



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



The effect of feminism on the existence of women traditional practices: A case of Chisungu tradition of the Lenje people in Chibombo district, central province of Zambia

Chisebe Sylvester ^{1,*}, Chanda Chansa Thelma ^{2,*} and Domboka Robert Pedzisai ¹

¹ School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences. Eden University, Lusaka, Zambia.

² Faculty of Postgraduate Studies & Research. Chreso University, Lusaka, Zambia.

World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2025, 25(03), 039-050

Publication history: Received on 20 January 2025; revised on 24 February 2025; accepted on 27 February 2025

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2025.25.3.0690>

Abstract

Feminism has significantly influenced the existence of women's traditional practices, including the Chisungu tradition of the Lenje people in Chibombo District, Central Province of Zambia. Chisungu, a female initiation rite marking the transition from girlhood to womanhood, has historically played a crucial role in shaping social values, gender roles, and cultural identity. However, the rise of feminist movements advocating for gender equality, women's rights, and the elimination of practices perceived as oppressive has led to a transformation in how such traditions are viewed and practiced. The research design was descriptive survey with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. The sample size was 100 respondents; Village Head Men and Community Members (Villagers). The data collection process involved distributing the questionnaires to the selected participants and conducting individual interviews. The quantitative data collected were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods, such as descriptive statistics using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and Microsoft excel whereas the qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings revealed that feminist advocacy has contributed to the gradual decline of certain aspects of Chisungu, particularly those perceived as reinforcing patriarchal norms and limiting women's autonomy. Additionally, education, modernization, and legal frameworks advocating for women's rights have played a role in reshaping Chisungu, leading to a more contemporary interpretation that aligns with evolving societal values. However, tensions exist between preserving cultural heritage and embracing feminist ideals, as some community members view the transformation as an erosion of tradition. The study therefore recommended stakeholders, including cultural leaders, feminists, and policymakers, to engage in dialogue and identify ways to modernize the Chisungu tradition while ensuring that women's rights and dignity are upheld.

Keywords: Chisungu; Feminism; Gender Equality; Lenje People and Traditional Practices

1. Introduction

The Lenje people of Central Province of Zambia are found in the east of Lukanga Swamp and their chief is Chief Mukuni who claims Luba Origin. Today, Lenje people are found in the following Districts; Chibombo, Chisamba, Kabwe, Kapiri Mposhi, Mumbwa, Masaiti and Mpongwe. Therefore, Lenje speaking people are known of practicing traditional ceremony called 'Kulamba Kubwalo'. The traditional ceremony is practiced every year in October in Chibombo District of Central Province of Zambia. The essence of the 'Kulamba Kubwalo is to honour the chief and to appease the ancestral spirits. The Lenje people have also traditional initiation ceremony that prepare a girl child to adulthood. The Lenje speaking people of Chibombo District started practicing Chisungu initiation ceremony since 1920s. This initiation ceremony was practiced annually and the minimum number of girls were three or four. In addition, after 2000 people started reducing the number of girls to one or zero to be initiated and also skipping a year without conducting the

* Corresponding author: Chisebe Sylvester

ceremony. It is believed that Lenje women of Chibombo District had have been influenced by women groups who are not in support of cultural practices. Therefore, these same women's groups have led to the introduction of feminism. Rasing (2010) contend that every culture has certain ideas about how a man and a woman should behave.

Feminism has significantly influenced the existence of women's traditional practices, such as the Chisungu tradition of the Lenje people in Chibombo District, Central Province of Zambia. Chisungu is a Lenje name that refer to an initiation ceremony that prepares young girls into adult life particularly marriages. Young girls were initiated into Chisungu when they had reach puberty. During this ritual passage, girls were kept indoors and taught how to sexually satisfy a man and also how to observe certain traditional customs and beliefs in marriage amongst other things. In a similar fashion, Gillian et al (2015) state that initiation ceremonies involving preparation of children for marriage influence early marriages in that young people develop a desire for marriage because they feel grown up after the rites. Chisungu, a coming-of-age initiation ceremony for young girls, has historically been a cultural cornerstone for imparting knowledge on womanhood, marital responsibilities, and social norms. However, feminist ideologies advocating for gender equality, women's rights, and the rejection of patriarchal traditions have challenged certain aspects of Chisungu, particularly those perceived as reinforcing gender stereotypes and limiting women's autonomy. Increased awareness of gender-based discrimination and the push for modern education and economic empowerment have led to modifications or, in some cases, the decline of such practices (Chanda & Madoda, 2024). While some argue that Chisungu fosters cultural identity and imparts valuable life skills, others view it as outdated, particularly where it involves elements of submission and exclusion from modern opportunities. Consequently, feminism's influence has sparked debates over whether such traditions should be preserved, reformed, or entirely abandoned, reflecting broader societal shifts in gender roles and cultural practices in Zambia.

"Feminism is the idea that women should have political, social, sexual, intellectual and economic rights equal to those of men" (Walby, 2011). "It involves various movements, treaties and philosophies, all concerned with issues of gender difference, which advocate equality for women and the campaign for women's rights and interest". The Feminist movement was an ongoing reaction against the male definition of woman's role and functions in the society. In most western civilizations, men have dominated politics, society and the economy of their worlds. Ibid (2011) added that "men have suppressed the voices of the women so that they could mold it the way they wanted it."

Agha (2014) say that feminism has roots in the earliest eras of human civilization. It was typically separated into three waves: first wave feminism which deals with property rights and the right to vote, second wave feminism, which focuses on equality and anti-discrimination and third wave feminism, which started in the 1990s as a backlash to the second wave's perceived privileging of women. The feminism can be categorized into two parts: Western and African Feminism. The two groups have promoted equalities across ethnicities in the world today (Ackerly, 2018). Therefore, the culture especially in Africa has been affected by this movement. Feminism has remained questionable and perceived as incompatible with African values (Atanga, 2013). Therefore, it has been understood as being anti-men and hence against values of marriage, childbearing and preservation of the family. The African perception of feminism echoes Salzman's (2018) view of feminism which is anti-men and a diversion of the initial goal of Western feminism which was to "challenge male domination and female subordination." Ibid (2018), recognize the existence of the inequities between the sexes. Feminism brought the abandonment in African traditional practices by embracing western way of equalizing men and women in our communities. Zambia was not left out in this problem that feminism had brought in the world. In Zambia, a number of ethnic groups stopped practicing their gender biased traditional initiation ceremonies that prepares young children to adulthood.

The Lenje speaking people of Chibombo District in Central Province, Zambia had traditional initiation ceremony that prepares a girl child before marriage and this initiation ceremony was known as Chisungu. However, Chisungu was an initiation ceremony that a girl child should go through at the age of 16 in order to prepare her to adulthood life. In this study initiate will refer to a female who has had her first menarche and is undergoing an initiation rite. An initiation is a process, a ritual of transition, through which a new identity of a girl was constructed. It is a process through which the basis of adult life was laid down for an individual. Ahmed (2014), explain that there are three stages of initiation, these are: first, separation; when an individual was separated from others and confined to a house of initiation. Secondly, the marginalization stage, which demonstrates the insignificance of the initiation.

It was during this stage that the initiate was taught and equipped with an extensive body of societal traits that a woman was expected to have and used in order to know how to live her newly attained phase of life. Thirdly, the aggregation stage; it was during this stage that an initiate is incorporated into the new state (adulthood). This stage signifies the end of the whole initiation process and the exit was a public spectacle where the initiate was introduced to the rest of the community as an adult (Rasing, 2010). Feminism brought abandonment in cultural practices among Africans and made loss of identity in the world. Many Africans have not supported this because people have lost cultural identity. This

movement has put the traditional practices in suspense due to the new cultural values that have been embraced by Africans. The traditional ceremonies help in preserving the norms, values, beliefs and practices of any ethnic group in Zambia.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The Chisungu tradition, a significant rite of passage for young Lenje women in Chibombo District, Central Province of Zambia, has long played a crucial role in shaping cultural identity, social norms, and gender roles. However, Chanda & Ngulube (2024) in their study noted that the rise of feminist ideologies advocating for gender equality, women's empowerment, and the rejection of patriarchal structures has led to increasing scrutiny of such traditional practices. Feminism challenges aspects of Chisungu that reinforce gender stereotypes, subordination, and prescribed roles for women, raising concerns about its relevance and sustainability in contemporary society. While some argue that the tradition preserves cultural heritage and imparts valuable life lessons, others contend that it perpetuates outdated norms that limit women's autonomy and opportunities. Mutale (2017) conducted a study on this topic, "The significance and resilience of the Chinamwali initiation ceremony of the Chewa people of Katete district of Zambia in the face of social change." As initiation ceremonies are a vital part of the society in traditional life. Munthali et al (2004) say their main essence is to educate, socialize into adult roles and transmit morals and values of society. Fumpa-Makano (2019) conducted a study on this this topic "Girls' Initiation Ceremonies in Zambia: Reflections on their Role in Girl Child Educational Advancement." Chitondo & Chanda (2023) revealed that culture plays a critical role in shaping people's customs, traditions, norms, beliefs, values, morals, and aspirations. However, the studies by Ibid (2017) and Ibid (2019) did not look at the effects of feminism on the existence of women traditional practices. Based on the two studies, the importance of preserving traditional practices is paramount. This means that traditional practices must not be obstructed by the external forces such as feminism. This study sought to examine the extent to which feminist perspectives influence the continuation, modification, or decline of the Chisungu tradition among the Lenje people. By exploring the perceptions of various stakeholders, including women, traditional leaders, and feminists, the study aims to understand the evolving dynamics between feminism and cultural traditions and assess the broader implications for gender roles and cultural preservation in Zambia.

1.2. Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Examine how Chisungu initiation ceremony of the Lenje people of Chibombo District of Central Province was being practiced.
- Determine the positive and negative effects of feminism on women traditional practices among Lenje people of Chibombo District of Central Province.

1.3. Conceptual Framework

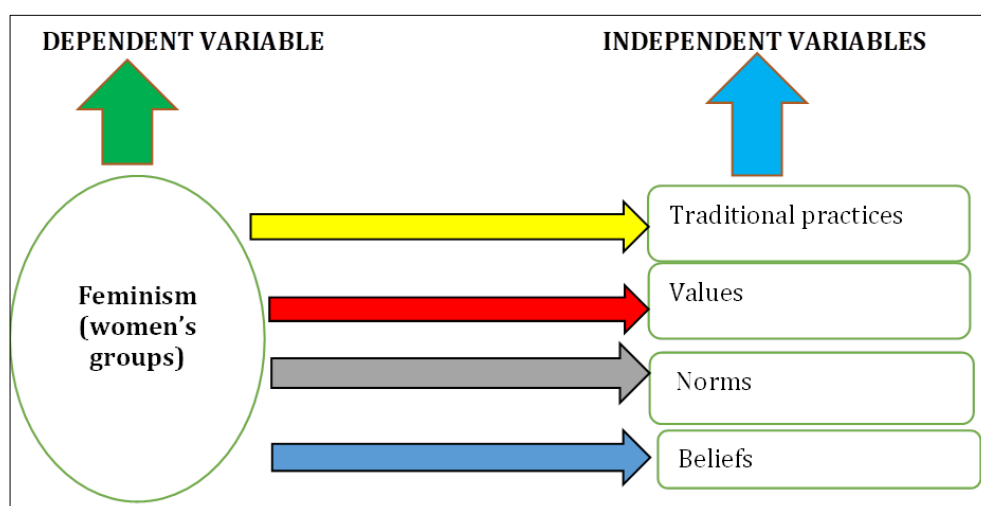


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

The study was conceptualized based on the current status of the Chisungu initiation ceremony and how it has been affected by feminism through various women's groups in Chibombo District of Central Province. The values, beliefs and norms should be protected from being attacked by feminism.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it explores the impact of feminism on the continuity and transformation of women's traditional practices, focusing on the Chisungu tradition of the Lenje people in Chibombo District, Central Province of Zambia. By examining how feminist ideologies influence cultural perceptions, gender roles, and the relevance of Chisungu in contemporary society, the study provides insights into the tension between cultural preservation and gender equality. It contributes to academic discourse on the intersection of feminism and indigenous traditions, offering perspectives on whether feminist movements challenge, modify, or reinforce such practices. Additionally, the study is valuable for policymakers, cultural custodians, and gender advocates in understanding how feminist-driven social change affects traditional initiation ceremonies, informing strategies for balancing cultural heritage with women's rights. The findings may also aid efforts to promote cultural inclusivity in feminist dialogues while ensuring that traditional rites evolve in ways that uphold both cultural identity and gender equity.

2. Research methodology

The research design was descriptive survey with both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in order to attain the comprehensive results (Banda et al, 2017). The study was conducted in Chibombo district, Zambia among the Lenje people. Purposive sampling was used specifically for the village Headmen who participated in the study while systematic sampling was used on community members by counting the households and picking the prime numbers in order to come with a desired sample size. The sample consisted 100 respondents; 10% of the target population 1000 (n=1000; n=10) which included; 10 village head men and 100 community members (villagers). The data collection process involved distributing the questionnaires to the selected participants and conducting individual interviews. The quantitative data collected through the questionnaires were analyzed using appropriate statistical methods, such as descriptive statistics using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and Microsoft excel whereas the qualitative data from semi structured interviews were analyzed thematically. The study upheld research ethical considerations such as voluntary participation of the respondents, confidentiality, honesty, and right of privacy.

3. Findings and discussions

The following findings and discussions were presented according to set research objectives:

3.1. How Chisungu Initiation Ceremony of the Lenje People of Chibombo District of Central Province was being practiced

3.1.1. Age at initiation

The findings revealed that the age at which initiation ceremony was conducted varied and depended on the decision of parents of initiates. Girls who used to attend Chisungu were only those who had started menstruation cycles. Girls aged 16 - 25 attend the Chisungu initiation ceremony. There are some girls who attend the Chisungu initiation ceremony at a much older age. The moment she returned to her home she attended Chisungu.

"It was believed that they initiated children who had breasts already so that they know how to keep themselves from men" (56-year female respondent, 2022).

"Girls were initiated at 16 when they were beginning to know boys and so to avoid problems, parents would decide to initiate them" (66-year female respondent, 2022).

Similarly, (respondents 11, 2022) had this to say: *"at the age of 16 they could just see blood on their pants without knowing how to take care of themselves. Therefore, between the age of 16 – 25 years a child should be initiated because is a critical period."*

In addition, those old women who wanted to be initiated were accommodated because it was a crucial practice that prepared girls and women in all spheres of life.

Girls aged 16 - 25 were at liberty to attend the Chisungu initiation ceremony. There were some girls who attended the Chisungu initiation ceremony at an older age. The moment she returned to her home from school, she would be initiated in Chisungu. It was believed that the initiation was meant for children who had breasts already so that they would know how to keep themselves and also from men. It was noted also that girls were initiated at 16 because they had started knowing boys and so to avoid problems, parents used to initiate them. In addition, at the age of 16 a girl could just see blood on her pants without knowing how to take care of her. Therefore, between the age of 16 – 25 years a child should be initiated because was a critical period. In addition, those old who wanted to be initiated were accommodated because it was a crucial practice that prepared girls in all spheres of life. There was traditional practice known as Chilebelebe which was meant to prepare girls for sex. Chilebelebe is a small shrub with soft roots peeled and inserted in a girls' private to prepare her for sex in future. In olden days, Chilebelebe used to go hand in hand with the initiation ceremony. The traditional initiation ceremony was abandoned by elderly women, adolescents have adopted it and are now encouraging younger girls to do it.

3.1.2. Place of initiation ceremony

The initiation ceremony used to take place within the village from one or two identified households. Most of the respondents were not initiated from selected villages but from other villages and chiefdoms. During the period of initiation, school girls could stop going to school for the period stipulated by their parents. Therefore, there were different intervals depending on the circumstances surrounding the initiates. The Chisungu initiation used to take place in the following months after harvesting: July, August, September, October and November. In olden days, village Headmen were at the center of organizing the Chisungu initiation ceremony. Therefore, all community members were motivated to initiate their children because the custodians of traditions were influential. Most of the respondents who were initiated from 2000 to 2022 were not initiated from selected villages. Parents or guardians used to tell the village head about their desire for their children to be initiated.

Respondents said that initiation ceremony took place with the village from one or two identified households. Most of the respondents were not initiated from selected villages but from other villages and chiefdoms. During the period of initiation, school girls could stop going to school for the period indicated by their parents.

Therefore, there were different intervals depending on the circumstances surrounding the initiates (75-year male respondent, 2022).

"The Chisungu initiation used to take place in the following months after harvesting: July, August, September, October and November" (45-year female respondent, 2022).

"In the past, village Headmen were at the center of organizing the Chisungu initiation ceremony. Therefore, all community members were motivated to initiate their children because the custodians of traditions were influential" (70-year-old male Headman, 2022).

"In chiefdom Chitanda, Liteta and Shakumbila are still conducting traditional initiation ceremony" (43-year-old female respondents, 2022).

"Most of the respondents who were initiated from 2000 to 2022 were not initiated from selected villages. In the past, people were getting initiated in the house" (50-year-old male respondent, 2022).

3.1.3. Events at initiation ceremony

Barker & Ricardo (2015), explained that there are three stages of initiation, these are: first, separation; when an individual is separated from others and confined to a house of initiation. Secondly, the marginalization stage, which demonstrates the insignificance of the initiation. Girls were not only taught sex matters but how to cook, giving respect to elderly and peers, welcoming visitors and shaving pubic hair and serving the husband. The initiators could demonstrate on how to execute all mentioned subjects to an initiate. Furthermore, during this period an initiate is never allowed to go outside the house without an escort of an initiator with a Chitenge material covering her heard. When an initiate was about to go out now, the community members could be notified to witness and, on this day, animals were slaughtered to celebrate the success of girl children. The initiate was taught not have sexual intercourse during menstruation, and that a menstruating woman should neither cook for others nor salt her own food (Kangwa, 2011). The findings showed that well define woman passed through traditional initiation ceremony, she was taught how to take care of herself, respecting peers and every elderly person, how to cook and serve the husband and how to welcome visitors. Those women who passed through Chisungu outlived in their marriages and had less problem because they were taught how to humble themselves when they were wrong.

Parents used to tell their village headman about their desire for their children to be initiated. Respondents were asked to give a description of what actually happens at the initiation ceremony.

“The traditional practice known as Chilebelebe which was meant to prepare girls for sex. Chilebelebe is a small shrub with soft roots are peeled and inserted in a girls’ private to prepare her for sex in future and in olden days, Chilebelebe used to go hand in hand with the initiation ceremony know Chisungu” (50-year-old female respondent, 2022).

Similarly, (respondents 4, 2022) had this to say: *“although the tradition has abandoned by elderly women, adolescents have adopted it and are now encouraging younger girls to do it.”*

“Girls were not only taught sex matters but how to cook, giving respect to elderly and peers, welcoming visitors, shaving pubic hair and serving the husband, they could demonstration on how to execute all mentioned subjects to an initiate” (66-year-old female respondent, 2022).

Similarly, (67-year-old male village headman, 2022) had this to say: *“during this period an initiate was never allowed to go outside the house without the escort of an initiator with a Chitenge material covering her head. When an initiate was about to out now, the community members could be notified to witness and, on this day, animals were killed to celebrate the success of girl children.”*

3.2. The Positive and Negative Effects of Feminism on Women Traditional Practices among Lenje People

3.2.1. The Positive Effects of Feminism on Women Traditional Practices

Regarding the positive effects of feminism on women traditional practices, the collected data was presented in Table 1 below;

Table 1 The Positive Effects of Feminism on Women Traditional Practices

	Items	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	S.D
1.	Increase people’s awareness of gender inequalities	47%	25%	4%	15%	9%	20%	15.2%
2.	Shows how gender roles are socially constructed	68%	19%	1%	7%	5%	20%	24.7%
3.	Made the role of women and gender relations visible	61%	25%	1%	7%	6%	20%	22.1%
4.	Less gender discrimination	47%	4%	4%	26%	19%	20%	15.98%
5.	Feminism strengthens human rights	45%	9%	2%	22%	22%	20%	14.7%
6.	Better chance for a leading corporate career for women	39%	32%	7%	8%	14%	20%	13.1%
7.	May lead to a more tolerant society	61%	7%	3%	18%	11%	20%	21.1%

The results in Table 1 results indicated that majority (72%) of respondents strongly agreed that feminism increases people’s awareness of gender inequalities whilst (24%) were against the notion. The rest (4%) of the respondents were not sure if feminism increases people’s awareness of gender inequalities or not. Majority (87%) of respondents strongly agreed that women are degrading men just like what they believe men are doing to them whilst (12%) were against the idea. The rest (1%) of respondents were not sure if women are degrading men just like what they believe men are doing to them or not. Majority (86%) of respondents strongly agreed that it ignores the chances that are happening such as the equal Pay Act and Free Will whilst (13%) were against the statement. The rest (1%) of the respondents were not sure if it ignores the chances that are happening such as the equal Pay Act and Free Will or not. Majority (51%) of respondents strongly agreed that more children lack mother’s care whilst (45%) were against the notion. The rest (4%) of the respondents were not sure if more children lack mother’s care or not. Majority (54%) of respondents strongly agreed that misunderstood domestic responsibilities id caused by feminism whilst (44%) against the notion. The rest (4%) of the respondents were not sure if misunderstanding of domestic responsibilities was caused by feminism or not. Majority (71%) of respondents strongly agreed that women may be preferred in case of divorce whilst (22%) were against the idea. The rest (7%) of the respondents were not sure if women may be preferred in case of divorce was caused feminism or not. Majority (68%) of respondents strongly agreed that more career women mean fewer children whilst (29%) were against the notion. The rest (3%) of the respondents were not sure if more career women mean fewer children or not.

The findings from questionnaires also comprehended with the semi-structured interviewed as evidenced by respondents 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10 and 11 below.

“Feminism increases people’s awareness of gender inequalities. Women and girls were sidelined in decision-making process. Therefore, feminism came to make women and girls realize their potential in all spheres of life” (Respondent 2, 2022).

Similarly, respondent (3, 2022) had this to say: “feminism shows that gender roles were socially constructed. It has contributed heavily in making sure that men were oriented in women roles and this made boys to help girls in doing house chores and fair treatment regardless of their sex difference.”

“The movement (feminism) make the role of women and gender relations visible. This time, women and girls are free to do whatever they want as long as it brings development at individual, family and community levels. Women have moved from kitchen and contribute so much to the needs of the family and nation at large” (Respondent 5, 2022).

Feminism advocated for an abolishment of gender discrimination between men and women. There is equal treatment at work, school, church, community and other special gatherings. This less discrimination makes women ascend to big position in private and public firms” (Respondent 7, 2022).

Similarly, Respondent 9, 2022 had this to say: “feminism had promoted human rights at all levels. Human right motivates individuals to participate in all community and national affairs and excel. People were free to air out their views, reject and correct the errors.”

“Regarding better chance for a leading corporate career for women. Women and girls have venture into careers and businesses which were considered to be gender bias. Feminism made women also to lead men some ways because of what their capability realized by themselves” (Respondent 10, 2022).

“Feminism had created more tolerant society. Men and women were able to move together in solving problems and development. Women were believed in giving good ideas during meetings. This gave more power to women to become leaders in all dimensions of life” (Respondent 11, 2022).

Therefore, feminism increases people’s awareness of gender inequalities, shows how gender roles are socially constructed, made the role of women and gender relations visible, less gender discrimination, better chance for a leading corporate career for women, and may lead to a more tolerant society respectively. The respondents also expressed that feminism has played a crucial role in increasing awareness of gender inequalities and challenging traditional gender roles among the Lenje people. Kang’ethe (2013) supported this finding by adding that by advocating for gender equality, feminist movements have helped communities recognize the disparities in opportunities, rights, and treatment between men and women, particularly in areas such as education, leadership, and economic participation. This awareness has led to critical reflections on traditional practices that may have marginalized women, encouraging efforts to promote more inclusive customs. Additionally, feminism has highlighted how gender roles are socially constructed rather than biologically determined. Among the Lenje people, this realization has contributed to shifts in cultural expectations, allowing women to participate more actively in decision-making processes, economic activities, and leadership roles that were previously reserved for men. As a result, traditional practices are gradually evolving to become more equitable, fostering an environment where women can assert their rights while maintaining cultural identity (Chanda, 2023).

The study results further indicated that feminism has played a crucial role in reducing gender discrimination and strengthening human rights among the Lenje people by challenging traditional practices that marginalized women. Historically, Lenje cultural norms often placed women in subordinate roles, limiting their access to education, leadership, and economic opportunities. However, feminist advocacy has led to increased awareness and rejection of discriminatory customs such as early marriages and gender-based violence (Sibani, 2018). As a result, more women now enjoy equal rights, access to education, and the freedom to participate in decision-making processes within their communities. Furthermore, feminism has reinforced human rights by promoting women’s autonomy, dignity, and legal protection, ensuring that cultural traditions evolve to respect gender equality (John et al., 2017). This shift has not only empowered women but also contributed to the overall social and economic development of Lenje society.

Additionally, feminism has had a positive impact on traditional practices among the Lenje people by providing women with better opportunities for leadership roles in the corporate sector and fostering a more tolerant society. As feminist ideals promote gender equality, Lenje women are increasingly encouraged to pursue education and professional

careers, breaking free from restrictive customs that previously confined them to domestic roles. This empowerment enhances their chances of securing leadership positions in the corporate world, thereby improving their socio-economic status (Mwansa et al., 2025). Additionally, feminism challenges discriminatory cultural norms, leading to a more inclusive and tolerant society. Otite & Ogionwo (2016) added that by advocating for equal rights, feminist movements help dismantle patriarchal traditions that marginalize women, fostering a community where diverse perspectives are valued and respected. This shift not only benefits women but also contributes to societal progress by promoting fairness, respect, and shared responsibilities in both the domestic and public spheres.

3.2.2. The Negative Effects of Feminism on Women Traditional Practices

Regarding the negative effects of feminism on women traditional practices, the collected information presented in Table 2 below;

Table 2 The Negative Effects of Feminism on Women Traditional Practices

	ITEMS	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	S. D
1.	It is a biased view against men	51%	17%	10%	13%	9%	20%	15.7%
2.	Women are degrading men just like what they believe men are doing to them.	39%	28%	6%	11%	16%	20%	11.98%
3.	Ignores the chances that are happening such as the equal Pay Act and Free Will	33%	24%	9%	15%	19%	20%	8.2%
4.	More children lack mother's care	48%	21%	15%	5%	11%	20%	14.9%
5.	Misunderstood Domestic responsibilities	65%	17%	5%	4%	9%	20%	22.96%
6.	Women may be preferred in case of divorce	57%	29%	2%	7%	5%	20%	20.8%
7.	More career women mean fewer children	35%	19%	3%	17%	25%	20%	10.5%

The results in Table 2 indicated that majority (66%) of respondents strongly agreed that feminism increases people's awareness of gender inequalities whilst (22%) were against the notion. The rest (10%) of the respondents were not sure if feminism increases people's awareness of gender inequalities or not. Majority (67%) of respondents strongly agreed that women are degrading men just like what they believe men are doing to them whilst (27%) were against the idea. The rest (6%) of respondents were not sure if women are degrading men just like what they believe men are doing to them or not. Majority (57%) of respondents strongly agreed that it ignores the chances that are happening such as the equal Pay Act and Free Will whilst (34%) were against the statement. The rest (9%) of the respondents were not sure if it ignores the chances that are happening such as the equal Pay Act and Free Will or not. Majority (69%) of respondents strongly agreed that more children lack mother's care whilst (16%) were against the notion. The rest (15%) of the respondents were not sure if more children lack mother's care or not. Majority (82%) of respondents strongly agreed that misunderstood domestic responsibilities is caused by feminism whilst (13%) were against the notion. The rest (5%) of the respondents were not sure if misunderstanding of domestic responsibilities was caused by feminism or not. Majority (86%) of respondents strongly agreed that women may be preferred in case of divorce whilst (12%) were against the idea. The rest (2%) of the respondents were not sure if women may be preferred in case of divorce was caused feminism or not. Majority (54%) of respondents strongly agreed that more career women mean fewer children whilst (42%) against the notion. The rest (3%) of the respondents were not sure if more career women mean fewer children or not.

The findings from questionnaires also comprehended with the semi-structured interviewed as evidenced by respondents 22, 31, 44, 49, 60, 73, and 84 below.

"It is a biased view against men. The movement (feminism) favors only women and girls and this created serious problem between gender. This had left a lot of men struggling on how to manage their homes because women could fight back which was not the case in the past" (Respondent 22, 2022).

Similarly (Respondent 31, 2022) had this to say: "women are degrading men just like what they believe men are doing to them. Women are mistreating men in the compounds today in the name of equalizing men and women. Therefore, men are being beaten by their wives and they cannot speak out and if men report the matter, women are favoured."

“Feminism ignores the chances that are happening such as the equal Pay Act and Free Will. Because of favoritism brought by feminism, men and women were no longer interested to do things together because women considered themselves superior to men” (Respondent 44, 2022).

Similarly, (Respondent 49, 2022) had this to say: more children lack mother’s care because their mothers are busy with different activities of life. Women have no enough time to their children as for that they prefer employing a house help in place of them. Feminism had disconnected mother and child relationship.”

“Misunderstood domestic responsibilities. In a situation where a man and woman are both working, a woman does not bring money home to make budget with her man. She will say, all things should be managed by a man and her salary is meant for hair and nails only. This had brought a lot of issues among couples in every community” (Respondent 60, 2022).

Similarly, (Respondent 73, 2022) had this to say: women may be preferred in case of divorce. Since feminism had supported women so much and made men lost control over them, divorce became an option for men to bring back peace. Men had no say because women had grown wings and for this high number of divorces were recorded in every community.”

“More career women mean fewer children. Feminism had promoted women folk so much and had allowed them to realize their potential to excel. The community leaders were very much concerned about people having few children. The community was not expanding because community members had small numbers of children. Therefore, feminism was considered to be the root of decrease in child bearing” (Respondent 84, 2022)

Therefore, it was a biased view against men, women were degrading men just like what they believe men were doing to them, ignores the chances that are happening such as the equal Pay Act and Free Will, more children lack mother’s care, misunderstood domestic responsibilities, women may be preferred in case of divorce, and more career women mean fewer children respectively.

The study results further showed that among the Lenje people, feminism has had both positive and negative effects, particularly on traditional practices that define gender roles. One significant negative impact is the way some women, in their pursuit of gender equality, have begun to degrade men in the same way they believe men have historically oppressed them. This shift has created tensions within families and communities, where respect for traditional male roles is being challenged (Hauchard, 2017). Instead of fostering mutual respect and cooperation, some women adopt an adversarial stance, dismissing traditional male authority and roles, which can lead to conflicts in relationships and the weakening of cultural cohesion. Elizabeth et al (2022) say that this reactionary approach undermines the essence of gender equality by replacing one form of dominance with another, rather than promoting balance and respect between genders. As a result, traditional practices that once promoted unity and complementarity between men and women among the Lenje people are being eroded, potentially leading to social instability and a loss of cultural identity.

Additionally, among the Lenje people, feminism has been perceived by some as contributing to the misunderstanding of traditional domestic responsibilities assigned to women. Traditionally, Lenje women have played crucial roles in managing households, nurturing children, and upholding cultural values, which are deeply embedded in their identity and societal expectations. However, the advocacy for gender equality and women's empowerment has, in some cases, led to a shift in these roles, causing tension between modern feminist ideals and traditional practices (Chanda et al., 2024). Some argue that feminism has encouraged a rejection of domestic duties, leading to conflicts in marriages, weakening family structures, and creating generational gaps in knowledge transfer. Elders within the Lenje community express concerns that young women are becoming less interested in learning domestic skills, such as cooking, child-rearing, and traditional crafts, which are essential for maintaining cultural continuity. This shift is sometimes misinterpreted as a complete abandonment of traditional values rather than an evolution of gender roles (Dionne, 2015). As a result, the perceived neglect of domestic responsibilities is seen as a negative effect of feminism, sparking debates on how to balance modern gender dynamics with the preservation of cultural heritage.

Furthermore, among the Lenje people, feminism has had certain negative effects on traditional practices, particularly in the areas of marriage and family dynamics. Kangaude (2017) noted that one such impact is the preference for women in cases of divorce, where feminist ideals advocating for women's rights have influenced legal and customary practices, often leading to men being disadvantaged in property and child custody disputes. This shift disrupts the traditional balance in marital unions, potentially discouraging men from entering into long-term commitments. Additionally, the rise of career-oriented women has contributed to lower birth rates, as many women prioritize professional growth over large families (Labous, 2015). In Lenje society, where extended families and high birth rates were traditionally valued for social and economic stability, this trend challenges established norms and may weaken intergenerational family

structures. As a result, while feminism has empowered women in many ways, it has also altered traditional gender roles and family expectations, creating tensions between modern aspirations and cultural heritage.

Recommendations

The following are actions that should be taken on the basis of the findings of this study:

- **Balancing Feminist Perspectives with Cultural Preservation:**
 - Stakeholders, including cultural leaders, feminists, and policymakers, should engage in dialogue to identify ways to modernize the Chisungu tradition while ensuring that women's rights and dignity are upheld.
- **Community Education and Sensitization:**
 - Cultural leaders should implement community-based awareness programs to educate both young women and men about feminist principles and the cultural significance of Chisungu. These programs should encourage critical discussions on the evolving role of traditional practices in a modern society and how they can be adapted to promote gender equality while maintaining cultural identity

4. Conclusion

Feminism has had a significant impact on the existence of traditional women's practices, such as the Chisungu initiation ceremony among the Lenje people of Chibombo District, Central Province of Zambia. While Chisungu has historically played a crucial role in imparting cultural values, life skills, and social expectations to young women, feminist ideologies advocating for gender equality, women's rights, and autonomy have led to shifts in its practice. Modern feminist perspectives challenge certain aspects of Chisungu that reinforce gender roles, subordination, and patriarchal norms, prompting a reevaluation of its relevance in contemporary society. As a result, while some elements of the tradition persist, they have undergone modifications to align with changing societal values, legal frameworks, and education. However, tensions exist between preserving cultural heritage and promoting women's empowerment, leading to debates on whether Chisungu should be entirely abandoned or adapted to reflect modern gender-equitable principles. Ultimately, feminism has influenced the transformation of Chisungu, ensuring that while aspects of cultural identity remain, they do so in ways that uphold the dignity and rights of women in an evolving society.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

Statement of ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

References

- [1] Ackerly, B. A. (2018). *Just Responsibility: A Human Rights Theory of Global Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [2] Agha, U. A. (2014). *Introduction to Sociology*. Retrieved from www.cssforum.com on 18 October, 2017.
- [3] Ahmed, B. (2014). *Confronting a Sexual Rite of Passage in Malawi*. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved February 22, 2019, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/01/confronting-a-sexual-rite-of-passage-in-malawi>
- [4] Atanga, L. L. (2013). *African Feminism?* In L. L. Atanga, E. E. Sibonile, L. Litosseliti, & J. Sunderland, *Gender and Language in Sub-Saharan Africa: Tradition, struggle and change* (pp. 301–314). Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- [5] Banda, S., Mpolomoka, D. L., Mbono, D., & Sampa, R.L (2017). "Use of Questions in Qualitative Research: How Questions Guided Our Study", *International Journal of Development Research*, 7, (12), 17895-17898, Available: <http://www.journalijdr.com>, ISSN: 2230-9926.
- [6] Banwari, M. (2015). *Dangerous To Mix: Culture and Politics in a Traditional Circumcision in South Africa*. *African Health Sciences*, 15(1), 283–287
- [7] Barker, G., & Ricardo, C. (2015). *Young Men and the Construction of Masculinity in Sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for HIV/ AIDS, Conflict, and Violence*. World Bank 2005. Retrieved January 28, 2019
- [8] Chanda, C. T. (2023). Factors Influencing Low Female Participation in Zambian Politics. A Case of Chawama Constituency of Lusaka District, Zambia. *International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering Technology and Science*, Volume 05, Issue 08, 2366-2374, August 2023, Available: www.irjmets.com, <https://doi.org/10.56726/IRJMETS44346>.
- [9] Chanda, C. T., & Madoda, D. (2024). Exploring the Relationship between Cultural Identity and Educational Equity: A Zambian Analysis. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, Vol 5, no 5, pp 11440-11448, May 2024, Available: www.ijrpr.com, ISSN 2582-7421.
- [10] Chanda, C. T., & Ngulube, L. (2024). Women in Leadership: Examining Barriers to Women's Advancement in Leadership Positions. *Asian Journal of Advanced Research and Reports*, Volume 18, Issue 6, Page 273-290; Available: <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajarr/2024/v18i6671>, Article no. AJARR. 116903, ISSN: 2582-3248.
- [11] Chanda, C. T., Phiri, E. V., Zohaib, H. S., Madoda, D., & Mwila, M. G. (2024). Examining the Role of Media Literacy in Promoting Gender Equality Practices in Lusaka District, Zambia. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, Vol 5, no 12, pp 6000-6011, December 2024, Available: www.ijrpr.com, ISSN 2582-7421.
- [12] Chitondo, L., & Chanda, C. T. (2023). Effects of Ethnic Diversity on the Development of a Country: A Case of Zambia. *International Journal of Current Business and Social Sciences*, Volume 9, Issue 5, 01-13, September, 2023, Available: www.ijcbss.org, ISSN: 2312-5985.
- [13] Dionne, K. Y. (2015). Social Networks, Ethnic Diversity, and Cooperative Behavior in Rural Malawi. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 27(4), 522–543. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0951629814556173>
- [14] Sibani, C. M. (2018). *Impact of Western Culture on Traditional African Society: Problems and Prospects*. Department of Religions, University of Benin
- [15] Elizabeth, S., Renata, T., & Maria B. (2022). The impact of adolescent initiation rites in East and Southern Africa: Implications for policies and practices, *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 27:1, 181-192, DOI: 10.1080/02673843.2022.2052123
- [16] Fumpa-Makano, R. (2019). *Girls' Initiation Ceremonies in Zambia: Reflections on their Role in Girl Child Educational Advancement*. Lusaka Publishing House: Zambia.
- [17] Hauchard, A. (2017). In Malawi, the Horrors of a Sexual Initiation Camp For Young Girls. *Le Monde*. August 2017. Retrieved January 25, 2019, from <https://www.worldcrunch.com/culture-society/in-malawi-the-horrors-of-a-sexual-initiationcamp-for-young-girls>
- [18] John, N. A., Stoebenau, K., Ritter, S., Edmeades, J., & Balvin, N. (March 1 2017). Gender Socialization during Adolescence in Low- And Middle-Income Countries: Conceptualization, Influences and Outcomes. Innocenti Discussion Paper, Retrieved January 31, 2019, from <http://repositorio.minedu.gob.pe/bitstream/handle/MINEDU/5318/Gender%20Socialization%20during%20Adolescence%20in%20Low-%20and%20Middle-Income%20Countries.pdf?sequence=1>
- [19] Kang'ethe, S. M. (2013). The Panacea and Perfidy of Cultural Rites of Circumcision in African Countries: Examples from Kenya, Botswana and South Africa. *EASSRR*, 29(1), 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.1353/eas.2013.0003>
- [20] Kangaude, G. D. (2017). Adolescent Sex and "Defilement" In Malawi Law and Society. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 17(2), 527–549. <https://doi.org/10.17159/1996-2096/2017/v17n2a8>
- [21] Kangwa, J. (2011). *Reclaiming The Values Of Indigenous Female Initiation Rites As A Strategy For HIV Prevention: A Gendered Analysis of Chisungu Initiation Rites among the Bemba People of Zambia [Master's Thesis]*. November 2011. Retrieved February 6, 2019, from <https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/handle/10413/8744>
- [22] Labous, J. (2015). *Zambian Sex Initiators Lead Revolution for Young Women*. Thomsen Reuters Foundation News. 28 April 2015. Retrieved February 5, 2019, from <http://news.trust.org/item/20150428112702-w3suc>

- [23] Munthali, A. C., Chimbiri, A., & Zulu, E. (2004). Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in Malawi: A Synthesis of Research Evidence. Occasional Report. The Alan Guttmacher Institute; No. 15. Retrieved February 4, 2019, from https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/2004/12/01/or_no15.pdf
- [24] Mutale, P. (2017). The Significance And Resilience Of The Chinamwali Initiation Ceremony Of The Chewa People Of Katete District Of Zambia In The Face Of Social Change [doctoral dissertation] Retrieved February 15, 2019, from <http://dspace.unza.zm:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/5206/MAIN%20DOCUMENT.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.
- [25] Mwansa, P., Chanda, C. T., & Ngulube, L. (2025). Assessing the Effect of Open Distance and E-learning (ODEL) in Enhancing Women's Access to Higher Education in Zambia. World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 25(01), 1805-1816, January 2025, Available: <https://wjarr.com/>, <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2025.25.1.0260>.
- [26] Otite, A., & Ogionwo, P. (2016). Problems of culture in Africa. Ibadan: Opex
- [27] Rasing, T. (2010). The Bush is burnt the Stories Remain: Female Initiation Rite in Urban Zambia. London: Lit Ver Lag Munster-Hamburg.
- [28] Salzman B. (2018). Puberty for Women: Freedom and Feminism in the Twenty-First Century.
- [29] Walby, S. (2011). Feminism in a Global Era. Economy and Society, 31(4): 533–557.

Authors' Short Biography

	<p>Chisebe Sylvester specializes in Civic Education and Religious Studies. Currently, he is lecturing under Social Sciences Department.</p>
	<p>Chanda Chansa Thelma (PhD) specializes in Education, Social Sciences and Politics. She is currently the Dean for Postgraduate Studies & Research.</p>
	<p>Domboka Robert Pedzisai specializes in Development Studies, Geography, Philosophy, and History. He is currently lecturing in the School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences.</p>