

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING AND PARTICIPATION IN TECHNICAL AND
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: A CASE STUDY OF
MARGINALIZED STUDENTS AT NAKAYALE VOCATIONAL TRAINING
CENTRE IN NAMIBIA

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AN ABSTRACT

of the thesis of *Selma Henok* for the degree of *Master of Technical and Vocational Education and Training* presented on 8 June 2025, entitled *Barriers to Accessing and Participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training: A case study of marginalized students at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre in Namibia*.

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This study presents an analysis of the findings aimed at exploring the barriers faced by marginalized students in accessing and participating in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre (NVTC). The research focused on understanding the systemic, socio-economic, and cultural challenges that hinder these students, particularly from the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba communities, from fully benefiting from TVET opportunities.

The findings reveal that while efforts to improve access to TVET for marginalized students exist, the implementation of inclusive policies and support systems remains insufficient and fragmented. These findings align with broader global trends in addressing barriers to education for disadvantaged groups, particularly in developing countries, where systemic inequities, socio-cultural norms, and inadequate institutional frameworks continue to limit equitable participation in TVET programs.



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Selma Henok

Degree Candidate

8 June 2025

शोध सार

विकास अध्ययनमा स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि सेल्मा हेनोकको शोध प्रबन्धको शीर्षक " प्राविधिक तथा व्यवसायिक शिक्षा तथा तालिममा पहुँच र सहभागिताका अवरोधहरू : नामिबियाको नाकायाले व्यवसायिक तालिम केन्द्रमा सीमान्तकृत विद्यार्थीहरूको एक अध्ययन" २५ जेठ २०८२ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो।



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उषा भण्डारी, पिएचडी

शोध निर्देशक

यस अध्ययनले नाकायाले वोकेशनल ट्रेनिङ सेन्टर (NVTC) मा सीमान्तकृत विद्यार्थीहरूले प्राविधिक तथा व्यावसायिक शिक्षा तथा तालिम (TVET) कार्यक्रममा पहुँच र सहभागिता गर्न सामना गर्ने अवरोधहरूको विश्लेषण प्रस्तुत गरेको छ। अनुसन्धानले विशेषगरी सान, ओभाहिम्बा, र ओभाजेम्बा समुदायका विद्यार्थीहरूलाई TVET अवसरहरूबाट पूर्ण लाभ लिन अवरोध गर्ने प्रणालीगत, सामाजिक-आर्थिक, र सांस्कृतिक चुनौतीहरू बुझ्नमा केन्द्रित थियो।

सीमान्तकृत विद्यार्थीहरूको लागि TVET मा पहुँच बढाउने प्रयासहरू भए पनि समावेशी नीतिहरू र सहयोग प्रणालीहरूको कार्यान्वयन अपुरो र टुक्रिएको अवस्थामा छ। अध्ययन निष्कर्षहरू शैक्षिक अवसरहरूमा वञ्चित समूहहरूको अवरोधलाई सम्बोधन गर्ने व्यापक विश्वव्यापी प्रवृत्तिहरूसँग मेल खान्छन्, विशेष गरी विकासशील मुलुकहरूमा, जहाँ प्रणालीगत असमानता, सामाजिक-सांस्कृतिक मान्यता, र अपर्याप्त संस्थागत संरचनाले अझै पनि TVET कार्यक्रमहरूमा समान सहभागितालाई सीमित गर्छ।



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सेल्मा हेनोक

उपाधी उम्मेदवार

२५ जेठ २०८२

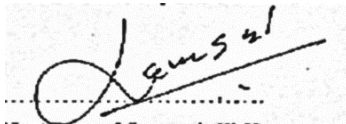
This dissertation, entitled *Barriers to Accessing and Participation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training: A case study of marginalized students at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre in Namibia*, presented by *Selma Henok* on 8 June 2025.

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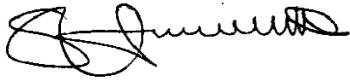
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and it has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.



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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful family, whose unwavering love, support, and encouragement have been my greatest source of strength and inspiration throughout this journey. I also dedicate this work to the entire TVET sector in Namibia and beyond. May this study contribute meaningfully to addressing the barriers faced by marginalized students and support the growth, inclusivity, and transformation of Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EFAGMR	Education for All Global Monitoring Report
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GCED	Global Citizenship Education
GOs	Governmental Organizations
MHETI	Ministry of Higher Education, Training, and Innovation
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSFAF	Namibia Students' Financial Assistance Fund
NTA	Namibia Training Authority
NVTC	Nakayale Vocational Training Centre
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides background information on the barriers marginalized students face in accessing and participating in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Namibia. It encompasses the study's rationale, the problem statement addressing the challenges encountered by indigenous groups such as the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba, the research's purpose, principal research questions, and the study's delimitation, concentrating on marginalized students enrolled in TVET programs at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre.

Education is widely recognized as a powerful tool for personal development and national progress. TVET is one of the many fields that looks like it could give people the hands-on skills they need to do well in today's work environment. TVET has become an important way to deal with unemployment and help the economy flourish in Namibia (Katire, 2024). But for a lot of students who are already at a disadvantage, such as those from indigenous groups like the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba, the promise of TVET is not fully realized. Although the government is trying to make the system more accessible to everyone, these students face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to access and participate in vocational education.

This dissertation looks closely at those barriers from the point of view of students at the NVTC. Namibia's government has tried to decentralize vocational education, provide financial aid, and start community-based programs (Ministry of Higher Education, Training, and Innovation [MHETI], 2022); however, many students who are already at a disadvantage are still being left behind. The reality on the ground is different from what policy papers say. Geography, poverty, cultural expectations, and lack of institutional support still make it hard to get into and participate in TVET (United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2018; Matengu et al., 2019).

This study uses a qualitative, ethnographic approach to look into these problems. It is based on the real-life experiences of six students from the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba communities and employs Social Exclusion Theory as a guide. This theory helps us understand how structural inequalities can keep people

and groups from getting the resources and opportunities that other people take for granted (Beall & Piron, 2005).

This study is very important because it looks at not only the problems but also how these students are able to deal with their problems and do well, even when the odds are against them. Their stories give teachers, policymakers, and institutions trying to make TVET fairer and more responsive to the needs of all Namibians useful information.

The study gives us a lot of information about Nakayale VTC, but it also adds to bigger conversations about access, participation, and social justice in education. In the end, the goal is to help make vocational training more inclusive and empowering so that everyone, no matter where they come from, has a real chance to grow, thrive, and make a difference in society.

Background

Technical and vocational education is very important for getting people ready for work and helping the economy grow (Naanda, 2010). Like in many other nations, students from marginalized groups in Namibia have trouble getting into and taking part in technical and vocational education. These obstacles make it harder for them to learn new skills, limit their chances of moving up in society, and keep the country's education system unfair (Maclean, 2010). The goal of this study is to find out what the main problems are for underprivileged students in Namibia when it comes to technical and vocational education. This will help us understand the difficulties better and suggest ways to make things better (Smith & John, 2021).

Namibia features a lot of different ethnic groups, including indigenous populations like the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba. In Namibia, marginalized students include people from low-income families, rural areas, ethnic minorities, and students with impairments (Ministry of Basic Education & Culture, 2000). Despite efforts to promote inclusive education, the barriers marginalized students encounter limit their access to technical and vocational education and training, impeding their chances of gaining marketable skills and employment. (United Nations General Assembly [UNGA], 2015)

The government of the Republic of Namibia has expanded its overall educational provisions to adults and the youth by establishing vocational training colleges, which are managed by the Namibian Training Authority (NTA) (Katire, 2024). Namibia has various accessible opportunities for marginalized students in

TVET, such as decentralization of Vocational training centres, Financial support, special programs, and community-based skills development. These opportunities include vocational training centres, the National Youth Service, Namibia Training Authority bursaries, affirmative action policies, and private sector partnerships. However, more needs to be done to ensure that marginalized students can access and benefit from these opportunities.

Namibia's commitment to universal education is responsive to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is made up of basic international statements of the inalienable and inviolable rights of all members of the human family (United Nations [UN], 1993, p. 2). Article 26, which is one of the articles of this declaration, states that:

Everyone has the right to education. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality.

In addition to the ratification of this declaration, Namibia has enshrined this commitment in its constitution. For example, Article 20 of the Namibian Constitution states that all persons shall have the right to education.

Marginalization is a socially contested concept. The United Kingdom's Education for All Global Monitoring Report (EFAGMR) 2010 defines marginalization as "a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities (UNESCO, 2010). Marginalization, in this sense, is thus conceived as a form of structural disadvantage which results from social inequality that has become the norm. Marginalization and exclusion occur when people are structurally and systematically excluded from meaningful participation in economic, social, political, cultural, and other forms of human social activities. Educational marginalization can be measured by the inequality between educational attainments of distinct social groups within a particular society (Ndimwedi, 2016).

Sharing the conceptions of marginalization above, the Report of the African Commission's Working Group of Experts on Indigenous Population/Communities (2005, pp. 13, 86) uses the term marginalized to describe their assessment of the indigenous communities in Africa to assist them in calling attention to the situation of the indigenous communities.

The term marginalization must, however, be used with caution, as some of the OvaHimba/OvaZemba people shun the concept in its usage since the term might be equated with “begging” and the OvaHimba, in particular, are inherently proud people (Katire, 2024). For this reason, this study utilizes the terms "social exclusion" and "marginalization" to mean the same thing: the systematic disadvantage and exclusion that people or groups in society face. They mean that people don't have access to the same opportunities and resources as everyone else, which makes it harder for them to fit in, have equal access, and be healthy. These ideas show that the constraints that marginalized people encounter are structural and systemic, and they come from many kinds of injustice, discrimination, and disadvantage. Chzhen et al. (2016) say that social exclusion can push disadvantaged people outside of society since they can't access the social and economic resources they need.

Statement of Problem

In Namibia, marginalized groups like the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba, as well as other groups that are often left out, have a hard time getting into and taking part in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs. Even though the government is trying to promote inclusive education, these populations are nonetheless left out and underrepresented in TVET institutions. This study wants to look into the specific problems that these groups of people face and how they affect their ability to do well in school.

The issue of limited access to TVET programs for marginalized communities is a significant problem for several reasons:

Educational Disparities: Historically, marginalized groups in Namibia, such as the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba, have not had as many chances to go to school. UNESCO (2015) says that everyone has the right to a good education; however, these communities have systemic problems that make it hard for them to fully participate in TVET programs. Some of these challenges are cultural biases, economic limitations, and a lack of educational infrastructure in their areas (Matengu et al., 2019).

Economic Consequences: TVET programs are important because they give people the practical skills they need to get a job. Not being able to take part in these programs makes it harder for people and communities who are already poor to improve their economic situation, which keeps them in cycles of poverty and unemployment (African Union, 2016). These villages cannot help with or benefit

from Namibia's Vision 2030 national economic development efforts since they can't get vocational training (Government of Namibia, 2004).

Social Inequality: The ongoing exclusion of these communities makes social inequities in Namibian society worse. The Constitution of Namibia and its educational policies say that all citizens should have the same access to education (Republic of Namibia, 1990; Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, 2018). But leaving out indigenous populations from TVET programs over and over again goes against these values and keeps social injustice going. To achieve educational fairness and social justice, it is very important to deal with these problems.

Cultural Marginalization: The San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba communities' identity and history are closely tied to their traditional knowledge and cultural traditions. Because they cannot get to TVET programs, these communities cannot combine their traditional knowledge with modern job skills. This makes it harder for them to protect and promote their cultural heritage (Jauch et al., 2009). This study's goal is to show how cultural issues and educational difficulties come together to make these groups even more isolated.

Policy Implications: To make good educational policies and programs, we need to know what unique problems marginalized students have when they want to get into TVET programs. Policy attempts may not go deep enough or work if they do not fully comprehend these limitations (Mbongo, 2018). The goal of this study is to give evidence-based information that can help make schools more welcoming and helpful for students from underrepresented groups.

This study's goal is to give a full picture of the problem and help create policies that promote equal and inclusive education for everyone by looking at the hurdles that prevent marginalized communities in Namibia from accessing and participating in TVET. This problem is not only a matter of educational policy but also a critical issue of social justice and economic development.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to analyse marginalised students' access to and participation in TVET programs in Namibia. The study further aims to identify the specific challenges and barriers that keep marginalized students from accessing and participating in TVET programs, as well as the reasons why these problems exist.

Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the barriers that marginalized TVET students face in accessing and participating in TVET programs?
2. How do marginalized TVET students deal with these barriers to successfully complete their TVET programs/courses?

Rationale and Significance of the Study

The rationale for conducting this study lies in the need to identify the barriers that marginalized students face in accessing and participating in technical and vocational education and training. Despite the acknowledged importance of technical and vocational education for skill development and economic growth, there is a growing concern that certain groups of individuals, particularly those who are marginalized, encounter obstacles that hinder their participation in these educational programs. To fix the current problems with unequal access to and outcomes in education, and to make sure that everyone has a fair chance to profit from technical and vocational education, we need to understand these impediments.

The significance of this study is underscored by its potential to help fix the problem of unequal education by finding hurdles and suggesting ways to get around them. In the end, it wants to make the education system fairer and open to everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from.

The findings of the study can inform the development of policies and programs that encourage technical and vocational education that is open to everyone. It can assist policymakers and schools in coming up with solutions to help students who are on the fringes of society deal with their unique problems, which will make it easier for them to get into and do well in these educational paths. The study can also help make the education system fairer and more just, give underprivileged students more chances to improve their social and economic status, and give them a voice by sharing their experiences and pointing out the problems they encounter. This recognition can lead to increased awareness and support from both the education sector and the broader society.

Delimitations of the Study

Barriers in accessing and participating in the TVET program refer to the obstacles or challenges that individuals from marginalized groups face when trying to enter and actively engage in technical and vocational education and training.

This study is delimited to marginalized students enrolled at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre in the Omusati Region of Namibia, specifically those from the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba indigenous communities. It only looks at students who are in certain TVET programs, such as Electrical General, ICT, Office Administration, Hospitality, and Wholesale and Retail. The study uses a qualitative ethnographic approach, focusing on the real-life experiences of students through in-depth interviews and observations. Data were collected within a specific timeframe during the 2024 academic year. The study is confined to looking at the barriers to accessing and participating in TVET and does not look at things like academic achievement, curriculum content, or job outcomes after training.

Organization of the Thesis

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 gives an overview of the study and its background. It discusses the issue statement, the goals of the research, the research questions, the importance of the study, and its limits. Chapter 2 covers the literature study on the problems that marginalized students have when trying to access and participate in TVET education and gives the theoretical framework for looking at and discussing this issue. Chapter 3 goes into detail on the research design and methodology, such as the study area, sample methods, data gathering methods, data analysis procedures, ethical issues, and validity. Chapter 4 shows and explains the research results, putting them next to other research and theories that are already out there. Chapter 5 wraps up the study by going over the main conclusions, talking about what they mean for practice and policy, and suggesting more research. The study ends with a full list of sources.

This chapter started with a summary of the study's historical background, concentrating on the problems that marginalized students in Namibia have when it comes to getting and taking part in Technical and Vocational Education and Training. It stressed how important it is to recognize these problems in order to make sure everyone has equal access to education. The research aim was clearly stated, giving the study a clear path to follow. There were also research questions that were meant to help the inquiry move forward step by step. The chapter ended with a delimitation of the study, specifying its focus on marginalized students at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a comprehensive examination of the studies and theories that already exist about the problems that marginalized students have when trying to get into and participate in TVET programs. This chapter explores the concept of marginalization and how it affects access to education, focusing on the problems that indigenous populations in Namibia confront. It also goes over ways to deal with problems and examples of successful cases. There is a theoretical review in the chapter that looks at different theories, like Social Exclusion Theory, to help with the study's analysis. It ends by pointing out gaps in the research and laying the groundwork for the study's methods.

Global Perspective on TVET Access

Many studies have looked into access to TVET around the world, and the results are different depending on the situation and the specific problems being looked at. For instance, Al-Rawashdeh and Muhammad (2019) looked at TVET policies and practices in five developing countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and found that access to TVET was limited by a number of things, such as lack of funding, poor infrastructure, and outdated curricula. The study found that TVET needs greater investment and content that is more useful and responsive. The study did not look at TVET access in other parts of the world or in low-income nations, though. More research is needed to find out what makes it hard for people to get to TVET in these places.

In the context of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), marginalised populations and individuals are defined as those who experience discrimination, exclusion, and vulnerability due to their limited access to power, resources, and opportunities (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2014, p. 5). Access, on the other hand, means that people have the chance to get the training and education they need to get the skills and knowledge they need to get a job and move on in their careers (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018, p. 5). Access to TVET may involve a range of factors, such as physical barriers, financial barriers, social barriers, and information access. When these are not equally and equitably

accessible, it results in social exclusion. These three concepts, marginalisation, access, and social exclusion, will be used in this study.

Milbourne (2005) argues that the consequence of social exclusion is the social marginalization of people from societal resources such as education and employment. Milbourne (2005) further explains that culturally and socially excluded groups and individuals become isolated and prevented from participating in society in ways that other people take for granted.

Sub-Saharan African Context

In addition, the Synthesis report (2017) reviewed existing research on TVET access and equity in sub-Saharan Africa. It concluded that poverty, gender, and living in a rural area were some of the biggest impediments to getting into TVET. The report suggested that policymakers take action to remove these barriers, such as increasing financing for TVET, giving targeted scholarships to underprivileged students, and paying more attention to gender and social inclusion. The study did not look at how well particular policy changes helped TVET access and fairness, and further research is needed on how specific policy changes affect these things.

A study was conducted on barriers in higher education in Kerala, and it was concluded that there were 14 major barriers in higher education in broad and more specifically in skilled education for marginalized sections (Salim, 2004). In the rural and semi-urban areas, people from SC/ST allocate the smallest proportion for the education of their wards, while in the urban areas, it is the SC/ST who spend the highest proportion. These 14 factors are the annual private cost of professional education at the pre-degree level and for entrance examination, parents' education, quality of school education, pre-degree marks, entrance coaching, motivation and intensity of effort of the student, government reservation policy, location, and encouragement from parents and teachers.

Strathdee and Cooper (2017) indicated that there is a long-held perception among Indigenous populations and their supporters in New Zealand about how disadvantageous education, including TVET, was for their communities. Reasons such as the curriculum being offered, the pedagogical process, and the qualifications produced were identified as the possible factors shaping these mindsets (Strathdee & Cooper, 2017).

Based on these factors, several scholars have explored how students from Indigenous backgrounds are further marginalized when it comes to TVET (Guenther

et al., 2016; Windley, 2017). These researchers have explored the trends of access and participation of Indigenous students globally and demonstrate that, like gender, geography, and SES, the ways in which Indigenous youths' and adults' access to TVET is neither linear nor uncomplicated. Indigenous access to, participation in, and persistence in TVET is complicated. While most of these researchers agree about the prospects of TVET for indigenous populations, they do acknowledge that the challenges that confront the participation of the Indigenous population in TVET are compounded by geography, systemic bias based on ethnicity and historical policies, and finance, as well as access.

Unlike the other racialized and ethnic minority groups, the reviewed literature suggests that students from Indigenous backgrounds have higher rates of participation in TVET than non-indigenous students (Klatt et al., 2017; Guenther et al., 2016; O'Callaghan, 2005). Frawley et al. (2017) identified that Indigenous students were more likely to participate in TVET than in other forms of postsecondary (university) education in Australia. Frawley et al.'s (2017) findings have been recently confirmed by Windley (2017), who examined the experience of Indigenous youth in Australia. Windley relied on data from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), National TVET Provider collection, the National Apprentice and Trainee Collection, and the Student Outcomes survey. The study revealed that Indigenous students were more likely to participate in TVET in comparison to mainstream education in Australia.

In Mozambique, Cho and Feda (2015) used a Participatory Evaluation Approach to look at how TVET programs affected learners' job prospects and income. They found that taking part in TVET was linked to better job prospects and higher income. The survey also found that there are challenges to accessing TVET, such as a lack of programs in remote areas and not enough money for equipment and supplies. The study was limited to one country and did not examine the impact of TVET programs in other contexts or the effectiveness of different TVET delivery models.

A study was conducted in Ghana by Amponsah and Ofori (2021) that examined the factors influencing access to TVET among students in secondary schools. The study indicated that financial constraints, lack of information, and negative attitudes toward TVET were all major barriers to access. The study also indicated that it was harder for students from low-income families and remote locations to get TVET opportunities.

In another part of Kenya, Kaimenyi et al. (2017) looked at how government policies affect access to TVET. The study revealed that initiatives meant to promote the availability of TVET had made it easier for people to get it, especially women and those from disadvantaged groups. The study also found that rules were not being put into place properly, which made access much harder. For example, there was inadequate funding and limited infrastructure, which continued to pose challenges to access.

Ramrathan and Dlamini (2019) looked at how students with impairments in South Africa were able to get to TVET, which is in line with what other research has found. The study indicated that students with disabilities had a lot of trouble getting to school because of inadequate facilities, lack of support services, and staff and peers had bad attitudes. The study showed that students with disabilities need to be included more in TVET programs.

Mugabi et al. (2021) looked into how remote learning affects skill development in Uganda. Their results showed that some areas were able to keep offering skills development through a quick switch to distance learning. However, ongoing social and digital gaps made it hard for marginalized groups to keep learning, which put them behind schedule.

Research on access to TVET has given us crucial information on what makes it easier or harder for people to take part in TVET programs. There are still some gaps in the study, though. For example, there has not been much research on how refugees and internally displaced people, who are often stigmatized and disadvantaged, utilize TVET programs. There is not much research on how well alternative techniques and policies work to make it easier for people to get to TVET, especially in low and middle-income nations. There hasn't been much research on the long-term effects and results of TVET on people and communities, especially when it comes to economic and social development (Abrutyn & Jonathan, 2011).

Regional Focus: Namibia

Namibia knows that TVET is important for helping people learn new skills, find jobs, and improve the economy. The government has put in place a number of policies and plans to make TVET more accessible, especially for populations that are often left out. These regulations often try to address financial, geographic, and social restrictions that make it hard for everyone to participate in TVET fairly.

The National Policy on Education (1998) is an important policy in Namibia. It stresses the need to make sure that all Namibians have equal access to quality education, including TVET. The policy acknowledges the need for education that includes everyone and meets the unique needs of groups who are often left out, such as women, people with disabilities, and those from low-income families.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Training, and Innovation (MHETI) is in charge of TVET in Namibia. The ministry has made plans and taken steps to make TVET more accessible and welcoming to everyone. These efforts include building more TVET facilities, opening vocational training centers in remote areas, and giving students money through scholarships and bursaries.

I found a number of papers on access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Namibia after doing some research. Nghixulifwa and Nkundwe (2018) did a study to look at the things that affect access to TVET in Namibia. The study indicated that financial constraints, lack of knowledge, and lack of availability of programs were some of the key barriers to access. The report suggested that TVET should be expanded and that financial help and career advice should be given to enhance access.

Tjipueja et al. (2019) did another study that looked at how access to TVET affects the job prospects of young people in Namibia. The study indicated that young people who had access to TVET were more likely to get jobs, especially in the formal sector. The report said that TVET programs should be expanded to meet the needs of skilled workers in the job market.

Nambili and Van Schalkwyk (2020) conducted a study in Namibia to look at the gender-based barriers to getting into and participating in TVET. The research indicated that cultural prejudices and gender roles were two of the main things that kept young women from getting what they needed. The study found that young women should have better access to jobs and career advice, and that promoting gender equality is very important.

The fact that so few San and Ovahimba pupils stay in school, especially in upper elementary and advanced classes, shows that they are being pushed to the side (United Nations for Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2011a). The comprehensive examination of quality and equity in education conducted by UNICEF in 2011 underscored a relatively high primary school enrolment rate among the general population, reaching 90.9 percent, with slight variations between genders. However,

attendance rates plummeted notably in regions housing marginalised communities, such as Kunene, Otjozondjupa, Omaheke, and Kavango, where figures ranged from 56.2 percent to 86.8 percent (UNICEF, 2011b).

Thiem and Hays (2013) further elucidated the educational challenges faced by marginalised communities through their study, revealing alarming dropout rates. Their research indicated that approximately 90 percent of marginalised individuals who commenced schooling discontinued their education before obtaining a certificate (Thiem & Hays, 2013). Moreover, the Education Management Information System data illustrated a concerning downward trend in marginalised enrolment, particularly evident in upper primary and higher grades (Education Management Information System, n.d.). Specifically, the study by Thiem and Hays (2013) revealed that 36 percent of children in their focus group had discontinued schooling by Grade 4, with over half (55.2 percent) ceasing education by Grade 6 (Thiem & Hays, 2013).

Barriers to TVET Access for Marginalized Communities

There are a lot of complicated barriers that make it hard for marginalized people to get access to and participate in TVET. These barriers can be grouped into four main groups: socio-economic, cultural, geographical, and institutional. These barriers make it much harder for students from poor families to sign up for, take part in, and finish TVET programs (Zelvys, 2004).

One of the most pervasive obstacles to TVET access for marginalized communities is socio-economic disadvantage. Poverty and a lack of financial resources severely limit the ability of students from low-income families to enroll in and complete TVET programs (Filmer, 2010). The high expenses of tuition, books, and transportation make it impossible for these students to take advantage of educational opportunities that could otherwise help them better their social and economic position (World Bank [WB], 2019).

Cultural and language differences also make it hard for some groups, especially indigenous populations, to get into TVET. Language obstacles and cultural biases in schools often prohibit these groups from fully participating in TVET programs (Ministry of Basic Education and Culture, 2000). Also, social and cultural conventions and deep-seated gender stereotypes make it much harder for women and girls to advance. They are generally discouraged from studying in technical and vocational fields (African Development Bank [ADB], 2015).

Geographical isolation is another major problem that impacts underprivileged communities more than others, especially those who live in rural areas. Students in these areas have a hard time getting to TVET schools since there is not enough infrastructure and the schools are far away (UNESCO, 2018). This problem is made worse by a lack of transportation choices, which makes it hard for students to attend and stay in TVET programs (Katire, 2024).

Institutional impediments in TVET institutions also make it harder for students who are already at a disadvantage to succeed. TVET programs are less accessible and of lower quality because of problems like inadequate facilities, outdated curricula, and a lack of experienced teachers (Maclean, 2010). Also, discriminatory behaviors and a lack of regulations that include everyone make it harder for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to fully participate in and profit from TVET possibilities (Smith & John, 2021).

Gaps in Research

There are still big gaps in the research about the problems and challenges of making TVET more accessible in Namibia. For instance, we need to do a more in-depth study on how well different tactics work to make TVET more accessible to people from underprivileged groups. There are not many studies that look at the experiences, challenges, and points of view of students from underrepresented ethnic groups.

The literature review shows that marginalized students experience many different types of difficulties while trying to enter and participate in TVET programs. These barriers include social, economic, cultural, geographical, and institutional factors. The review looks at these barriers from a global, Sub-Saharan African, and Namibian point of view. It makes it clear that there is an urgent need for focused policies and actions to promote equitable technical and vocational education. The information obtained from this review will help shape the research design and methods of this study, which will look into the specific problems and obstacles that underprivileged students in Namibia experience.

Theoretical Review

Theories are important for helping us understand the deeper truths behind study results. It not only gives a way to put the study problem in context, but it also lays the groundwork for understanding, generalizing, analyzing, and interpreting the underlying facts. Researchers can compare studies from the past and present that are

connected to their study issue by doing a theoretical evaluation of the literature. As Smith and Smith (2010) emphasize, theory aids in making sense of reality. It allows us to form assumptions and predictions about the world, offering a structured method for prioritizing and legitimizing what we observe and do. Theory provides a space for planning, strategizing, and taking greater control by offering a perspective on reality (Smith & Smith, 2010).

Theories are about how things are related to one another, like how actions, events, structures, and ideas are connected. It shows how events are related to each other and how they happen in order (Sutton & Staw, 1995). In short, theory is a way to make sense of things. It acts as a lens through which researchers view their subjects, guiding them towards the research destination. According to Whetten (1989) and Bacharach (1989), a theory is valuable when it effectively describes, explains, and predicts phenomena.

A theoretical review of literature provides a solid foundation for understanding, generalizing, analyzing, and interpreting the core realities of a study. It helps to dig deeper into the core of the research topic. I use Social Exclusion Theory in this review to back up and give this study more credibility.

Social Exclusion Theory

Social exclusion theory gives us a full picture of the many problems that marginalized students have when trying to get into TVET. It looks at how social and systemic problems make some groups feel left out (Chzhen et al., 2016). The theory was created and made popular by a number of scholars in the late 20th century, especially French sociologist René Lenoir in the 1970s. It talks about how people or groups are systematically denied access to rights, opportunities, and resources that are important for social integration and participation (Beall & Piron, 2005). This theory is especially useful for figuring out how financial problems, cultural norms, unfair practices, and institutional rules keep students who are already on the fringes from getting the help they need. It fits with the study's goal of finding ways to make it easier for these students to get into and participate in TVET programs.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Theoretical frameworks are based on what has been learned from earlier research, while conceptual analyses look at what has already been learned. Researchers can use these frameworks to organize their thoughts on research topics, combine what they already know, and show why more research is needed. They help

researchers put together a logical chain of reasoning that links the research problem to the study's goal, its theoretical and conceptual frameworks, its research design, its data sources, its findings, and finally, its recommendations.

This study is grounded in Social Exclusion Theory, which is the main way we look at the problems that disadvantaged students have when they want to get into and take part in TVET at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre. Social Exclusion Theory looks at how people or groups are systematically denied rights, resources, and opportunities that are available to others. It was first developed in Europe and became very popular in the 1970s thanks to French sociologist René Lenoir (Beall & Piron, 2005). These exclusions can be based on money, society, culture, or institutions, and they are generally caused by deep-seated structural inequality.

This theory is quite helpful for this study because it lets us look at the exclusion of marginalized groups like the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba populations in Namibia from many different angles. Using Social Exclusion Theory, the study looks at how things like poverty, cultural stigma, geographic isolation, and institutional prejudice work together to make it harder for students to go to and participate in TVET. It also looks at how personal problems like low self-esteem, lack of ambition, or past educational difficulties might make exclusion worse and make it harder to get involved in vocational education.

Social Exclusion Theory is useful, yet it has its critics. Some scholars say that the idea is too broad and not precise enough, which makes it hard to put into practice (Levitas, 2005). Some others, like Saunders (2003), say that the theory might focus too much on the symptoms of exclusion, like unemployment or poverty, instead of the causes, like systemic inequality or power imbalances. Byrne (2001) also criticizes the idea of sometimes putting assimilation into mainstream culture ahead of other things. This could mean that cultural diversity is not valued enough or that marginalized groups are pushed to conform instead of affirming their unique identities. Allen et al. (2012) also say that the theory's broadness can cause policy solutions to be fragmented or too generic, which makes them less effective or less focused.

Despite these critiques, social exclusion theory is nevertheless a useful way to examine the many ways in which minority students are excluded. It gives us a complete picture of how and why these students have trouble getting technical and vocational education. By applying this theory, the study will not only identify the

barriers but also suggest targeted interventions to improve access and participation in TVET programs for marginalized groups.

This chapter begins by exploring the concept of marginalization and what it means for access to education. Then it goes into detail about the specific problems that indigenous groups in Namibia, especially the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba tribes, face. It looks at many kinds of exclusion that keep these groups from fully participating in TVET programs. The chapter also discusses how marginalized students deal with these problems and gives examples of successful cases. We use theoretical points of view, such as Social Exclusion Theory, to frame the discussion and help us grasp the problems better. The chapter ends with a summary of what the literature says, pointing out gaps that this study will fill and setting the stage for the next part on research methods.

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research methods used in this study. It presents the methods of data collection and analysis, details population and sampling procedures, and examines validity and reliability measures. It discusses why certain tools and procedures were chosen, where the data came from, and how the data was analyzed and understood. It touches upon topics like representation and ethical norms in the research process.

The study is based on research methodology, which is based on theoretical frameworks that help guide the investigation of the research problem. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) say that methodology is about how we learn about the world (p. 99). Given that this is a qualitative study, various theories are applied to provide a theoretical basis. Therefore, this chapter covers the research design, data collection, and processing procedures, and concludes by examining the validity, reliability, and consistency of the data and information collected.

In this scenario, learning and knowledge acquisition are naturally situational, dependent upon the environment. Punch (1994) asserts, "Methodology concentrates on the means by which we acquire knowledge about the world" (p. 99). This study examines the challenges faced by marginalized students in accessing and participating in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programs through an interpretative research methodology. Qualitative research methodologies, such as ethnography, are used to get a deeper understanding of the problems these students experience.

Research Method

This study seeks to explore the social, economic, and institutional aspects that affect how underprivileged students access and participate in TVET at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre. The study investigates how these factors affect the students' capacity to finish their vocational training and get a job. I analyse the participants' experiences in depth through interviews and observations, paying attention to the cultural norms, socio-economic challenges, and institutional support systems that either make it easier or harder for them to participate in TVET programs.

The study is qualitative, which means it looks at the individual and group experiences of marginalized students to find out what specific barriers they have. The interpretive approach helps us comprehend these constraints in a more detailed way and how they affect the students' education and future chances.

Ethnography as a Method

Ethnography is employed as a method to explore the lived experiences of marginalized students at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre. Gulati et al. (2011) say that ethnography is the study of a group's daily activities, rituals, beliefs, values, and social interactions to find patterns and meanings (p. 525). In my research, ethnography lets me closely observe how marginalized students navigate the TVET system by focusing on their daily lives, challenges, and ways of dealing with them.

As an ethnographer, I participate in the students' school life by observing their interactions with each other, asking questions, and collecting information through interviews and casual chats. This strategy serves to show how these students' social, cultural, and economic backgrounds affect their engagement in TVET. Ethnography gives a lot of detailed information about the barriers students experience and how their communities, institutions, and personal situations affect these barriers.

Ethnography is both a way of doing research and the results of that research. It shows the cultural backdrop of the NVTC students who are not well-known. The method shows how students' social origins, societal norms, and institutional structures affect their chances of doing well in vocational training. Denscombe (2017) says that ethnography is a way to describe people or cultures. My study gives a picture of the unique experiences and problems that marginalized students confront when they try to get technical and vocational education (p. 69).

In this case, ethnography explores how students understand their lives through their interactions with other people in the NVTC setting. It shows how social and cultural factors affect students' lives by giving them a "voice in their own local context" through direct observation and detailed descriptions of their experiences (Fetterman, 2019).

Ethnography allows me to capture the behaviors, attitudes, and practices of marginalized students that affect how they interact with TVET. The method gives a detailed view of the social, cultural, and institutional elements that either help or hurt their ability to participate in vocational training. With this method, I want to find out

the processes and meanings behind the students' experiences, which will show the genuine facts about how they get to school and find work.

Research Participants

The study's research participants consisted of six marginalized students attending Nakayale Vocational Training Centre. The group had three males and three females, and they were all enrolled in different occupational areas, such as hospitality and tourism, office administration, wholesale and retail, electrical general, and information and communication technology (ICT). Two students from the San community, two from the OvaZemba community, and two from the OvaHimba community were included in the sample. This was done to make sure that all indigenous tribes were represented. The students are purposefully selected to show how diverse students see the issues and experiences that poor students have when they try to get into and participate in TVET programs. Their lived experiences show a wide range of problems that come from being marginalized because of their culture, race, or location.

Study Area

This study took place in the Omusati region of Namibia at the Nakayale Vocational Training Centre. Nakayale Vocational Training Centre was chosen because it is in a good location that makes it easier for students from the Kunene region, which is largely home to the San, OvaHimba, and OvaZemba people, to get there. The villages that were picked show how different marginalized groups are, which gives a unique look at the problems that people in Namibia face when trying to get TVET.

The choice of NVTC shows that the institution's mission is to help students who are not in the mainstream learn technological skills and become more employable. A study looks at a certain area to learn about the unique experiences of students from underrepresented groups. This gives us a more localized and nuanced view of their problems and chances in the TVET system. The chosen site gives a full look at the social, economic, and cultural aspects that affect the participation of students from underrepresented groups in vocational education.

Data Collection

This study employed only primary data. Primary data were collected through various observation sessions and in-depth interviews with the six marginalized students participating in this study.

Primary Sources

Primary data were gathered through a combination of methodologies, including observation and comprehensive interviews. The participants included six marginalized students enrolled in vocational skills training at NVTC, who are currently studying different occupational fields. All participants engaged in comprehensive interviews, during which I also noted their facial expressions and gestures to detect the sensitivities of their experiences. Following formal and informal introductions, I made efforts to draw the subjective feelings and perspectives of the participants regarding their barriers to accessing vocational training.

Tools and Techniques

The data collection process began with the selection of participants for in-depth interviews and the identification of key informants. The interview questions aimed to tackle relevant themes related to the obstacles, accessibility, and involvement of underprivileged students in occupational training and skills development.

Observation

To obtain a deeper insight into the daily lives of the participants and their lived experiences, I engaged in the observation process. I explored further locations where students had training, encompassing workshops and various professional settings. This observation allowed me to detect the participants' genuine situations, appreciate the challenges they encountered, and grasp their social background. Nason and Golding (1998) state that ethnography fundamentally pertains to sense-making, highlighting the interactions of persons in their quotidian existence (p. 241).

During my visits, I carefully looked at the participants' daily lives, taking into account the social setting of the teaching. Participant observation is a key aspect of ethnographic methods, which involve acquiring mostly unstructured empirical data. Some people say that every social research needs a certain amount of participant observation because researchers can't study social life without being a part of it (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Therefore, I wanted to be as unobtrusive as possible during the observation procedure to avoid disrupting the participants' routine activities.

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were a very important part of gathering data. I talked to each participant several times to find out what they thought about the problems they

faced when trying to access and participate in vocational training programs. I paid attention to nonverbal signs like gestures and facial expressions during the interviews and got permission to record audio when it was acceptable.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Following data collection, I started the analytical process, which included coding, classification, categorization, and topic formulation. The analysis of data was guided by observation and aimed to reveal important findings.

Data Gathering and Compilation

I engaged in fieldwork to gather data, which provided me with a comprehensive grasp of the barriers to access and participation in TVET and the challenges encountered by disadvantaged students. Initially, I endeavoured to comprehend the extensive data by aggregating it, minimizing its volume, discerning significant tendencies, and establishing a reporting framework. During my data collection, I consistently observed patterns, regularities, and correlations.

Transcribing and Codification

The collected data were meticulously transcribed and cross-verified for precision. Each data point was assigned a distinct identification, and I established a category based on the prevailing themes and notions expressed by the participants. The coding methodology was iterative, involving several review rounds to guarantee comprehensiveness.

Editing and Processing

Following transcription and coding, the data were rectified to correct errors and address omissions. I examined the text for grammatical errors, clarity, consistency, and general organization to ensure the data was prepared for analysis.

Data Interpretation

Ultimately, I analyzed the data to discern the implications of the observed patterns. This involved posing critical inquiries on the true implications of the data and relating them to fundamental theoretical frameworks, such as social exclusion theory and human capital theory. The processes of analysis and interpretation were interconnected, facilitating the participants' comprehension of their experiences.

Quality Standards

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) indicated that qualitative researchers face a lot of issues, especially the three "crises" that come from post-structuralism and postmodernism: the crises of representation, legitimation, and praxis. These disasters

have ignited enduring discussions among scholars who analyze qualitative and quantitative data. In my research, I ensured that the work adhered to high-quality standards by emphasizing its credibility, legitimacy, and acceptance among key stakeholders.

Ethical Standards

My study methodology was significantly influenced by ethical considerations. In adherence to the ethical principles established by my institution, I implemented measures to safeguard the participants' rights and dignity, ensured their comprehensive understanding of the research objectives, and honored their right to withdraw at any moment. I ensured that all private or sensitive information remained confidential and was utilized solely for research purposes. I meticulously adhered to the cultural beliefs and rituals of the populations I was studying, particularly those from marginalized groups. I adhered to the university's ethical standards during the study process to ensure that my work was comprehensive, respectful, and ethically sound.

I aimed to establish trust with the participants and ensure that my research was conducted appropriately and with respect for all involved by adhering to these ethical standards.

This chapter examined the ethical and quality standards employed in my investigation. It detailed the methods for acquiring, processing, and comprehending data. The ethical problems at stake were clearly delineated, emphasizing the significance of respecting participants and following academic protocols. The methodologies and protocols employed in this study were designed to ensure the research's reliability, credibility, and applicability in both academic and practical contexts.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Barriers to Access and Participation in TVET Programs by Marginalized Students

This chapter examines the experiences of disadvantaged students at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre, emphasizing their perspectives on technical and vocational education and training programs. This study presents findings from an ethnographic viewpoint, enabling the voices, feelings, and daily challenges of six students from the San, OvaZemba, and OvaHimba groups to inform the discourse. The study identifies challenges, including financial constraints, geographic inaccessibility, accommodation issues, transportation difficulties, cultural norms, and food security concerns. This analysis explores these barriers through the lens of Social Exclusion Theory, highlighting the necessity for specific interventions to guarantee equal access to TVET programs for marginalized populations. The results highlight the necessity of overcoming these obstacles to foster economic development and social advancement. Engaging with underprivileged students at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre unveiled a complex reality influenced by poverty, geographical remoteness, cultural norms, and institutional separation.

Financial Barriers and Participation

Financial problems were a major and ongoing problem for disadvantaged students at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre. Most of the people who took part came from low-income families and said they had trouble paying for things like tuition, registration, transportation, food, and lodging. Even while people knew about the benefits of vocational education, financial problems typically caused more people to drop out or not participate in the first place (UNESCO, 2016).

Kahozu, a member of the OvaZemba community, recounted how her family was forced to sell their last sheep to cover her expenses. *Witnessing my family's hardships was difficult.* She reported, *"My father seemed defeated, yet he said, 'Go, we will manage.'"* Kakulukaze similarly articulated how severe droughts destroyed their livelihood. *"My uncle successfully sold the remaining livestock to assist with my*

registration and transportation expenses". *"My father has passed away, and my mother and siblings rely on my uncle's livestock for support,"* she stated.

Witbooi, representing the San group, emphasized an additional dimension to this struggle: *"My family relied on social grants for our sustenance."* *I obtained support from the Office of Marginalized Communities within the Ministry of Gender and Inequality, which financed my registration and tuition costs; yet, I continued to face difficulties in meeting my daily expenses. I frequently had hunger*". The narratives shared by all participants revealed both material hardship and the emotional weight borne by youth striving to transcend poverty through education.

Although several students obtained partial assistance from NSFAP or the Ministry of Gender, these monies hardly sufficed to cover the complete expenses of training, much less daily essentials such as meals or study materials. This means that there is a structural gap between what the government does to help underprivileged students and what they really need to succeed in TVET.

According to Social Exclusion Theory, being poor is a structural barrier to getting the resources you need to fully participate in society and school (Chzhen et al., 2016). These economic hurdles not only make it harder for people to get an education, but they also keep them in poverty and out of mainstream economic growth from one generation to the next.

Geographic Isolation

Geographic distance has been a major barrier that makes it hard for students from rural areas like Kunene to get access to and attend TVET programs. Most training institutes are in cities, which makes it hard or impossible for students from rural areas to enroll. This often forces people to travel long distances or give up their chances to learn altogether. Kahozu said, *"I come from Otjongombr in a rural area of the Kunene region where there are no public TVET schools."* *I often missed application deadlines since I lived far away and didn't have easy access to important information, which meant I always got old information.*

The situation gets worse not only because of geographical distance, but also because of limited access to digital infrastructure. Many students do not have access to the internet or the power to charge their phones. *"Everything in life is now digital, but I do not have a smartphone that can connect to the internet or a power source to charge it."* *"I lose chances before I even start,"* Kahozu said. Dausies, who is also from Kunene, told a similar story: *"A visitor (Tourist) told me about application*

deadlines." Because our community still relies on traditional media (radio). Her statement shows that many rural kids don't have easy access to or timely information about TVET.

Dauses pointed out that *TVET institutions are utilizing digital platforms for communication and advertising. This is unfortunate for students in rural areas where radio and newspapers are the only sources of information.* These experiences show that both being far away and being left out of the digital world make it harder to get information early for vocational education applications.

According to Powell and McGrath (2016), students in rural areas of Africa have the same challenges with land and information when they try to access and participate in TVET. According to the Capability Approach (Sen, 1999), these spatial limitations could be understood as limits on students' flexibility to achieve the life goals they seek. At-risk students become caught in cycles of poverty and exclusion because they don't have simple access to information and training opportunities nearby.

Accommodation Challenges

Securing safe and affordable housing upon enrollment at a TVET institution, such as Nakayale Vocational Training Centre, was a big concern for marginalized students from rural or remote areas. TVET institutions are often located in urban or suburban areas, where the cost of living, particularly rental expenses, is too expensive for several low-income families and the marginalized. *Upon acceptance, the issues persisted after enrollment. Kahozu stated, "I reside in a compact room with four additional students for rent affordability." There is an unreliable provision of water and energy supply. I was unable to study; I am either tired, hungry, or anxious.*

This lifestyle was not atypical; it was a prevalent experience for those participating. A multitude of individuals were compelled to reside in congested, substandard accommodations where fundamental requirements such as privacy, illumination, and tranquil study environments were nearly unattainable. The impact on individuals' worries was substantial. Kahozu stated, *"My family struggled to afford housing, which significantly hindered my ability to concentrate on my studies."*

Research indicates that residing in inadequate housing circumstances elevates stress levels and impedes students' ability to concentrate on their academics and achieve academic success (World Bank, 2019). These locations frequently lack dependable access to water and electricity, complicating pupils' academic

performance due to daily disruptions. Examined via the framework of Cultural Capital Theory (Bourdieu, 2011), the accommodation barrier illustrates how students from marginalized backgrounds frequently lack the requisite economic and social capital to attain the stable, supportive surroundings that others may consider commonplace. In this context, housing transcends mere shelter; it serves as a crucial factor influencing persistence, performance, and dignity in the educational experience.

Transportation Barriers

Transportation acted as a quiet gatekeeper, deciding who could go and who could not. For many of the disadvantaged students at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre, getting to class was not only a daily task but a constant struggle. Most TVET centers are in cities or other central locations; however, students from areas like Kunene live in very rural and isolated areas. Because public transportation was limited or non-existent, students often had to walk long distances or rely on rides from community members that were few and far between.

Dauses, a participant from Kunene, put it this way: *"If you missed that lift, you missed school."* Her statements show that transportation was not merely a logistical concern; it also influenced dignity, stability, and the determination to persevere. She continued, *"I had a lot of trouble getting to TVET because there wasn't any reliable public transportation, and my family's limited financial resources made it hard for us to pay for private transportation."*

In some situations, students didn't go to school at all, not because they wanted to, but because they didn't want to deal with the stress and embarrassment of being late after a long trip. These conditions make transportation not just a minor issue, but a major obstacle that is hard to overcome.

The digital gap makes it even harder for people who can't move around. Dauses went on to say that she often didn't know about TVET application deadlines and opportunities since she lived in a rural area where there was no internet access. Most of this information was shared through digital media. The combination of not being able to get to both physical and information makes the distance between students in remote places even bigger.

Powell and McGrath (2019) talk about a systemic problem that Dauses and others have experienced: rural students often have trouble getting to TVET because of high costs and long travel times. Adams's Equity Theory (1965) looks at the psychological and structural challenges that these differences cause from a theoretical

point of view. It depicts how unfairly oppressed people see and feel when systems don't give them the fundamental things they need, like transportation. In the realm of TVET, these inequalities have a direct impact on who can get in, who can participate, and, in the end, who will be successful.

Cultural Barriers and Social Stigma

Cultural perspectives and societal norms significantly influenced the participation of underprivileged students in TVET programs at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre. A multitude of individuals were reluctant to attend vocational school, as it represented their sole alternative due to institutional impediments and societal stigma.

Alfred, a San student from Kamanjab, said that this stigma was hard for him: *"In my community, TVET is seen as a way for people who have failed." I used to think that too. I know more now, yet the stigma is still there.* His statements embody the prevalent perception in numerous marginalized communities that Technical and Vocational Education and Training is only for individuals perceived as intellectually deficient or those who have disengaged from formal education. Others echoed this sentiment, stating that their families and acquaintances did not regard vocational education as a viable or desirable path. Conversely, skepticism or reluctance was frequently encountered.

This adverse cultural framing prevented both students and their families from pursuing vocational training, despite their awareness of its potential benefits. Alfred continued, *"Many people in my community don't know what TVET really offers." They still think it only applies to people who have failed or don't have any possibilities.*

The problem was more than just a generic view of society; it was also quite gendered. Female participants talked about an extra level of pressure that made their choices even more limited. A young woman from the OvaHimba community named Kakulukaze said, *"As a woman, you should work in hospitality instead of electrical work." But I wanted to try a different way. I had to choose something that wouldn't offend my family, though.* Her statements reveal the struggle between individual aspirations and societal norms. She aspired to contest societal perceptions; however, her apprehension of societal judgment influenced her choices.

Gender norms were tangible entities that individuals could perceive and manipulate, rather than just concepts. Female students from marginalized communities were occasionally compelled to pursue conventional "female"

occupations such as hospitality, clerical labor, or cosmetology. These programs, however beneficial, frequently resulted in positions that offered lower compensation and diminished opportunities for career advancement compared to those in predominantly male-dominated sectors such as construction, engineering, or mechanics (Citaristi, 2022). Moreover, societal norms that prioritize domestic responsibilities over schooling hindered women's participation.

Cultural diversity activities aim to honor history and foster acceptance; nevertheless, my observations at NVTC revealed a more complex and concerning reality. During a cultural diversity day at NVTC, students from several ethnic backgrounds dressed in traditional attire and performed dances accompanied by music that narrated the stories of their heritage. Nevertheless, the San, OvaZemba, and OvaHimba participants expressed a lack of pride; rather, they reported feelings of weakness and isolation. *"I put on my traditional clothes, but people stared and some even laughed,"* Witbooi said softly. *"It wasn't a party; it felt like we were being shown off."* Kakulukaze, a female participant, said, *"We wanted to show who we are, but it turned into something that others made fun of or didn't understand." After that day, I stayed away from anything like that.*

The event confirmed their feelings: while other groups danced and displayed their work freely, the students who were not invited stayed alone, either sitting quietly or refusing to participate. The school didn't do anything to encourage people from different cultures to talk to each other or understand each other better.

These events show that even good intentions can make things worse if cultural differences are not handled with care and respect for one another. For several students, the events meant to bring people together only reminded them of how different they are.

Using Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 2021) as a guide, the experiences of these students show how having several social identities, such as gender, race, and socioeconomic position, makes it harder for marginalized students to learn. Cultural influences, gender stereotypes, and wrong ideas about vocational training all make it harder for everyone to fully and fairly participate in TVET.

McGrath et al. (2020) say that changing how people think about TVET is not just good, but necessary. If we don't deal with these deeply held beliefs and biases, people won't be able to get the same access to vocational training, which means that education won't be able to reach its full potential to change lives.

Food Security

Food insecurity was a prevalent and significant issue for numerous students at Nakayale Vocational Training Centre, who were already facing disadvantages. For several individuals, the difficulty of obtaining sufficient nutrition during training extended beyond mere hunger; it impaired their capacity to concentrate, engage, and maintain enrollment.

Kahozu, who is part of the OvaZemba community, said, *"After I paid my registration, I left with a few monies which I cannot even afford to buy food for a week." Sometimes I went days without food. My friends help me with food when they have.* Her explanation conveys a quiet yet really painful truth that resonates with others. Students often did not have enough money left over for meals after paying for transportation, registration, or basic necessities. Many participants said they relied on free offers from their friends or skipped meals to get through training sessions.

The deficiency of fundamental sustenance adversely impacted both mental and emotional well-being. Students reported difficulties with concentration, persistent fatigue, class absences, and health issues attributed to stress. For many, hunger was not merely a transient issue; it was a persistent challenge that prompted thoughts of resignation.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (2019) states that numerous marginalized people lack sufficient food, and when this occurs in educational institutions, it directly impacts students' academic performance and their capacity to remain enrolled. In the realm of TVET, where experiential learning necessitates vigor and engagement, insufficient nutrition impedes individuals' ability to participate.

According to the Capability Approach (Sen, 1999), food security is regarded as a crucial element for academic success. Students cannot achieve their significant life objectives without enough nourishment. The findings of this study indicate that tackling food insecurity must be regarded not as supplementary support, but as an integral component of any inclusive and learner-centered TVET program.

These economic, geographic, and cultural constraints are interconnected issues. Examined via the framework of Social Exclusion Theory, they illustrate how systemic elements collaboratively perpetuate the exclusion of specific groups (Beall & Piron, 2005). Monetary assistance that excludes expenses for sustenance or housing. Web-based application solutions are meant for kids who always have access to the internet. Educational communication that doesn't take cultural meanings into

account. These show institutions that accidentally keep people out who they are trying to help.

This ethnographic report gives us more than just facts; it gives us stories of people trying to overcome institutional barriers. These six voices stand for many more voices that have not been heard. They remind us that behind every problem is a person, a possibility, and a future that wants to come out. The next chapter will use these facts to suggest fair and inclusive changes to policy and practice.

CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter looks at the problems that students from underrepresented groups at the Nakayale Vocational Training Centre experience when trying to get into Technical and Vocational Education and Training programs. The study showed that there are deep-seated inequities in institutions by looking at the points of view and experiences of six students from the San, OvaZemba, and OvaHimba communities. These included things like lack of money, living in a remote area, social shame, and cultural traditions that have historically affected and, in many cases, limited access to education for underprivileged groups.

This study shows how strong these students are. Even though they face big problems, they keep going with their studies with determination and hope. Their stories show not just how hard things were for them, but also how strongly they believed that TVET might change their lives, families, and communities. Their willingness to face economic hardship, social exclusion, and institutional neglect shows a determination that deserves recognition from institutions and support from the government.

Still, their experiences show that there are big differences between what policies say they want to do and what actually happens. Even when national frameworks and efforts call for equity and inclusion in education, they often don't help the people who need it the most. A lot of students, especially girls and people from low-income families, said they were unhappy with the lack of practical help. They felt like their needs were always being ignored. The gap between stated policy goals and real-life experiences needs to be addressed right away.

Using Social Exclusion Theory helped us understand how systemic inequalities, not just individual situations, can push people to the edges of society. The theory helped us look more closely at how deeply rooted social, economic, cultural, and institutional structures limit students' abilities and access to opportunities. The Capability Approach stressed how important it is to meet basic requirements like food, shelter, transportation, and dignity in order to do well in school.

This chapter stresses how important it is for institutions to change completely and for policies to be made with everyone in mind. According to Tjivikua (2021), even the best policies may not be enough if there isn't a detailed and context-aware implementation plan. Amukugo and Likando (2021) say that people who are on the outside need specific help instead of general answers to make sure that everyone has fair access to education.

The conclusions of this study call for changes that are practical and focused on people. These include better help with money and housing, student services that are sensitive to different cultures, outreach programs for rural areas, and ways to communicate that include everyone. These kinds of reforms need to be built into any workable TVET system, not just added on.

This study not only points out problems, but it also gives a voice to students who are trying to build their futures through vocational education despite all the challenges they face. Not only do we need to listen to their stories, but we also need to do something about them. Bringing policy and practice into line is not just a bureaucratic task; it is also a moral and social duty.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- a. Marginalized students encounter various barriers, financial, cultural, and geographic, that restrict their access to and involvement in TVET. These obstacles are more acute for female and low-income students.
- b. Female involvement in Technical and Vocational Education and Training is constrained, particularly in male-dominated sectors, owing to gender norms, societal expectations, and insufficient targeted institutional assistance.
- c. The understanding of technical and vocational education and training differs among students, and this is shaped by their socio-economic status, community attitudes, and availability of information.
- d. A disparity exists between TVET policy and its implementation. Although policies advocate for inclusion, inadequate implementation and insufficient resources marginalize numerous students. Contribute to this inequality, and more gender-sensitive policies are needed to address this issue.

Implications to Policy and Practice

This study has identified several critical implications for policymakers, educators, and researchers, emphasizing the enhancement of TVET access and participation for marginalised students at NVTC.

a. **Implement Rural Application Outreach and Offline Communication**

Channels: TVET institutions should adopt offline and rural-friendly communication strategies, including radio announcements, mobile information vans, and community liaison officers, to guarantee equitable access to application processes for students lacking reliable digital access.

b. **Expand Accommodation and Meal Support for Marginalized Students:**

TVET institutions should establish low-cost hostel facilities and meal programs specifically targeted at rural and indigent students. Government funding or public-private partnerships can be leveraged to sustain such interventions.

c. **Revise Financial Aid Models to Cover Hidden Costs:** Financial aid schemes should be restructured to include a realistic cost-of-living allowance, particularly for students from marginalized communities, to reduce dropout rates and ensure consistent participation.

d. **Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Training for TVET Staff:** TVET institutions should develop staff development programs focused on cultural awareness, ensuring trainers and administrators are better equipped to support learners from indigenous and marginalized backgrounds with dignity and inclusivity.

Implications for Future Research

In terms of research implications, this study represents a micro-level investigation into the experiences of marginalized students in accessing and participating in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs. The study aimed to capture the lived experiences of these students to better understand the barriers they face and their perceptions of vocational training. While this research has contributed valuable insights to the field, particularly in the context of marginalized students in Namibia, there are several additional issues that require empirical exploration. Future researchers can build upon these findings to further investigate and address the specific socio-cultural, economic, and gender-related

challenges that continue to impact equitable access to TVET. Future research should explore specific questions on overcoming the barriers faced by marginalized students in TVET:

Future research should explore specific questions on overcoming the barriers faced by marginalized students in TVET:

- a. What specific socio-cultural and economic barriers limit marginalized students' participation in TVET, and how can these be effectively addressed?
- b. What can be done to close the gap between TVET policy and practice, and how can these measures improve outcomes for marginalized groups?
- c. How can gender sensitive interventions be designed to promote equal access to vocational training for both men and women?

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