flexibility while maintaining indigenous accountability. However, it was noted that in Tshaulu education does not necessarily lead to discarding traditional gender roles instead, it enhances individual capacity to navigate both modern economic spaces and indigenous social systems. This reflects the coexistence of modernisation processes and indigenous systems within household livelihood strategies. This demonstrates that poverty in Tshaulu is experienced as a multidimensional and relational condition rather than solely an income-based issue.

8.2.2.3 Synthesising theory, policy and rural realities of Tshaulu

This section moves beyond description to explain how theory and policy interact with the lived realities of rural households. Understanding the effectiveness of South African poverty elevation strategies requires integration of theories and policy within the realities of rural livelihoods. The NDP 2030 and related development frameworks recognised poverty as multi-dimensional, yet they often operationalise it through an individualistic and employment centred approaches. The rural household (as established in Tshaulu) function as a collective livelihood system where all members contribute towards sustaining livelihoods, the welfare of the family, income, informal work, agriculture and social support.

Linking social theories to poverty alleviation frameworks

The effectiveness and relevance of South African poverty elevation strategies can only be fully understood when examined through a combined lenses of social theories and development policies framework. The integration of Critical Theory, Social Role Theory, Modernisation Theory, and Intersectionality Theory with the development frameworks of poverty alleviation provide a critical framework on the foundation of analysing the poverty alleviation efforts.

Social Role Theory and collective rural household functioning

Social role theory as discussed in previous sections interpret economic behaviour through the lens of role-based expectations and access to opportunities. In the rural areas of South Africa, however, the theory must be reframed to recognise collective household functioning rather than individualised roles differentiation. Rural households operate as cooperative livelihoods systems where each member contributes to sustaining the family economy through income generation, subsistence farming, care work and social support network. The designation of the household head in this context is the person that represents the administrative and representational responsibility for the household and not ownership or gendered authority of the household. Poverty alleviation strategies such as social grants, employment, and rural enterprise support is implicitly acknowledged in this collective functioning. Social grants, for instance, are directed to an individual, however, is used to sustain the household as a unit, illustrating how roles within the household are interdependent rather than competitive. However, development agendas often apply individualistic targeting models, treating the beneficiaries as separate economy characters rather than members of a shared livelihoods system. This reflects a theoretical and operational gap between policy design and social reality. To align with Social Role Theory as applied to rural collectivism, poverty intervention must acknowledge the household as a core economic actor, ensuring that assistant programmes and rural development initiatives reinforce household solidarity rather than downgrade participation. This highlights a disconnect between policy design and the collective reality of rural household functioning.

Modernisation Theory and its limits in rural South Africa

Modernisation Theory on the other hand assumes that societies progress from more traditional to modern stages through process such as industrialisation and urbanisation that leads to formal employment. South Africans NDP 2030 draws heavily from this logic that links poverty reduction to job creation and formal sector expansion. The empirical evidence from the Tshaulu case study, demonstrates that such as option does not hold uniformity. In rural South Africa, many households remain on a lower income range despite being economically active through self-employment, informal trade and seasonal employment (Zizzamia et al, 2017). In Tshaulu the persistence of

a low income among the self-employed and retiree respondents revealed that integration into modern economic system has not yet translated into stable or sufficient livelihoods. This exposes a structural limitation of modernisation thinking within the NDP 2030 by assuming that increasing formal jobs will automatically improve the household welfare. The critical reflection of modernisation within the South Africa development framework indicates the need for a more hybrid model that includes on the one hand the values, traditional and informal livelihood roles alongside formal employment and education that is advocated by more contemporary development agendas. The NDP 2030 modernisation narrative should thus be evolved to incorporate livelihood pluralism, that will recognise that rural households can sustain themselves through a blend of modern, informal and communal economic activities. This challenges the assumption that formal employment alone can resolve rural poverty.

Intersectionality Theory and shared responsibilities

The poverty elevation in indigenous context is fundamentally social and relational not merely economic, and the Intersectionality Theory helps to show how networks operate across gender, age, and social roles ensuring inclusion through diverse contributions. In Tshaulu, where subsistence farming dominates, livestock management and collective labour roles are not determined by gender but by availability, capacity and family circumstances. Each member contributes to household welfare in ways that are interdependent and complemented. Intersectionality Theory provides insight into how age, education, household and structure influence participation in different strategies. For instance, in Tshaulu the elders provide guidance on subsistence farming and the management of livestock, while the youth engage in more physical labour, business and migration and other activities. Both women and men both participate in farming, trading and financial management of the households highlighting how diverse identities can shape shared responsibilities. This demonstrates that poverty and participation are shaped by intersecting social and economic conditions rather than a single factor such as gender.

Critical Theory and structural inequality

Critical theory in gender poverty analysis highlights poverty because of systemic inequality, social exclusion, and epistemic marginalisation, not just economic lack. It

shows how historical; economic and policy structure interact to reproduce poverty across rural households. These structures influence how resources are distributed, how roles are assigned within families and how opportunities for participation in development process are either enabled or constrained. Within the context, Critical Theory exposes how modernisation neglected and undervalued indigenous knowledge systems. Such approaches prioritise external driven models of progress overlooking the cultural and indigenous wisdom that rural households rely on for survival and resilience. The exclusion of indigenous knowledge from formal poverty alleviation frameworks limits the effectiveness of poverty alleviation intervention as it marginalises the local practices that have historically sustained the community's wellbeing. By situating the poverty within the broader context of household's livelihoods, community relations and cultural organisation Critical Theory enables a multidimensional and context sensitive understanding of household poverty. It recognises that sustainable development cannot be achieved through imported models alone but must integrate indigenous practices, relational gender roles and local socio-cultural values as key drivers of inclusive transformation. Poverty alleviation in the study of rural communities is not externally imposed activity but a locally rooted socially rooted process.

8.2.3 A critical assessment of income utilisation of the households in Tshaulu linked development theories and agendas

Understanding how households utilise income is central to evaluating poverty and livelihood sustainability within the selected rural areas of the study context. Income utilisation in Tshaulu reveals not only the economic priorities of the household but also the social logic that underpins their livelihood systems, reflecting the interplay of needs, responsibilities and shared survival strategies. This section presented the findings on the critical analysis of household income utilisation through the lenses of four theories explained in Chapter 2 in relation to the development policy framework. It concludes with a critical reflection using a critical theory on how household income distribution pattern affirms or challenge policy assumption about growth welfare in equity.

8.2.3.1 Income allocation, redistribution and circulation in Tshaulu households

The study findings in Tshaulu, show that income is rarely considered to be an individual asset, rather, it is a collective resource redistributed within the household to maintain social and cultural cohesion and sustain everyday living. The structure of Tshaulu rural household, is characterised as multi-generational and interdependent, and the income received by a member of the household through any type of employment or grant or remittances becomes part of the shared household utilisation to maintain the well-being of all members of the household.

As explained in Chapter 5, the primary source of income into the households in Tshaulu are from social grants ranging from child support grants, old age pensions and the temporary relief grants for the youth. The less common forms of income are derived from formal and informal employment and income from own businesses. The income pattern observed in this study showed that rural household in the study area experienced persistent stratification by employment status, with the unemployed and retired concentrated in the lowest income bands between R1001 and R3000. The self-employed within the R1001 and R6000 range and the formerly employed in the R12,000 and above brackets.

Income utilisation patterns show that economic behaviour in the Tshaulu indigenous households' is driven by balance, redistribution, and relational well-being. The empirical evidence shows that expenditure on food and electricity constitute the largest portion of household expenditure, signifying the household prioritisation of daily sustenance and access to basic services. Expenditure on transport reflects both practical needs and challenges as many households must travel long distances to access employment, healthcare and schools. Shelter and infrastructural maintenance although intermittent indicate aspiration from improved living standards and dignity with the home. Mutual aid and risk pooling is a practise in Tshaulu as reflected in their participation in burial societies and stokvels and this reflects the communal and moral economy of life in Tshaulu ensuring that households are supported against emergencies and that social solidarity is maintained. Income expenditure on education is limited due to the free public schools.

8.2.3.2 Income utilisation in Tshaulu within national and global within the development policy frameworks

The NDP 2030 recognises that income alone does not determine well-being, the plan calls for household level resilience, improved human capabilities and social protection system that enables sustainable consumption and investment. The implementation of the NDP 2030 has however focused more on job creation and income expansion than supporting household to utilise income productively. The result is that many rural households remain 'consumption dependent' with limited scope to convert income into a longer-term asset. From observations and interactions with the respondents, the researcher recommends that the NDP 2030 poverty elevation pillar should explicitly promote income utilisation strategies using community-based savings cooperatives, household enterprise, grants and rural infrastructures In rural communities of the study area and other countries in the Global South where income is shared and recycled within their families, success should be measured in terms of household livelihoods sustainability rather than per capita income.

In terms of the UN Agenda 2063, the observation and reported income spending patterns aligned directly with SDG 1 (No poverty) and SDG 2 (zero hunger) via food security, SDG 3 (Heath) through health related costs, SDG 8 in terms of electricity, SDG 4 (quality education) that focusses more on post schooling qualifications as the state provides free basic education. These align with the NDP 2030 objective of inclusive rural growth as well as the AU Agenda 2063 (Aspirations 1 and 6) that advocate for shared prosperity and the recognition of indigenous knowledge system as a vehicle for sustainable development.

In analysing the global to local development agendas related to income and income utilisation within the context of the empirical evidence presented for Tshaulu, the researcher asserts that true inclusivity of development requires recognising collective income systems as valid forms of social innovation. Indigenous practises exemplify the very objective of national and global development frameworks of economic resilience, gender inclusion and sustainable livelihoods and the added advantage is that they do so through contextually grounded, rational, and a just manner, yet the policy frameworks underemphasise this characteristic of traditional rural community's utilisation.

The important lessons learnt in Tshaulu are that income utilisation in rural households demonstrate that poverty is not merely about low earnings but about the limited capacity to translate income into sustainable livelihoods. To achieve the NDP 2030 vision of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality, related policies must, evolve from promoting income generation to enabling income transformation, helping households, convents earnings into assets, capabilities, and resilience. The findings of this study provide important insights into the realities of rural households in Tshaulu in relation to national development priorities outlined in the NDP 2030. While there is evidence of progress toward inclusive participation, particularly through shared decision-making practices, persistent patterns such as male-dominated property ownership indicate that challenges related to gender inequality remain. These findings highlight that although the goals of poverty reduction, gender equality, and rural development are reflected at a policy level, their implementation at the household level remains uneven. Indigenous knowledge systems continue to play a central role in shaping these outcomes, highlighting the importance of integrating local practices into development strategies.

8.2.3.3 Interpreting income utilisation in Tshaulu explained through development theories

Each of the theoretical frameworks offer a distinct yet complementary understanding of household income and expenditure behaviour in a typical traditional rural community.

Social Role Theory: income use as collective responsibility and relational practice

Social Role Theory perspective shows that the utilisation of income mirrors socially defined but contextually flexible roles within the household. Decisions about expenditure are not based on fixed hierarchies but on functional capacity and availability. Whoever is best positioned, whether a father, a mother, a grandparent, assumes responsibility for households' well-being in the absent of the traditional logical order of household's head. These reflect the rural complementarity rather than gender distinction where all household members contribute towards common goals such as food provision, education and household maintenance.

Social Role Theory helped the researcher explain how income use reflects the social responsibilities attached to household practises in the rural settings. The findings that

income in Tshaulu is used for collective welfare rather than individual gain reinforces the view that economic behaviour in the households of the case study are socially embedded and shaped by relational roles, not individualistic utility maximisation.

Social role theory posited that incoming opportunity are shaped by social roles individuals occupied in a communities' rural context. However, these roles are collective and interdependent, not individualistic. The respondents who earned the income through self-employment, pensions and other sources each contributes to the household overall welfare. The household head, typically a man by convention, represent the family administratively, not as a private owner of income. Therefore, household income reflects role complementarity, not role competition. The theory helps explain why the formally employed who occupy economically privileged roles tend to earn more. Yet once income enters the household it becomes a shared resources redistributed across dependence and non-earners.

The collective use of income aligns with the NDP 2030 call for social cohesion and inclusive development but also exposes a theoretical limitation: Social Role Theory does not fully account for how economic roles are embedded in shared livelihood systems. To interpret household income accurately in rural communities, the theory should be expanded beyond the individual level to recognise the household as a primary social economic actor, consistent with the communal orientation of rural livelihoods.

Modernisation theory: Growth assumptions and reality

The Modernisation Theory can provide explanations for the underlying motivation of South African growth-oriented development models; however, it fails to capture the complex social redistribution of income within a household and the limited translation of economic growth into the collective well-being of the household. Although the NDP 2030 has identified job creation as the principal mechanism for the reduction of, the empirical evidence from Tshaulu shows that formal employment does not guarantee an income or livelihood security, especially in households in Tshaulu that have extended family obligations and high dependency ratios that dilute the monthly income per person. Modernisation Theory's assumption that income automatically translate into improved welfare does not hold consistently in rural communities where income

quality and stability determine whether household can sustain upward mobility. The households that rely on temporary relief, or informal earnings may experience short term relief without long term improvement. This challenges the modernisation paradigm embedded in many poverty elevation strategies, which often measure success through income growth rather than income stability and utilisation.

Based on the empirical evidence provided in Tshaulu, the researcher thus recommends that development policy must focus on not only on income generation but also on how income is used, reinforcing the need for inclusive context sensitive livelihoods planning. Modernisation Theory can still provide insight into how indigenous household integrate traditional and modern income practices, such as farming, livestock domestication, shared labour arrangements are vital while social grant, waged labour and small enterprises complement the system.

Critical Theory: revealing power, ideology and alternative realities

Critical Theory as an analytical lens on income utilisation maintains the ideological dimension that shape household's livelihoods. Within this framework, households are resilient and resourceful despite their financial decision occurring within a constrained economic environment that is characterised by unemployment; limited infrastructure; and uneven service delivery.

Critical Theory helped to expose the more neoliberal discourse that labels rural grant recipients as dependent, without recognising that social grants and informal mechanisms (stokvels and burial societies) operate as vital systems of social protection and mutual care. In Tshaulu these indigenous institutions redistribute income and thus reduce poverty vulnerability achieving goals that are aligned to formal contemporary social welfare system, but which is totally grounded in the local culture. Spending on food and electricity meets the immediate physical needs, educational and health expenditure reflect a long-term investment, while infrastructure maintenance and communal savings express aspiration for stability and dignity.

Critical Theory helped the researcher uncover some contradictions between external development paradigms and local realities in Tshaulu. While the NDP 2030 and AU Agenda 2063 promote inclusive growth in their essence, the implementation overlooks indigenous systems that already embody collective development logic that is

incorporated into these two development agendas. The Critical Theory interpretation of income utilisation in Tshaulu, indicates that development frameworks should not seek to replace indigenous economic systems with western individualism but rather to integrate them as complementary strategies to drive equitable and sustainable rural transformation. The income utilisation pattern in the study area, therefore, represent resilience and communal innovations and not dependence.

From the Critical Theory perspective, the researcher advocates that poverty alleviation, should be reconceptualised as a process of restoring moral economies and social autonomy, not merely increasing income flows. The indigenous income practices in Tshaulu, when viewed critically, demonstrate that alternative modernities where obligations sharing and mutual aid should be considered as legitimate modes of economic rationality. This indicates that poverty alleviation must be context-specific and grounded in both local knowledge and broader structural conditions.

Intersectionality Theory: gender, identity and unequal recognition of income practises

Intersectionality Theory was applied to identify how identity and social location shape income use and to expose the limitations of development policy frameworks that treats gender and class as isolated variables.

In the UN Agenda 2030, and in the NDP 2030, Policies often report major progress in terms of gender equity, and these reports make use of indicators such as: women access to financial credit to purchase assets; or increased participation of women in formal employment (UNDP, 2025). In contrast the empirical evidence from Tshaulu demonstrate that the economic role of women in indigenous contexts is not primarily defined by ownership or wages, but by collective management, relational influence, and communities' stewardship. The Intersectionality Theory helps to expose this epistemic gap and goes further to support that the metrics of gender equality for contemporary urban societies should be very cautiously applied to more indigenous rural women, as their agency and power and agency should not be evaluated through the same lens. In practise many women in Tshaulu exercise economic leadership by organising cooperative savings groups such as stokvels and burial societies and managing household budgets to keep the household from poverty, yet the reporting and implementing of the NDP 2030, remains silent of this contribution, as it falls

outside of the acceptable formal economic classifications. This indicates the need for context-sensitive approaches that recognise household livelihoods as collective systems, where both men and women contribute in interdependent ways, including forms of participation that are not always captured by formal policy indicators or adequately recognised in existing research.

Synthesising Social Role Theory and Critical Theory to ensure context sensitive interpretations

To effectively understand the income utilisation in Tshaulu, Social Role Theory and the Critical Theory should be synthesised. Social Role Theory clarifies that role differentiation in income management does not inherently imply inequality, as roles are defined through reciprocal functions and mutual accountability. Men and women in Tshaulu perform distinct but interdependent tasks that ensures collective well-being of their respective households. Critical Theory, supports this view but goes further by indicating that functional complementarity in Tshaulu households should not be labelled as subordinate in planning and reporting, as this has the risk of reflecting a western bias to egalitarian sameness and in this way risk the pathologizing of the indigenous cooperation models that prioritises family unity and shared responsibilities over the advancement of individual. This indicates the need for context-sensitive interpretations that recognise indigenous systems of cooperation as legitimate forms of livelihoods practices rather than deviations from formal models.

8.2.4 A critical assessment of household access to basic services in Tshaulu, linked development theories and agendas

Access to basic services such as water, transport, electricity, healthcare, sanitation, housing and education is fundamental to human development and a key indicator of poverty alleviation in rural contexts. In rural South Africa, access to services determines of household productivity, income utilisation and social stability. This highlight that access to services is not only a welfare issue but also a key determinant of livelihood sustainability.

National and global frameworks such as the NDP 2030, AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Agenda 2030 recognise universal access to basic services as essential for reducing poverty and promoting inclusive development. However, the extent to which these

policy objectives are reflected in rural household realities remains uneven, as demonstrated in Tshaulu.

In Tshaulu, households access basic services through both government provision and through personal or household-level access. This section provides an overview of basic services access of households in Tshaulu and situates within the study integrated theoretical and policy.

8.2.4.1 Overview of basic services access of households in Tshaulu

Access to basic services is a fundamental determinant of household welfare and a key indicator of human development. In the rural South Africa, such access goes beyond physical infrastructure and defines the extent to which households can sustain livelihoods, participate in the economy and live in dignity. Despite much progress since 1994, rural households in South Africa continue to experience limited and mostly uneven access to basic services, due to historical inequalities, governance challenges and severe infrastructural backlogs.

The National Development Plan identifies basic service delivery as one of the primary mechanisms of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality, emphasising access to clean water, sanitation, energy, housing and safe transport by 2030. The empirical evidence of Tshaulu reveals that while basic service coverage has improved since 1994 many households continue to experience uneven and limited access compared to urban areas. These disparities are not only spatial but structural, reflecting historical inequities, governance capacity challenges and infrastructural backlog that persist not only in Tshaulu but across many rural municipalities in South Africa. This indicates that access to basic services in rural contexts is shaped not only by infrastructure availability but also by structural and historical inequalities.

Access to water in Tshaulu

Access to safe and reliable water remain one of the most significant challenges in Tshaulu, wherein many participants rated their basic access to water as poor. Although the NDP 2030 has a strong commit to achieving universal access to water and sanitation (in line with the UN Agenda 2030), many households in Tshaulu still rely on communal taps, rivers and boreholes, and rainwater harvesting, which often

do not provide sufficient daily water supply. Water shortages, unreliable supply and poor maintenance of infrastructure increase the household vulnerability and constrain productivity activities including household's water needs, small scale agriculture and livestock farming. In Tshaulu is was observed that poor maintenance of the water infrastructure results in an erratic supply of water and this increases vulnerability in the households and also restricts subsistence farming and livestock rearing that many households depend upon for their livelihoods. This reflects a gap between infrastructure provision and effective service delivery, particularly in rural areas where maintenance and reliability remain critical challenges.

Access to housing, sanitation, electricity, health and education in Tshaulu

The respondents in the Tshaulu case study rated access to housing, sanitation, health and education facilities as good to fair, except for housing, these services as shared community basic services that were provided by the government with limited cost to the household. In addition, the respondents rated their own household access to electricity as fair to good, the rating is likely based on fact that the community members have to buy their own electricity, however most of the household have access to electricity through a well-developed grid. Health and sanitation services are accessed through both public and private facilities reflecting a coexistence of contemporary and indigenous knowledge systems. This highlight that while access may be reported as available, the quality and reliability of services remain uneven, affecting household livelihood stability.

Rural-urban service disparities

Based on the empirical findings of household access to basic services, it can be confirmed that authorities have made measurable progress however Tshaulu but remain characterised by rural-urban inequality and subsequent fragmented service delivery. The typical household in Tshaulu access to basic services access remains incomplete, inconsistent and often fragile. If access to basic services is to improve, it is critical that the current development agendas move beyond infrastructure provision towards a more integrated rural development planning strategy, where water, energy, household and transport investment are synchronised with livelihoods programmes; improvement in local governance capacity; and increased community participation.

This highlights the persistence of spatial inequality, which continues to shape service access despite national development efforts.

Household and community adaptive strategies in Tshaulu

In Tshaulu, access to food and shelter is maintained through a mixture of subsistence farming, livestock production and communal sharing of resources (FDG-HAB-1; KSI-1). Water supplies are often supplemented through boreholes owned by some households, who sometimes sell water to the local community. Infrastructure, health and sanitation services are accepted both through private and public healthcare facilities reflecting coexistence between contemporary knowledge. Many respondents indicated that they save on electricity costs by preparing the household meals using firewood. This indicates that households actively compensate for service limitations through locally embedded livelihood strategies.

Social organisation of access to basic services

The evidence of Tshaulu shows the pursuit of basic services is not an individual endeavour but a collective household responsibility. The household unit, often represented by either men especially in terms of ownership of property as traditional custom, and women in the absent of men or individually can have access to land provide they have their own family. Access to basic services is embedded in social cooperation and cultural norms of shared responsibilities rather than economic independence. This reflects a collective approach to service access, where responsibilities are shared and adapted based on household context rather than fixed gender roles.

4.2.4.2 Linking theories and development policies to the basic services access in Tshaulu

Access to basic services represents a direct expression of social and economic development processes. Within the South Africa rural areas contexts access remains uneven and unfragmented, reflecting both structural inequalities, special disparities inherited from the past. A theoretical grounding is essential to interpret patterns of service access, household residence and development outcomes. This section

therefore moves beyond describing access to services and explains how theoretical perspectives help interpret these patterns.

Social Role Theory

Social role theory highlights how social expectation and institutional structures shape individual and group behaviour. Within the context of this case study, rural households' access to basic services is mediated through public facilities that are shared amongst community members, and this reinforces the collective norms of indigenous knowledge systems, rather the individualistic system of the contemporary knowledge systems. This highlight that access to basic services is mediated through collective social roles rather than individual entitlement.

Modernisation Theory

Modernisation theory views access to basic services as an indicator of social societal progress. In this process infrastructure expansion is the key factor reflecting a transition from traditional to modern development stages. As indicated earlier in this chapter, the Modernisation Theory has influenced the NDP 2030 and all strategies to prioritise infrastructural development.

Since 1994, South Africa has made some successes in expansion on basic housing delivery, electrification and water access. These successes are all aligned to modernisation ideals. However, the empirical data of Tshaulu indicates that that the infrastructure delivery has not translated into equitable outcomes. Communities like Tshaulu remain underserved due to affordability constraints, and generally focus on technical expansion, without social inclusion. The Modernisation Theory captures the state commitment to development but overlooks the structural and spatial factors that inhibit equitable service distribution. Policy framework guided by this model risk perpetuating inequalities unless they explicitly prioritise rural localisation and service equity. This highlights the limitation of modernisation approaches that prioritise infrastructure expansion without adequately addressing issues of access, affordability, equity, and the lived realities of collective household livelihoods in rural contexts such as Tshaulu.

Intersectionality theory

By examining overlapping identifies (related to demography and socio-economic profile), the researcher could identify the differential forms of disadvantages, and this could help explain why some groups experience deeper barriers in accessing basic services. Through observation the researcher noted that the typical poverty relief strategies implemented in the community that focussed on a generic poor household, produce differentiated service needs and the result is service delivery gaps that have the potential to perpetuate multidimensional poverty. It was also noted that if participatory development approaches were infused into decision-making spaces improved and more accountable service delivery could take place. This demonstrates that access to basic services varies across households depending on intersecting social and economic factors.

Critical Theory

Form a critical theory perspective, the findings highlight the disparities in access to basic services in the study area that reflect structural inequalities and policy blind spots that are more aligned to an urban and market-based service delivery model. Rural communities like Tshaulu remain marginalised within the NDP 2030 wherein modernisation is often equated with progress while indigenous systems of livelihoods maintenance are undervalued and ignored. Critical Theory exposes how global and national development frameworks through well-intentioned frequently reproduce higher levels of dependency in rural communities by prioritising a top-down service delivery rather than strengthening the community-led system that dominates rural communities in South Africa, and as reflected in Tshaulu that despite limited infrastructure, access to food and water is achieved through subsistence farming and shared water points communal taps that not providing water daily. This reflects a gap between infrastructure provision and effective service delivery, particularly in rural areas where maintenance and reliability remain critical challenges. In Critical theory that's repositions indigenous system as legitimate framework of sustainable development rather than perceiving them as traditional or outdated. Critical Theory supports the researcher’s notion that indigenous knowledge systems should be recognised as foundational in achieving the NDP 2030, and this way true equity in service access can be achieved as rural communities will be included in decision

making and developers would thus recognise that indigenous cooperation offers a more sustainable development model of social provision than market dependency. This indicates that sustainable service delivery must be grounded in local realities rather than imposed through top-down models.

Conclusion

The importance of viewing service access not through gendered or individualistic framework, but through the collective realities of indigenous household. While modernisation posited that improved access to basic services follow infrastructural expansion and technological advancement, the case study of Tshaulu challenges this linear assumption. Rather than transforming traditional system these modern services have been absorbed into indigenous framework that prioritize cooperation and collective decision making. Access to basic services reflect adaptive integration rather than replacement of indigenous system. The findings in this case study reflect the lived realities of rural households operating within traditional knowledge systems. These realities are shaped by indigenous expectations of gender roles, household structures and social responsibilities that are often overlooked in formal development frameworks. This indicates that effective poverty alleviation requires development frameworks that recognise and integrate these collective and context-specific livelihood systems.

8.2.5 A critical analysis of the indigenous and contemporary roles of gender in poverty in relation to theoretical and development policy

8.2.5.1 Introduction: Gender, poverty and theoretical context

In rural communities' gender roles are not defined by competition, but by interdependence and complementarity within a shared household livelihood. The empirical evidence from Tshaulu show that the indigenous gender systems historically functioned as a cooperative social structure, where both genders contributed to sustaining the collective livelihoods of a household. The data presented in this thesis, support the notion that gendered labour in Tshaulu was not divided along the lines of power or exclusion but rather along the functional responsibilities and in this way creates a balance that ensures households security; resource sharing; and social stability. Despite the growing development agenda interest in the part gender roles

can play in poverty alleviation strategies especially rural areas, few researchers have addressed the modern narrative that associate gender equality solely with individual empowerment (Chapter 2 and 3). Tshaulu household that associate strongly with Indigenous practises, see elevation out of poverty as a collective process that is achieved through shared labour and community support mechanism of livelihoods maintenance. Understanding poverty and livelihood dynamics in rural South Africa requires examining how gendered social roles, both indigenous and contemporary, function within household systems. The researcher observed that the indigenous system emphasises cooperation, reciprocity and interdependence where men and women contribute differently but equally towards maintaining household livelihoods. On the other hand, gender roles, in the households that were influenced by both indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems play a central role in shaping poverty alleviation strategies and overall household well-being. Historically, women roles in rural development have been underrepresented in poverty alleviation and gender roles literature often confined to unpaid domestic responsibilities and framed within patriarchal constraints (Chapter 4). In the context of this study women and men are recognised as key role players in household poverty alleviation of the households. This highlight that gender roles in Tshaulu are structured around cooperation and shared responsibility rather than hierarchy or exclusion.

8.2.5.2 Evolution of indigenous and contemporary gender roles

The evidence from Tshaulu show that the gender roles have evolved in response to social and economic transformation. Further evidence shared during the focus group discussions in relation gender roles confirms that women do not only engage in caregiving but also in agricultural activities, relocation for employment, decision making, households headship, leadership roles. It was noted in Chapter 4 that the diversification of livelihood activities has been influenced by formal employment; the ability to relocate for work; access to education; and more exposure to more contemporary practises. Further evidence of the Tshaulu households shows that some of the participants were self-employed through, small enterprises and informal trade, and they also s in agricultural activities, earned wages; participated in migrant labour regardless of their gender. It is critical to note however, that there was overwhelming evidence that despite the varied economic activities of both genders in and away from the household, the cooperative essence of the Tshaulu households remained intact,

wherein income, regardless of who earned it is shared in the household to sustain the well-being of all who live in it. No evidence could be found of a decline in the household's collective livelihoods in households who had adopted more contemporary norms and practises.

Overall, these results from this case study indicate that success of poverty alleviation depends not on competitive genders, but rather on the functional cross-integration of gender roles. Despite some households adopting a combined indigenous and contemporary knowledge system the key to poverty alleviation and the household well-being, remained rooted in cooperation and shared responsibility, not inequality. These roles are guided by indigenous obligations, cultural norms and traditional authorities' systems that prioritise family welfare over individual accumulation. The results from Tshaulu, show that despite more embracement of contemporary norms such as increased access to education, wage labour and micro-enterprises for both genders, the core element of collective decision making and mutual dependence remain intact. This indicates that the evolution of gender roles in Tshaulu reflects adaptation rather than replacement of indigenous systems.

8.2.5.3 Rethinking patriarchy through indigenous cultural logic

This could potentially lead to the interpretation of gender roles in indigenous rural communities such as Tshaulu to be understood within their own cultural logic rather than through externally imposed frameworks. In Chapter 4, it was recorded that most modern and feminist scholars researching gender roles in poverty define patriarchy as a system of male dominance and female subordination with men occupying positions of authority and women being marginalized and excluded from power. It remains unclear whether these gender roles historically evolved under external pressures such as apartheid labour migration, where men were compelled to leave rural homes to work in urban centres and mines while women and elders manage the household. There is little knowledge of whether the pattern was not a reflection of patriarchal exclusion, but of a structural response to economic marginalisation and state-imposed labour systems. While the modern scholars strive for the equality or individual empowerment, the results from Tshaulu shows that in post-apartheid both men and women continued to share responsibilities across productive educational and domestic spheres within the limit of rural opportunities. Overall, the results indicate

that while this interpretation has relevance in socio-economic context of Tshaulu, it is problematic to apply this universally without considering specific local indigenous value systems and the social organisation of any specific indigenous community. The results emphasise the validity of the indigenous governance structure of rural households wherein men are traditionally designated as household heads primarily for representational and administrative purposes. The results also broaden the understanding of traditional role of a male which involves mediating between the household and traditional authorities, such as approaching the chief to request land during marriage. However, this representation is not a form of ownership or control, but rather a culturally defined duty performed by men on behalf of the household (KSI and FGD, 2023). These results are not in line with those of modern scholars (Zhllima et al., 2023; Otieno & Muga, 2024; Azumah et al., 2023) who found that rural women have limited access to land and property ownership, rooted from complex interplay of legal framework, customary norms, patriarchal system and economic factors. In contrast to some studies, the results from Tshaulu indicate that the land once allocated is used collectively for residential, agricultural, economic, and other purposes from which all household members benefit. This suggests that interpretations of patriarchy should be context-specific and grounded in local social organisation rather than applied uniformly.

8.2.5.4 Gender roles in subsistence agricultural and household organisation

Evidence of gender roles in subsistence agriculture, the basis of livelihoods and household maintenance, was collected in Tshaulu. The results show the significant contributions of men and women who participate in the subsistence farming either as joint or complementary roles or alone. The results show that both genders engage in crop cultivation, land preparation, food processing and domestic food preparation. While results confirmed that male representation of the household exists, it functions within a framework of mutual responsibilities where gender roles are flexible, negotiated and responsive to contexts. Significant results emerging from Tshaulu, is that women participate in decision-making; community leadership roles; education; collective decision making, land ownership through indigenous households' resource access. In cases where women are single, widowed or divorced or in a polygamous relationship women assume complete responsibility for the household without any cultural stigma and with full recognition and acknowledged by both genders.

When asked about their roles in decision making, most respondents indicated that both men and women fulfil decision-making roles regardless of their indigenous and contemporary systems influence. A common view amongst the respondents was that indigenous social system operates on a principle of functional complementarity where both men and women fulfil roles that sustain their household livelihoods and community according to specific circumstances that feature through need, availability and capacity. These findings are significant as the universal (modern) understanding and assumption about patriarchy in a rural area in the Global South is a fixed system of operation. This reflects a system of functional complementarity, where roles are shared and negotiated rather than strictly assigned.

8.2.5.5 Indigenous female leadership and matricentric governance

The most striking results on women leadership shows that within the study area the indigenous authority promote women leadership within the community. In Tshaulu the chief leading the 15 villages (12 of which are led by males) is under the jurisdiction of a female chief. The results also shows that women are appointed as village heads under the traditional leadership. One critical aspect to note is that the fact that there is a female chief is evidence that in this community that is inherently traditional recognises and legitimise female leadership reflecting the internal logic of indigenous gender roles. This finding is worth highlighting as this does not simply reflect a transition towards Western models of gender equality but rather the recognition of authority, responsibilities and interdependence embedded in the indigenous knowledge systems. Female traditional chiefs, female village heads, and women taking on male household responsibilities in Tshaulu illustrate indigenous matricentric governance. that is embedded in broader communal and relational logic of indigenous authority systems. The researcher also observed that the female participation in governance does not imply a reversal of patriarchy but rather serves as an affirmation of women authority though competency, lineage and customary legitimacy. The results emphasise the importance of this analysis of matricentric governance, the thesis challenges conventional development narratives that portray rural African societies as mostly patriarchal (8.2.5.3). These results broaden our understanding towards the cultural rooted understanding of gendered authority in rural development context and aligns with the African centred framework of households shared responsibilities and family dependency relations. This illustrates that leadership in Tshaulu is shaped by

indigenous grounded systems in which female chieftaincy is recognised as a legitimate and respected form of indigenous authority, rooted in traditional beliefs and social organisation rather than derived from contemporary policy-driven notions of gender empowerment.

8.2.5.6 Linking theoretical perspective to development policy frameworks

Linking the theoretical perspectives with development policy framework allows for a deeper understanding of how gender roles influence households' poverty alleviation in rural indigenous households. The NDP 2030, AU Agenda 2063 and UN Agenda 2030 (specifically the SDGs) all recognise the need for gender responsive strategies to eradicate households' poverty. However, in these strategies gender responsive strategies are operationalised as equality through the individual empowerment and by so doing the realities of many traditional rural households may neglect indigenous functions. By integrating critical theory social role, intersectionality theory, modernisation theory into the development framework of poverty alleviation this section situates gender within households shared development strategies reflecting both indigenous practices and contemporary socio-economic dynamics. This highlights a gap between policy design and the lived realities of rural households.

Social Role Theory as interdependence rather than hierarchy

One striking result from the Tshaulu case study is that authority within the household is exercised as representation, not ownership, meaning that leadership or decision-making shift flexibly depending on who is present, whether it male, female or elder. This reflects what Eagly & Wood (2013) described as socially situated role system where division of labour responds to the environmental and social realities rather than biological distinctions. This means that in Tshaulu, gender roles are family based rather than gender based, guided by collective welfare and cooperation of households. Both men and women participate in farming, caregiving, leadership and household decision making. This aligns with Social Role Theory premise that behaviour reflects functional social arrangement but differs in that indigenous system prioritise complementary and interdependence. In addition, this way of thinking aligns with the NDP 2030 vision of cohesive, inclusive rural development; UN Agenda 2030 (SDG 5 on gender equality) and the AU Agenda 2063 Aspiration 1 - on people driven inclusive growth), all of which advocate for equality embedded in collective development. While

Social Role Theory helps to explain the division of labour, Intersectionality Theory helps to provide depth by recognising that household roles are mediated by factors such as age, marital status, education and access to resources (Chhachhi & Truong, 2009). The findings in Tshaulu highlight that leadership and decision-making are not determined by gender hierarchy but their social context and capability. This flexibility challenges the assumption that rural African household are uniformly patriarchal. The leadership breakdown in terms of gender in the study area is a further reflection of interdependence rather than hierarchy as reflected in the fact that both male and female traditional leaders. This illustrates that authority in an indigenous system can be inclusive rather than exclusionary. This reflects a balance of roles rooted in communal ethics and family representation, rather than private power or gender dominance. Intersectionality Theory therefore enriches Social Role Theory by showing that gender interacts with structural and situational variables shaping household configurations and shared responsibilities in poverty alleviation. These findings indicate that gender roles in Tshaulu operate as interdependent and context-specific social arrangements, supporting collective household livelihoods rather than hierarchical structures, thereby reinforcing the relevance of Social Role Theory within a rural indigenous context.

Modernisation Theory and hybrid indigenous-contemporary system

Modernisation Theory predicts that traditional system will be replaced by modern individualised social and economic arrangement (Chapter 2). However, the findings in this case study demonstrated that tradition and modernity coexist in hybrid form. Education, labour, migration and technology have been integrated into indigenous frameworks rather than replacing them. Both men and women in Tshaulu increasingly pursue education and engage in small business activities, yet they continue to rely on collective income sharing and shared decision making for household survival. This hybrid system reflects institutional resilience and evolution of indigenous cooperation rather than its erosion. Modernisation Theory must therefore be reconsidered, rural progress in rural areas reflect not a linear transition from traditional to modern, but a synthesis where both systems interact. Policies influenced by modernisation, such as the NDP 2030s' employment creation agenda, should thus integrate indigenous cooperation models into its rural economic planning. This illustrates that rural

transformation is not a linear shift from traditional to modern systems, but a hybrid process in which both systems coexist and interact.

Critical evaluation of theory and policy in rural development

The critical evaluation of the theories and development policies in relation to gender roles in poverty alleviations revealed a complex interaction between indigenous household systems, social theory and modern policy frameworks. While the theories and development frameworks provides useful analytical gender poverty lens their practical application in rural development context exposes important conceptual and structural gaps. Empirical evidence from Tshaulu rural communities shows that household organisation operates on collective interdependent principles in which men and women share complementary roles aimed at sustaining livelihoods. Poverty, therefore, is a shared experience rather than one rooted in gender, competition or subordination. Policies that continue to interpret gender through individualistic or western framework risk overlooking these indigenous cooperative foundations.

Applying Critical Theory to indigenous gender systems

Using Critical Theory (as explained in Chapter 2), illustrates how dominant development narratives may misrepresent indigenous systems by imposing western ideals of gender equality and individualism on communities focused on collective survival. From a critical perspective, the mislabelling of indigenous household as patriarchal reflect a form of misrecognition (Fraser 2023), a failure to value alternative social logic. In Tshaulu, the organisation of labour, authority and decision making is not evidence of inequality but of collective rationality and a mode of cooperation developed under cultural continuity and structural constraint. Critical Theory therefore help to reframe the empirical analysis by revealing that the real barrier of equality and poverty reduction are not entrenched in indigenous customs, but rather the structural legacies of apartheid, economic marginalisation and policy misalignment. Tshaulu households embody a social system that already enacts many principles of equity, inclusion and shared responsibilities as envisioned by the NDP 2030, UN Agenda 2030 and African the AU Agenda 2063. Respondents in Tshaulu explained that this system is not sign of “backwardness”, but rather a demonstration of resilience showing how indigenous knowledge systems continues to engage meaningfully within a more

modern development framework. This highlight that effective poverty alleviation must incorporate indigenous knowledge systems as part of development planning.

Integrating Critical Theory and Intersectionality Theory as a combined analytical lens

The integration of Critical Theory with Intersectionality Theory creates a strong analytical synthesis that addresses both macro-structural critique and micro-level identity dynamics. Critical Theory provide a lens to examine institutions, norms and colonial legacies, while Intersectionality Theory explains how race, class ethnicity, age and gender interact to shape vulnerability at the household's level (Cameron and Tedds, 2020). Intersectionality Theory further deepens the analysis by demonstrating how multiple dimensions of identity, such as gender, class, ethnicity, age and culture interact to shape lived experiences within and across households. Together these theories enabled a more nuanced understanding of poverty dynamics that recognises both structural condition and lived experiences within community and household's settings. The theoretical integration is particularly significant in the Tshaulu villages case study as it prevents the separation of gender from other intersecting identity markers that influence household's livelihoods. It recognises that poverty experiences are not uniform but are shaped by the interaction of social hierarchies and demographic factors within households. Evidence from Tshaulu shows that the capacity of households to engage in poverty alleviation initiatives are mediated by its members age composition, educational background, cultural status, shared responsibilities and traditional authority relations. For instance, in the community a men may approach the chief if he is married to request land on behalf of his household or family, he does undertake these negotiations as a private owner of the property but a family representative. Such an approach ensures that poverty is analysed as multilayered and intersectional phenomenon not one reducible to income disparities and gender alone.

The integration of the critical theory and intersectionality theory enhances the explanatory and transformative potential of this research. It situates the household's poverty within a framework of power relations, cultural meaning and socio-economic hierarchies while recognises the diversity of lived experiences within the households. By applying this integrated theoretical perspective, the study maintains both analytical depth and empirical inclusivity, demonstrating that poverty dynamics are shaped

through complex interaction between social structure, indigenous livelihoods systems and historical context.

8.2.6 A critical assessment of the impacts and challenges on indigenous and contemporary roles of gender in poverty alleviation, theories and development policies and critical

This section examines how indigenous and contemporary gender roles shape household livelihoods and poverty dynamics. While the previous section established a cooperative and complementary nature of gendered practises, this section focuses more on the impacts and challenges emerging within the system as communities negotiate change. The analysis will identify how external development policies, social economic transitions and institutional pressures have altered over time and at times have undermined the indigenous framework of shared responsibilities. Drawing on the empirical findings of Tshaulu the section explores how challenges intersect with theoretical perspectives and policy agendas, revealing both opportunities for transformation and a risk of epistemic marginalisation. This reflects the dynamic interaction between indigenous systems and external development influences

8.2.6.1 Indigenous and contemporary gender roles in rural households

This study revealed that indigenous and contemporary gender roles jointly and complementary support initiatives in rural setting to alleviate poverty. Within the indigenous context, the gendered responsibilities are not competitive but collective, guided by cooperation, reciprocity and shared household goals. However, several critical challenges were identified in the study area that could weaken the system. the erosion of collective labour could result in a decline in communal farming arrangements, while stokvel networks are declining and, in this way, reducing the strength of indigenous safety nets that once improved household poverty shocks. This highlights a gradual weakening of traditional support systems under changing socio-economic conditions.

Furthermore, modern development framework tends to view gender through individualistic or western feminist perspective, overlooking household level cooperation as the foundation of rural livelihoods. Also, the institutional non recognition of collective representation wherein policies and administrative system often

designated a single male or female head as a household representative, ignoring the collective nature of family decision-making and excluding women and elders from formal recognition in development initiatives.

Moreover, the study findings on economic and structural constraints revealed that there was high unemployment, and limited rural infrastructure restrict opportunities for both men and women.

8.2.6.2 Erosion of indigenous collective systems and external development pressure

Poverty persists in the study area not because of gender hierarchy, but within changing livelihood conditions shaped by the interaction between indigenous and contemporary systems and broader development influences. Further, changing social dynamics in which education, migration and technology have transformed gender roles, creating hybrid systems that blend traditional cooperation with modern independence. Yet this adoption faces strain as traditional authority system are not adequately integrated into policy framework.

Gender roles positively impacted poverty alleviation by enhancing resilience through shared responsibilities, prioritising household welfare, education, and relocations, and promoting shared roles between men and women. Challenges arose when the external categories and policies clashed with the indigenous practices. For example, initiatives aimed at female-headed households failed to acknowledge the difference between representation and ownership, resulting in interventions that were not suitably aligned. Additionally, neoliberal models of service delivery placed an unjustified burden on women, failing to address systemic inequalities. The literature confirms these patterns about national data showing that women disproportionately represented below the poverty line (StatSA, 2021), this thesis revealed that women in Tshaulu are not marginalised but under-recognised within communal system narratives. This finding challenges the modernisation narrative that equate rurality with backwardness, demonstrating instead the resilience and adaptivity of indigenous systems. This highlight that poverty dynamics in Tshaulu are shaped by structural conditions and livelihood systems rather than gender-based exclusion alone. These findings challenge modernisation narratives that equate rural systems with backwardness, demonstrating instead the resilience and adaptive capacity of indigenous and hybrid livelihood systems.

8.2.6.3 Institutional misalignment and non-recognition of collective household representation

The indigenous model of gender roles in poverty alleviation has sustained households by fostering mutual dependency and flexible adaptation. Modern economic and policy discourse that promote individualism pose a significant challenge to the community livelihoods improvements. The key issue is the disconnection between the local system and external models that continue to promote western notions of gender equality and individual advancement over communal interdependence. Local community shared system of labour, decision making and income utilization enhances community cohesion, food security and social resilience. Households rely on both traditional practices such as subsistence farming, livestock domestication and communal labour and contemporary mechanism like social grant, formal employment and educational training. All the strategies mitigate poverty and maintain livelihoods even under resources constraints. Limited employment opportunities, inadequate infrastructure and inconsistent services delivery reduce the effectiveness of both indigenous and contemporary livelihoods practice. Indigenous and modern livelihood systems development programs that prioritize individual empowerment often conflict with the communal orientation of indigenous household, leading to tension between externally imposed framework and local realities. This indicates a disconnect between formal policy frameworks and collective household systems.

8.2.6.4 Socio-economic constraints and shifting social dynamics

Decision-making within a Tshaulu household was found to be largely consultative and consensus driven, consistent with indigenous and contemporary values of balance and respect. The empirical evidence shows that both men and women contribute to decisions on resource allocation, education and participation in development projects engagement. While men often act as formal representatives of the household, decisions are rarely unilateral. This finding highlights the indigenous logic of collective governance, where power is understood as responsibility rather than dominance. Development policies that frame empowerment exclusively in terms of individual autonomy as is the case in many mainstreams develop agendas, risk undermining the system of relational accountability. Development strategies should embrace the households as a collective decision-making unit echoing the participatory governance ideals embedded in NDP 2030 and UN Agenda 2030 specifically SDG 16 (peace,

justice and strong institutions). Despite these challenges, indigenous and contemporary gender systems remain mutually reinforcing, offering flexible and adaptive strategies for poverty alleviation. The key limitation lies not in the gender structure itself, but in the lack of recognition of institutional collective representation and cultural system within formal policy. This reflects a consultative model of governance rooted in shared responsibility.

8.2.6.5 Tensions between indigenous practises and external development categories

Gender roles are dynamic and negotiated according to the need to ensure that both men and women participate interchangeably in household's affairs and activities. This collective approach strengthens social stability and aligns with SDG (1, 2 and 5), not by promoting competition between genders but fostering functional complementarity. A critical challenge identified is the persistence of external stereotyping of indigenous gender relations. Development discourse often positions rural men as patriarchal gatekeepers and women as passive dependence. This representation has disturbed the social realities of the indigenous household, which are governed by interdependence rather than inequality. This challenge is that these stereotyping influences funding priorities, policy design and NGO engagement, leading to one-dimensional intervention that marginalised indigenous practices. Consequently, community trust in development agencies weakens and this reinforces social cultural resistance. The findings in Tshaulu, highlight the urgent need for epistemic justice recognising the indigenous knowledge system as legitimate framework for understanding and addressing poverty. This highlights how external narratives can distort local realities and influence development interventions.

8.2.6.6 Theoretical and development perspective informing the impact and challenges of gender roles in poverty alleviation

Intersectionality theory examines how gender, age, education, and socio-economic status intersect to shape roles with employment and education area affecting members collectively rather than along gendered lines.

Modernisation theory assumes the progressive shift from traditional to modern system. However, the findings of Tshaulu contradict this linear trajectory. Rather than discarding indigenous system household have integrated modern mechanism such as

social grant, formal employment and education into existing structures of communal cooperation. This combination does not signal modernisation in the western sense but demonstrate indigenous adoption and agency in shaping livelihoods systems.

From a critical Theory perspective, the findings highlight the contradiction between policy intention and lived experiences. Development strategies grounded in neoliberal and individualist approach may misinterpret indigenous cooperation as dependency therefore, failing to recognise its social and economic value. Persistent of poverty in some households in Tshaulu reflects structural inequality and policy designs that neglect household dynamics. A decolonised approach recognises indigenous systems as legitimate sources of knowledge and social organisation. While this aligns with the UN Agenda 2030 (especially the SDGs), the NDP 2030 and AU Agenda 2063 in principle it also challenges their implementation to move beyond the imported models of progress.

The integration of the four social theories provides a valuable multidimensional lens for understanding households in Tshaulu. Social Role Theory explain how expectations shape the everyday socio-economic responsibilities, while Critical Theory interrogates whose interests' specific roles serve and how they can be transformed. Intersectionality theory explains how ownership structures and cultural expectations allocate responsibilities in a household. While the Modernisation Theory provides the catalyst that makes the adaptive capacity of indigenous systems visible.

By applying these theories together, it is evident that gendered labour divisions are adaptive rather than static and that household arrangements evolve in response to capabilities and constraints. The findings in Tshaulu demonstrate that men and women contribute as interdependent partners within shared structures. While this model remain resilient, it is increasingly under pressure from external policies, economic marginalisation and intuitional misalignment. Gendered labour divisions are adaptive rather than static.

8.3 Conclusion

This chapter concludes that poverty alleviation in rural areas is sustained through a balance of indigenous and contemporary practices shaped by shared household responsibility rather than gender division. Based on the insights provided by Modernisation Theory, Critical Theory, Social Role Theory and Intersectionality Theory, the findings reaffirmed that rural livelihoods are organised through cooperation, interdependence and culturally grounded system of representation. The evidence revealed that development frameworks such as NDP 2030, UN Agenda 2030; and AU Agenda 2063 are aligned in principle with the values but often fail in practice due to their emphasis on individualised empowerment. Effective poverty reduction therefore requires policies that recognise indigenous households' system as actively legitimate framework for sustainable development where rules are adaptive, collective and rooted in cultural logic. This demonstrates that sustainable poverty alleviation depends on recognising indigenous collective household systems as central to rural development.

8.4. Research gap

Despite increasing recognition of Indigenous knowledge in the development discourse there remains a significant gap in understanding how indigenous household-based systems of shared responsibility function as sustainable mechanism for poverty alleviation. Much of the existing literature and policy frameworks continue to apply individualised or gender binary approaches which fail to capture the cooperative and relational nature of gender roles in rural communities. Studies that frame poverty through the feminisation lens or male dominated narrative often overlook the collective dynamics of household's survivals where men and women contribute interdependently according to capacity and context. While development frameworks such as National Development Plan 2030, UN 2030 specifically the Sustainable Development Goals and African Union Agenda 2063 promote inclusive and equitable growth, there is limited empirical research on how this framework interacts with indigenous governance system and local epistemologies in practice. The gap lies in connecting formal policy ambition with the lived experience of rural household, particularly how indigenous leadership, land access, education and households shared responsibilities shape resilience and adaptation to poverty. Future research should focus on

developing context specific model that integrate indigenous and contemporary knowledge system ensuring that national and continental policy reflect the realities and strengthen of rural African community. This study contributes by providing empirical evidence on how the interaction between indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems within collective household structures shapes adaptive livelihood systems and poverty dynamics in rural contexts.

CHAPTER 9: SYNTHESIS, REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

9.1 introduction

This chapter present a synthesis of the core findings of the study by integrating the empirical evidence with the theoretical frameworks discussed in the earlier chapters. And reflects on their conceptual and practical implications for poverty dynamics and livelihoods systems in traditional rural communities within the study area. By focusing on the interaction of indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems, gender dynamics, and socio-economic realities of rural poverty this thesis set out to challenge the dominant western-informed paradigms that underpin current poverty alleviation strategies. Through the in-depth case study of the traditional rural community of Tshaulu in Limpopo, South Africa, this thesis has provided insight into how gender roles shape household level poverty experiences and responses.

This chapter restate the aim and objectives and summarise the key findings, highlight recommendations, identify study limitations and propose future areas of research. The argument presented throughout the thesis that sustainable and context relevant poverty alleviation strategies must actively integrate indigenous gender norms, practises and knowledge systems with contemporary approaches to achieve meaningful reduction in household poverty in rural areas, and this argument is maintained in this chapter. This chapter therefore moves beyond summary to provide an integrated synthesis of how the findings collectively advance the study and demonstrate its contribution to knowledge and policy.

9.2 Summary of the research aim and objectives

The overall aim of the thesis is to establish how different knowledge systems, norms and traditions can be infused into the development of more effective poverty related approaches in South Africa, with particular focus on how indigenous and contemporary gender roles interact within households' livelihoods systems and influence poverty dynamics in rural communities. To achieve the aim the following objectives where developed:

- Objective 1: to establish the *socio-economic profile* of households in traditional rural villages.
- Objective 2: to identify and analyse poverty related livelihoods activities and *strategies* practiced at the household level in the traditional rural villages.
- Objective 3: to establish the underlying *knowledge practices* and *gender roles* that inform gendered access to resources and *basic services* within the household livelihoods systems in rural villages.
- Objective 4: to identify the *challenges* and the *impact of gender* roles on household's livelihoods systems and poverty dynamics in typical rural village, through a critical analysis of the empirical findings against development agendas and relevant social theories.
- Objective 5: to advance *suggestions* on the integration of gender related traditional socio-economic norms, practices and traditions into the currently more contemporary based approach influencing household's livelihoods systems and poverty dynamics.

The findings presented in this thesis affirm that gender roles are shaped by long standing cultural expectations and more contemporary socio-economic pressures and play a central role in shaping how households navigate and respond to poverty.

9.3 Synthesis of key findings

This section consolidates the empirical findings presented in Chapters 5 to 7 and interprets them in an integrated manner in relation to the study aim and theoretical framework. Rather than presenting these findings separately, the section highlights how they intersect to provide a coherent and explanatory understanding of poverty and livelihood dynamics in rural contexts. The synthesis demonstrates how socio-economic conditions, gender roles, and household livelihood strategies are interrelated and jointly shape poverty alleviation outcomes in Tshaulu, indicating that poverty is experienced and addressed as a collective and multidimensional process rather than an individual condition of livelihood experience. The findings of this study extend existing theoretical perspectives by demonstrating that Social Role Theory and Intersectionality Theory must be understood within collective household systems rather than individualised frameworks. In addition, the study challenges aspects of Modernisation Theory by showing that rural livelihoods do not follow a linear transition

but instead reflect hybrid systems where indigenous and contemporary practices coexist. This synthesis further suggests that theoretical applications and development frameworks that do not account for these collective and context-specific dynamics risk misinterpreting rural livelihood systems and limiting the effectiveness of poverty alleviation interventions. These insights contribute to refining the application of these theories in rural contexts of similar nature by emphasising the importance of integrating indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems within household livelihood structures.

9.3.1 Socio-economic profile of Tshaulu

The comprehensive socio-economic profile of 400 household representatives from five villages in Tshaulu was necessary to establish how gendered roles (both indigenous and contemporary) can on the one hand shape vulnerability to poverty and on the other hand inform more effective poverty alleviation strategies. Using a mixed-methods design, the statistics from household surveys were triangulated with the qualitative information from focus groups and the key informant interviews. The study area is in the rural context characterised by traditional structures, high dependency levels, limited employment opportunities, and significant gendered divisions of labour. Women constituted most household representatives (66.8%), which aligns with broader provincial trends due to the labour migration of males. Age and gender patterns revealed that younger and economically active men were often absent from the community, and this left women to manage households despite not always being recognised as household heads. Most respondents were married, yet qualitative data highlighted that married, divorced, and widowed women face increased poverty risks due to their dependency burdens, cultural norms, and gendered labour expectations. Income sources varied, with social grants and pensions forming the main income for most households, although younger adults sometimes generated income through salaries or small businesses. High unemployment (particularly among women) combined with low levels of formal employment undermined economic resilience, and limits livelihoods stability. Educational levels showed improvements over generations, however, gendered barriers to education persist and continue to limit rural women's access to formal employment. Family roles demonstrated that women, grandmothers, and daughters-in-law disproportionately participate in unpaid care work, informal

labour, and household management, while elderly household members often rely solely on grants to support extensive dependants. Most households had between four and six dependants, increasing their vulnerability to poverty due to shared income, high dependency ratios, and limited earning capacity.

Overall, Chapter 5 illustrated how socio-economic characteristics (linked to gender, age, marital status, education, employment, and household structure) intersect to produce different poverty risks. Critical, Modernisation, Social Role, and Intersectionality theories helped to explain how structural inequalities, traditional gender norms, and overlapping vulnerabilities support persistent rural poverty. These findings provided the empirical foundation for subsequent chapters that explore indigenous and contemporary gender roles in poverty alleviation. Although most household representatives are married and men are traditionally recognised as the heads of the household, women who responded to the survey often did so as household representatives either in the absence of men or where men were unavailable to participate, while some were heads of their own households. A key finding of this study is that the concept of “household head is not necessarily equivalent to household representation. The findings show that household representatives, particularly women, often reflect availability rather than formal authority or decision-making power within the household. This distinction is significant for research on gender and poverty, as it challenges conventional assumptions used in household-level analysis and highlights the need to differentiate between representation and authority when examining livelihood strategies and poverty dynamics. These findings indicate that socio-economic vulnerability in Tshaulu is shaped by the interaction between household structure, gender roles, and limited economic opportunities, reinforcing the importance of analysing poverty as a collective and context-specific livelihood process rather than an individual condition. This further reinforces the central argument of the study that poverty in rural contexts is best understood through household-level dynamics shaped by both indigenous and contemporary systems.

9.3.2 Existing household poverty alleviation strategies

Chapter 6 examined the role of gender in household poverty alleviation strategies in Tshaulu, with a focus on access to basic services, subsistence farming, and income

utilisation. The findings reveal that while households experience varying levels of access to essential services, poverty alleviation is driven by a blend of indigenous and contemporary practices, with gender roles shaping (but not strictly determining) how households cope with socioeconomic challenges. Access to basic services shows mixed outcomes: most households report good or fair access to food, housing, sanitation, education, electricity, and health services, while access to water is critically poor for the majority, undermined by unreliable supply and inadequate infrastructure. Subsistence farming emerges as the most significant poverty alleviation strategy, with 91% of households consistently practising it and drawing predominantly on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), with both genders participating actively. Qualitative evidence highlights subsistence farming as a cultural tradition passed through generations. In contrast, commercial farming remains marginal, with 90% of households not engaging in it and little clarity on the knowledge systems informing the practice. Domestication of livestock shows a similar pattern: where practised, it is primarily guided by indigenous knowledge, though overall participation is declining. Social capital mechanisms such as donations, borrowing, and collective labour are limited, with most households rarely or never relying on them, pointing to an erosion of traditional reciprocal support systems. Entrepreneurship is also limited, with few households earning income from small businesses and most lacking capital, skills, or market access. Social grants, particularly child and disability grants, play an essential role in sustaining households especially those represented by women but remain insufficient to fully meet basic needs. Income utilisation patterns demonstrate that households consistently prioritise spending on food, electricity, stokvels and burial societies, with spending influenced by household size and income levels. Overall, the chapter concludes that poverty alleviation in Tshaulu relies heavily on indigenous, gender-inclusive strategies (especially subsistence farming and shared household responsibilities) while limited-service access, unemployment, and low incomes continue to constrain household resilience. The chapter highlights the ongoing importance of recognising both indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems in designing sustainable rural poverty interventions. Chapter 6 examined the role of gender in household poverty alleviation strategies in Tshaulu, with a focus on access to basic services, subsistence farming, and income utilisation. The findings reveal that while households experience varying levels of access to essential services, poverty alleviation is driven by a blend of indigenous and contemporary practices, with gender

roles shaping (but not strictly determining) how households cope with socioeconomic challenges. Access to basic services shows mixed outcomes: most households report good or fair access to food, housing, sanitation, education, electricity, and health services, while access to water is critically poor for the majority, undermined by unreliable supply and inadequate infrastructure. Subsistence farming emerges as the most significant poverty alleviation strategy, with 91% of households consistently practising it and drawing predominantly on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), with both genders participating actively. Qualitative evidence highlights subsistence farming as a cultural tradition passed through generations. In contrast, commercial farming remains marginal, with 90% of households not engaging in it and little clarity on the knowledge systems informing the practice. Domestication of livestock shows a similar pattern: where practised, it is primarily guided by indigenous knowledge, though overall participation is declining. Social capital mechanisms such as donations, borrowing, and collective labour are limited, with most households rarely or never relying on them, pointing to an erosion of traditional reciprocal support systems. Entrepreneurship is also limited, with few households earning income from small businesses and most lacking capital, skills, or market access. Social grants, particularly child and disability grants, play an essential role in sustaining households especially those represented by women but remain insufficient to fully meet basic needs. Income utilisation patterns demonstrate that households consistently prioritise spending on food, electricity, and burial societies, with spending influenced by household size and income levels. Overall, chapter 6 shows that poverty alleviation in Tshaulu relies on adaptive livelihoods strategies that combines indigenous and cotemporary practices, particularly subsistence farming and shared household responsibilities, while limited-service access, unemployment, and low incomes continue to constrain household resilience. These findings indicate that poverty alleviation strategies in Tshaulu are not individualised economic responses but are collectively organised livelihood practices shaped by the interaction of indigenous knowledge systems, gender roles, and contemporary socio-economic conditions. This further suggests that the limited effectiveness of some interventions arises from a misalignment between policy approaches and the lived realities of household livelihood systems.

9.3.3 Gender roles, knowledge systems and access to services

Chapter 7 examines how indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems shape gender roles and access to services within households in Tshaulu, highlighting the ways in which these knowledge practices inform property ownership, decision-making, financial contribution, education, labour roles, and agricultural responsibilities. Across all domains, the chapter demonstrates that gendered roles in Tshaulu are not strictly defined by biological sex but rather emerge from a fluid interplay between traditional norms and contemporary influences, with household capacity and presence often overriding rigid gender expectations. Property ownership remains strongly shaped by indigenous systems that position men as the formal heads of households and primary asset holders, even though women's everyday contributions and use of land are substantial but often undocumented. Contemporary knowledge introduces more inclusive perceptions of joint ownership, although this is frequently symbolic and still mediated through traditional household structures. Decision-making follows a similar pattern: indigenous systems continue to recognise men as the official decisionmakers, while in practice decisions are collectively negotiated, and contemporary knowledge encourages more visible shared authority. Headship roles also show strong alignment with indigenous norms, though joint and female leadership are becoming more common in households influenced by blended or contemporary systems. In financial provision, men remain the dominant earners under indigenous norms; however, shared financial responsibility is increasingly evident, particularly in households influenced by contemporary knowledge systems. Community perceptions of education strongly support equal access for men and women, driven largely by contemporary knowledge, marking one of the clearest breaks from traditional gender expectations. Labour patterns reveal that women still carry primary responsibility for domestic work, but shared roles are emerging where contemporary norms have stronger influence. In contrast, agricultural work is widely viewed as a shared activity across all knowledge systems, reflecting long-standing indigenous principles of collective household labour. Regarding labour mobility and relocation for work, indigenous norms privilege men, whereas contemporary knowledge supports equal mobility opportunities for both genders. Overall, the chapter shows that indigenous knowledge continues to underpin household organisation, but contemporary influences are reshaping gender roles toward greater inclusivity. This dynamic interplay produces a hybrid system in which

gender responsibilities are increasingly determined by household needs, capacity, and evolving socio-cultural values rather than fixed traditional roles. These findings highlight that gender roles in Tshaulu are best understood as context-specific and collectively negotiated within household livelihood systems, shaped by the interaction between indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems rather than fixed hierarchical structures. This further suggests that development approaches that rely on rigid or individualised interpretations of gender risk overlooking the adaptive and interdependent nature of rural household livelihoods.

9.3.4 Challenges of a gendered approach to poverty alleviation and theoretical implications

This chapter integrates empirical evidence from Tshaulu (Chapters 5 to 7) with four theoretical lenses (Critical Theory, Intersectionality Theory, Social Role Theory, and Modernisation Theory) and situates the findings within global to local development agendas, namely, Agenda 2030 (SDGs), AU Agenda 2063, and South Africa's NDP 2030. The chapter demonstrates that poverty alleviation in Tshaulu is fundamentally collective, relational, and embedded in indigenous governance logics, while contemporary policy and measurement frameworks remain largely individualised and urban-centric.

The challenges affecting household's poverty strategies (specifically Agenda 2030 (SDGs), AU Agenda 2063, and South Africa's NDP 2030) stem primarily from structural factors rather than internal household gender dynamics. These include:

- Limited services access, particularly water infrastructure, which affects household productivity.
- Constrained economic and livelihoods opportunities making household rely on a combination of traditional and modern strategies.
- Declining of communal support practises such as collective labours, which historically contributed to household resilience
- Policy misalignment where formal poverty elevation frameworks do not always recognise how traditional households function or how knowledge system guide their choices.

Traditional gender roles in Tshaulu, as found in this study, do not obstruct household poverty elevation rather, they provide a stable organisational structure that is already functioning and adaptable.

A synthesis of the empirical evidence with the theoretical underpinning of the thesis noted that:

- *Social Role Theory* explains cooperative, interdependent roles; policies should treat the household as the core economic actor.
- *Intersectionality Theory* reveals how age, education, and household size shape role flexibility and opportunity, beyond gender binaries.
- *Modernisation Theory* is insufficient: as Tshaulu demonstrate a hybrid system where education, mobility, and grants are integrated into indigenous cooperation rather than replacing it.
- *Critical Theory* exposes structural misalignment and under recognition of indigenous systems in policy design and evaluation.

Throughout Chapter 8 several recommendations on a gendered approach to poverty alleviation that includes both indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems, norms and practise are posed, and these will be summarised in the subsequent section.

The findings of this study demonstrate that poverty alleviation in Tshaulu cannot be understood through isolated socio-economic variables or gender categories. Instead, the results show that poverty is shaped by the interaction between household structure, gender roles, access to resources, and the coexistence of indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems. While Chapter 5 highlights the structural socio-economic conditions of vulnerability, Chapter 6 shows how households respond through hybrid livelihood strategies, and Chapter 7 demonstrates how gender roles and knowledge systems organise these responses. These findings indicate that household-level poverty alleviation is fundamentally collective, adaptive, and context-specific, and that development approaches which do not account for these dynamics risk being misaligned with rural livelihood realities. This synthesis advances the study by demonstrating that effective poverty alleviation strategies must move beyond individualised and externally driven models and instead recognise the central role of

household dynamics, indigenous knowledge systems, and flexible gender roles in shaping sustainable livelihood outcomes

9.4 Recommendations on the integration of gender related hybrid model of poverty alleviation

These recommendations are grounded in the empirical findings presented in Chapters 5 to 7, particularly the observed reliance on collective household systems, indigenous knowledge practices, and constrained livelihoods opportunities. A more context sensitive and effective poverty alleviation framework for rural settings such as Tshaulu requires the deliberate incorporation of traditional gender norms, indigenous governance systems, and place-based livelihood strategies into contemporary policy instruments. The evidence shows that structural constraints rather than household gender dynamics are the primary barriers to poverty reduction; therefore, interventions must be aligned with how traditional households organise labour, make decisions, and mobilise collective resources. This indicates that poverty alleviation efforts must shift from individual-focused interventions towards approaches that recognise households as collective units of livelihood organisation.

To achieve this alignment, poverty metrics and programme strategies should be revised along the following lines:

Recognise Household Collectivism and Indigenous Governance

Contemporary poverty frameworks should acknowledge that decision-making, resource use, and labour organisation in rural households often operate through collective, relational systems rather than individualised or proprietary models. Administrative and poverty measurement tools should therefore:

- Capture collective household roles, including gendered responsibilities that structure labour and resource flows.
- Record representational roles as collective and rotational, reflecting indigenous governance rather than individual ownership.

This reflects the finding that household functioning in Tshaulu is organised through shared responsibilities rather than individual authority.

Link Social Protection to Productive, Local Livelihood Systems

Beyond cash transfers, poverty alleviation strategies should strengthen the productive capacity of rural households by:

- Integrating agricultural extension, communal farming support, and place appropriate technologies.
- Enhancing market access, local enterprise development, and rural infrastructure (especially water systems), which directly influence household productivity.
- Supporting hybrid livelihoods that combine traditional practices with modern opportunities, acknowledging how households diversify to survive.

This indicates that social protection alone is insufficient unless it is embedded within broader livelihood-supporting systems.

Embed Participatory, Locality Specific Planning

Poverty strategies must move away from one size fits all models and instead:

- Prioritise participatory planning processes grounded in local knowledge systems.
- Incorporate traditional gender roles not as obstacles but as organisational strengths that already structure labour sharing, caregiving, and resource management.
- Recognise how local norms shape household choices and ensure that interventions complement (instead of overriding) these systems.

This aligns with the finding that indigenous systems provide a foundation for organising household livelihoods.

Revitalise and Support Communal Labour and Social Solidarity Practices

Because the decline of traditional collectivist practices undermines resilience, strategies should:

- Reinforce and modernise community-based labour exchange systems.

- Support local institutions that historically provided safety nets and boosted household coping capacity.

This reflects the observed erosion of collective support mechanisms and their importance for sustaining household resilience.

Address Structural Constraints as Central Drivers of Poverty

Given that poverty in Tshaulu-like contexts is driven more by structural barriers than by intra-household gender dynamics, interventions must prioritise:

- Limited access to water infrastructure was identified as a major constraint affecting household livelihood functioning. This finding suggests the need for expansion of basic services, particularly water infrastructure, as a priority for improving household resilience and productivity.
- The findings revealed that households rely on limited and unstable livelihood opportunities due to unemployment and low-income levels. This indicates the need to strengthen rural livelihood opportunities, including value-chain participation, micro-enterprise support, and youth-oriented employment pathways aligned with existing household systems.
- The study found a misalignment between formal policy interventions and the way traditional households organise their livelihoods. This suggests the need for better alignment between policy frameworks and traditional household functioning to ensure programmes are contextually relevant and effective.

These priorities indicate that effective poverty alleviation requires alignment between policy design and the lived realities of collective household livelihood systems.

In summary, the findings of the study demonstrate that poverty alleviation in Tshaulu is shaped by structural constraints, collective household systems, and the interaction between indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems. These findings support the proposed hybrid model by showing that effective interventions must be grounded in existing household livelihood practices while addressing broader structural barriers. The findings of the thesis support a hybrid model of poverty alleviation that builds from the strengths of existing traditional systems (including gender roles), while integrating contemporary approaches within household livelihood structures rather than replacing

indigenous systems. From the perspective of this study, the most significant contribution is the demonstration that poverty alleviation in rural contexts is sustained through the interaction between indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems within collective household livelihoods. This highlights the need for context-sensitive, household-centred approaches that move beyond individualised models and recognise the relational and adaptive nature of rural poverty dynamics.

9.5 Limitations of the study

In section 1.8, the limitations of the study were highlighted, and the following summary is provided in conclusion. While robust, the study is limited to one rural context influenced by the indigenous knowledge system and therefore reflects the socio-cultural characteristic of the Tshaulu community rather than being directly generalisable to all rural contexts. Some traditional practises have shifted or weakened overtime, making them less observable. Data collection was influenced by pandemic conditions and self-reporting may carry inherent limitations. These constraints define the study scope but do not undermine from the validity of its insights. These constraints indicate that the findings should be interpreted within their specific contextual setting; however, they do not undermine the validity of the study but rather emphasise the importance of context-sensitive analysis in rural livelihood research.

9.6 Recommendations for future research

Future areas of research would deepen the understanding of gendered poverty and enhance the development of culturally relevant interventions and could focus on:

- Comparative analysis across different traditional communities in South Africa to assess applicability and contextual variation of the findings of this thesis.
- Longitudinal studies to assess how gender roles, knowledge systems and poverty alleviation strategies evolve over time within changing rural contexts.
- Research on male experiences of poverty particularly in context where traditional gender expectations are shifting to provide a more holistic understanding of household's livelihoods structures.
- Evaluation of indigenous knowledge integration into existing poverty alleviation programmes, with emphasis on their effectiveness within collective household structures.

- Investigation into revitalisation and institutionalisation of communal support mechanisms and their potential role in strengthening household resilience and social cohesion.
- Assessment of the impact of infrastructure improvement (especially water and basic services) on household livelihoods functioning and the sustainability of traditional systems.

9.7 Final conclusion

This study concludes that traditional household structure and indigenous knowledge system remains central to how rural households alleviate poverty. Roles are distributed based on capacity, contexts, availability and household needs rather than rigid gender rules. Poverty alleviation strategies in Tshaulu work best when they integrate indigenous and contemporary practises within a unified household system. The thesis main contribution lies in articulating a contextually grounded framework that recognises how traditional social organisation can support rather than hinder rural development and poverty reduction. the study demonstrates that poverty alleviation in rural contexts is best understood through the interaction between indigenous and contemporary knowledge systems operating within collective household livelihood structures. While the findings provide important insights, they are based on a single case study and should therefore be interpreted as context-specific rather than universally generalisable. However, they offer valuable insights into how context-sensitive, household-centred approaches can enhance the design and implementation of poverty alleviation strategies in similar rural settings.

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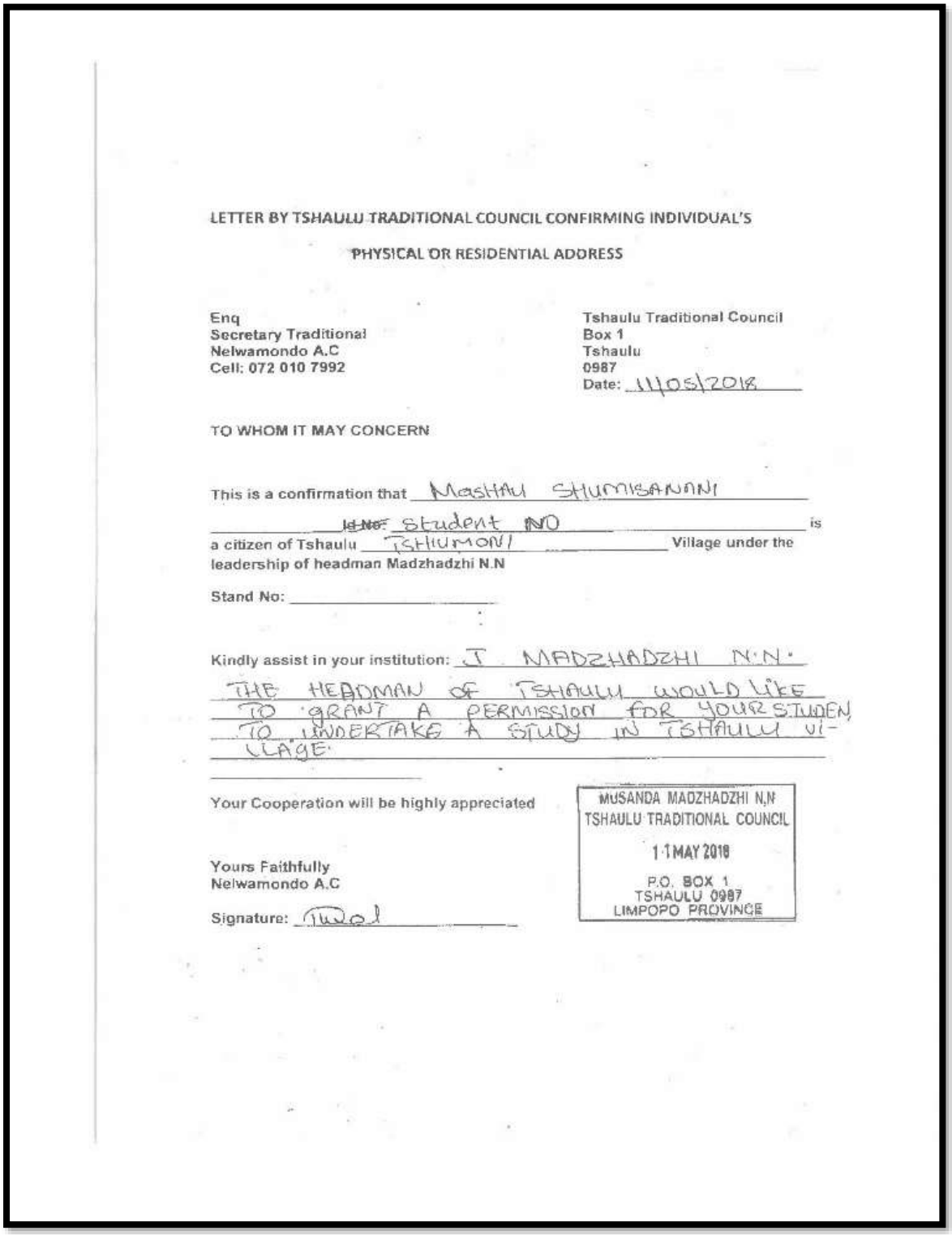
APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Tshaulu Traditional Council Permission to undertake research



LETTER BY TSHAULU TRADITIONAL COUNCIL CONFIRMING INDIVIDUAL'S

PHYSICAL OR RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Enq
Secretary Traditional
Nelwamondo A.C
Cell: 072 010 7992

Tshaulu Traditional Council
Box 1
Tshaulu
0987
Date: 11/05/2018

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is a confirmation that MASHAU SHUMISANANI

~~Id No:~~ Student NO is
a citizen of Tshaulu TSHUMONI Village under the
leadership of headman Madzhadzhi N.N

Stand No: _____

Kindly assist in your institution: J MADZHADZHI N.N.

THE HEADMAN OF TSHAULU WOULD LIKE TO GRANT A PERMISSION FOR YOUR STUDEN TO UNDERTAKE A STUDY IN TSHAULU VILLAGE.

Your Cooperation will be highly appreciated

MUSANDA MADZHADZHI N,N
TSHAULU TRADITIONAL COUNCIL
11 MAY 2018
P.O. BOX 1
TSHAULU 0987
LIMPOPO PROVINCE

Yours Faithfully
Nelwamondo A.C

Signature: _____

Appendix 2: Ethical Clearance Certificate

UNISA university of south africa

CAES HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date: 26/04/2019

NHREC Registration # : REC-170616-051
REC Reference # : 2019/CAES/060
Name : Ms SJ Mashau
Student #: 63403501

Dear Ms Mashau

Decision: Ethics Approval from 01/05/2019 to 30/04/2020

Researcher(s): Ms SJ Mashau
todansj@unisa.ac.za

Supervisor (s): Prof MD Nicolau
nicolmd@unisa.ac.za; 011-670-9492

Working title of research:

Integrating traditional knowledge into the contemporary strategies for poverty alleviation and gender equality, the case study of Tshaulu village, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Qualification: PhD Geography

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the CAES Health Research Ethics Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for a one-year period. After one year the researcher is required to submit a progress report, upon which the ethics clearance may be renewed for another year.

Due date for progress report: 30 April 2020

*The low **risk application** was **reviewed** by the CAES Health Research Ethics Committee on 25 April 2019 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.

Open Rubric

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:
*The reference number **2019/CAES/060** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,

Prof EL Kempen
Chair of CAES Health REC
E-mail: kempeel@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (011) 471-2241

Prof MJ Linington
Executive Dean : CAES
E-mail: lininmj@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (011) 471-3806

University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
www.unisa.ac.za

Appendix 3: Focus Group Question Guideline

Focus Group Discussion Questions
Researcher: Mrs SJ Mashau Supervisor: Prof MD Nicolau Contact: todansj@unisa.ac.za 0116709760 nicolmd@unisa.ac.za
The purpose of the focus group is to identify and compare households' poverty alleviation strategies, and indicate how the contemporary and indigenous practices have influenced the implementation of the household's poverty alleviation strategies?
Description of participants: Only 5-10 participants in a group
Location:
Date:
Other additional and observed group information: Gender (M= F=); Age Range: Marital Statuses: Employment statuses: Education Levels: Sources of Income:

1. What traditional methods or practices have households used historically to improve their household's daily basic needs and livelihoods maintenance?
2. What new or modern strategies do households now use to improve their household's daily basic needs and maintain their livelihood?
3. In your view, how effective are these traditional strategies in reducing poverty?
4. How effective do you think these modern strategies are in addressing poverty at the household level?
5. Do traditional and modern poverty alleviation strategies complement each other, or do they sometimes conflict? Please provide examples.
6. What prevents households from fully benefiting from either traditional or modern poverty alleviation strategies?
7. From your experience, which strategies have traditional or modern had the greatest impact on reducing poverty?
8. What traditional roles do men and women typically play within households to support households' poverty alleviation efforts?
9. How have this gender roles changed over time with the introduction of modern economic activities or programs?
10. How do both men and women contribute to households' effort to poverty alleviation such as income generation, household food security, and general wellbeing?
11. What challenges do men and women face differently when trying to engage in poverty alleviation activities?
12. How do gender norms or expectations limit or support men's and women's efforts to improve their household's livelihoods and basic needs?
13. In what ways does traditional and contemporary gender roles practices (such as decisionmaking power, access to land, or control over income) influence the success or failure of poverty reduction strategies?
14. Is there anything else about gender, traditions, and poverty in your community that we have not asked, but that you think is important for us to understand?
15. In your opinion does poverty affect women more than men in your community and why?

Appendix 4: Key Stakeholder Discussion Guideline

Key Stakeholder Discussion Questions
Researcher: Mrs SJ Mashau Supervisor: Prof MD Nicolau Contact: todansj@unisa.ac.za 0116709760 nicolmd@unisa.ac.za
The purpose of the discussion is to identify and compare households' poverty alleviation strategies, and indicate how the contemporary and indigenous practices have influenced the implementation of the household's poverty alleviation strategies?
Location:
Date:
Other additional and observed group information: Gender (M= F=); Age Range: Marital Statuses: Employment statuses: Education Levels: Sources of Income:

1. What traditional methods or practices have households used historically to improve their household's daily basic needs and livelihoods maintenance?
2. What new or modern strategies do households now use to improve their household's daily basic needs and maintain their livelihood?
3. How were gender roles traditionally defined in relation to poverty reduction and basic needs provision of the households in this village?
4. In your view, how effective are these traditional strategies in reducing poverty?
5. How effective do you think these modern strategies are in addressing poverty at the household level?
6. Do traditional and modern poverty alleviation strategies complement each other, or do they sometimes conflict? Please provide examples.
7. What challenges do men and women face differently when trying to engage in poverty alleviation activities?
8. How do gender norms or expectations limit or support men's and women's efforts to improve their household's livelihoods and basic needs?
9. In what ways do traditional and contemporary gender roles practices (such as decision-making power, access to land, or control over income) influence the success or failure of poverty reduction strategies?
10. Is there anything else about gender, traditions, and poverty in your community that we have not asked, but that you think is important for us to understand?
11. In your opinion does poverty affect women more than men in your community and why?
12. Which aspects of indigenous and contemporary practices can be adopted to enhance the well-being and households' resilience to poverty in this community?"

Appendix 5: Household Survey

The purpose of the research is to assess the traditional and contemporary role of gender in poverty alleviation strategies of your community. The information you provide will contribute to valuable research and may help inform policy and practices in our community. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from study at any time without any consequence. Your responses will be confidential and will be used solely for research purposes. This questionnaire should take approximately 20-35 minutes to complete.

Researcher Names: Mashau Shumisanani, Institution: University of South Africa, PhD in Geography, E-mail: todansj@unisa.ac.za Research (supervisor: Prof MD Nicolau (nicolmd@unisa.ac.za)

COVID-19 **Declaration:**

Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, we are taking necessary precautions to ensure your safety during the data collection process. Please confirm that you have not experienced any symptoms of COVID-19 (such as fever, cough, or difficulty breathing) in the past 14 days, nor have you been in close contact with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19. Yes: No: __Temperature: _____ Symptoms: _____

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood the purpose of this survey and agree to participate voluntarily. You understand that you may withdraw at any time and that your responses will remain confidential.

Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____ Location: _____

Answer all questions with honesty!

QUESTION NUMBER	QUESTIONS	RESPONSE OPTION	
Section A: The household demographic (socio-economic) profile.			
1.	What is your gender?	1_Male_2_Female	
2.	What is your age?	1_20-29 years_2_30-39 years_3_40-49 years_4_50-59 years_5_60-69 years_6_70 years and above	
3.	What is your marital status?	1_Never Married_2_Married_3_Divorced_4_Widowed	
4.	What is your role in the family?	1_Mother_2_Father_3_Grandmother_4_Grandfather_5_Daughter in-law_6_Son in-law_7_Child head of family	
5.	What is your highest level of education?	1_No formal education_2_Primary education_3_Secondary education_4_Matric or grade 12_5_Certificate in training_6_Diploma_7_Higher degree	
6.	What is your current employment status?	1_Unemployed_2_Permanent employment_3_Informal employment or contracts_4_Self-employed_5_Pensioner or retired elder	
7.	What is your primary source of income?	1_No-income_2_Salary_3_Maintenance_4_Business_5_Social grant_6_Pension grant	
8.	What is your total household income?	1_R0.00_2_>R1000_3_R1001-R3000_4_R3001-R6000_5_R6001-R9000_6_<R9001	

9.	How many people stay in your house that are dependent on household income?	1_1-3 members_2_4-6 members_3_7-9 members_4_10 and above	
Section B: Household Poverty Alleviation Strategies (Modern or Traditional); Please indicate how often the following strategies are used in your household for poverty alleviation and the knowledge which influence the implementation of the indicated strategy of your house.			
10.	Does your household engage in subsistence farming?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
11.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
12.	Does your household keep domesticated livestock and poultry?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
13.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
14.	Does your household participate in collective labour for a token of appreciation?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
15.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
17.	Does your household receive donations such as food or any form of basic needs?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
18.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
19.	Does your household earn income from a small business?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
20.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
21.	Does your household borrow from neighbours, friends, or relatives?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
22.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
23.	Does your household earn income from commercial farming?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
24.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
25.	Does your household utilize social grants?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	

26.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
27.	Does your household earn income from jobs?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
28.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
Section C: Household Income Utilisation. Please indicate how household income is utilized for the following purposes.			
29.	How often do you buy food?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
30.	How often do you spend on child support or maintenance?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
31.	How often do you allocate funds for education	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
32.	How often do you spend money on transport?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
33.	How often do you spend money on electricity?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
34.	How often do you spend on house maintenance or infrastructure?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
35.	How often do you contribute to social clubs, burial societies, or stokvels?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
36.	How often do you spend on health services?	1_Never_2_Rarely_3_Sometimes_4_Always _5_Often	
Section D: Please rate the following services based on your experience in your home. Use the scale where 1 = Very Good and 5 = Very Poor.			
37.	How would you rate your access to food?	1_Very good_2_Good_3_Neutral_4_poor_5_Very poor	
38.	How would you rate your access to housing or shelter?	1_Very good_2_Good_3_Neutral_4_poor_5_Very poor	
39.	How would you rate your access to health services and facilities?	1_Very good_2_Good_3_Neutral_4_poor_5_Very poor	
40.	How would you rate your access to daily water supply?	1_Very good_2_Good_3_Neutral_4_poor_5_Very poor	
41.	How would you rate your access to sanitation services?	1_Very good_2_Good_3_Neutral_4_poor_5_Very poor	

42.	How would you rate your access to education facilities and support?	1_Very good_2_Good_3_Neutral_4_poor_5_Very poor	
43.	How would you rate your access to electricity?	1_Very good_2_Good_3_Neutral_4_poor_5_Very poor	
Section E: Gender Roles in Poverty Alleviation in terms of Indigenous and Contemporary Knowledge. Please identify who is responsible for defined activities below and rate your agreement with the following statements about the influence of indigenous and contemporary knowledge on gender roles.			
44.	Who would you say is the owner of the property or assets in your household?	1_Men_2_Women_3_Men and Women	
45.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1&2_4_ Not sure	
46.	Who would you say is the primary decision-maker in your home?	1_Men_2_Women_3_Men and Women	
47.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
48.	Who in your household is considered acceptable to work away from home?	1_Men_2_Women_3_Men and Women	
49.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
50.	Who in your household is considered acceptable for educational training?	1_Men_2_Women_3_Men and Women	
51.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
52.	Who in your household is considered acceptable to engage in agricultural and farming activities?	1_Men_2_Women_3_Men and Women	
53.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
54.	Who would you say is providing financial support for your family in your home?	1_Men_2_Women_3_Men and Women	
55.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
56.	Who in your home is responsible for household chores, such as laundry, cooking, and cleaning?	1_Men_2_Women_3_Men and Women	
57.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	

58.	Who in your household do you consider to be the head of the family?	1_Men_2_Women_3_Men and Women	
59.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
60.	Based on gender, who in your family would you choose for leadership in the community?	1_Men_2_Women_3_Men and Women	
61.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
Section E: Challenges and Impacts of Gender Roles in Poverty Alleviation. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding gender roles in your household. Additionally, specify the influence of knowledge systems on these statements using the ratings provided:			
62.	In your opinion, men and women have equal property rights and ownership.	1_Strongly Agree_2_ Agree_3_ Neutral_4_ Disagree_5_Strongly Disagree	
63.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
64.	In your opinion, men and women have equal opportunities to make decisions in your home.	1_Strongly Agree_2_ Agree_3_ Neutral_4_ Disagree_5_Strongly Disagree	
65.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
66.	In your opinion, men and women have equal opportunities to decide whether to relocate for jobs near or far from their home or current location.	1_Strongly Agree_2_ Agree_3_ Neutral_4_ Disagree_5_Strongly Disagree	
67.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
68.	In your opinion, men and women have equal opportunities to choose between school and training.	1_Strongly Agree_2_ Agree_3_ Neutral_4_ Disagree_5_Strongly Disagree	
69.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
70.	In your opinion, both men and women in your household engage in domestic agricultural activities equally.	1_Strongly Agree_2_ Agree_3_ Neutral_4_ Disagree_5_Strongly Disagree	
71.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	

72.	In your opinion, both men and women carry out domestic duties in your home equally.	1_Strongly Agree_2_ Agree_3_ Neutral_4_ Disagree_5_Strongly Disagree	
73.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
74.	In your opinion, either a man or a woman can be chosen for leadership roles within your community.	1_Strongly Agree_2_ Agree_3_ Neutral_4_ Disagree_5_Strongly Disagree	
75.	Knowledge influence	1_Indigenous or traditional norms_2_Modern expectations or education_3_ Both 1& 2_4_ Not sure	
76.	In your opinion, poverty affects men and women equally in your community.	1_Strongly Agree_2_ Agree_3_ Neutral_4_ Disagree_5_Strongly Disagree	
77.	In your community are there any specific barriers pertaining to gender roles? How does the indigenous or contemporary practice affect your gender roles in poverty alleviation? What can be done to improve gender roles in your community strategies of poverty alleviation? _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____		

Ndo Livhuwa nga maanda u dzhenelela havho (Thank you for your participation)!!