Original Research Article

An Exploring the post-Independence experiences of the Namibian Children of the Liberation Struggle: A qualitative study

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ABSTRACT

The Independence of Namibia signified the end of the struggle against colonialism. A voluntary repatriation of approximately 50 000 exiled Namibians, including children born and/or raised in exile, back to Namibia happened as from 1989. These children are called the Children of the Liberation Struggle (CLS). The CLS demonstrations with several demands made headlines in the media for the past few years. Many Namibians often label the CLS as deviant and unproductive. The perceived demanding behaviour of a group of CLS in Namibia prompts one to consider possible reasons for their behaviour. An understanding of what drives behaviour can assist in meaning-making of the behaviour. The purpose of this study was thus to explore the experiences of the CLS since returning "home "and to stimulate minds for considering the role of such experiences on human behavior. A qualitative approach was employed and in-depth interviews were conducted with 10 employed CLS in the Khomas region from two generations. Interviews were transcribed and the data was categorised and analysed according to thematic analysis. Excitement and disappointment with the homecoming experience, feeling unsafe during and after repatriation, being separated from biological parents and siblings, adjustment difficulties, lack of psychological support, seeking education opportunities, experiencing deficient distribution of government assistance, having to endure negative labelling and finding solace in other CLS are some of the post-Independence experiences that the CLS report. The study recommends psychological interventions in the form of therapeutic group sessions for employed and unemployed CLS as well as an awareness campaign amongst Namibians to understand what the CLS endured prior to as well as after Independence.

1. Introduction

Namibia has a colonial past which stretches from the late 18th century until 21 March 1990 when it gained independence (Dierks, 2002). Namibians resisted their colonisers from 1884 until 1919 (during the German colonial rule) and again from 1919 until 1990 (during South African rule) (Shiningayamwe, 2013). In 1957, Namibians launched the Owamboland People's Congress (OPC) (Dierks, 2002), which later became the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO). According to Moore (n.d), SWAPO participated in diplomatic mobilization and engaged in an armed struggle through its 1966 founded military wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), until 1989. During this time, most of the SWAPO leadership and many Namibians went into exile to participate in the liberation struggle or just to flee the oppressive South African colonial regime in Namibia (Moore, n.d), thus becoming refugees. Refugees are people who leave their country due to a well-founded fear that they may be persecuted due to reasons such as race, religion, and/or affiliation to a specific political or social group (UNHCR, 2007). With the permission of respective neighbouring countries such as Tanzania, Angola and Zambia, SWAPO set up refugee camps for civilians, as well as military bases for PLAN fighters (Krause & Kaplan, 2017; Nghiwete, 2010; Williams, 2009). The camp in Cassinga (Angola), the Namibia Health and Education Centre (NHEC) in Kwanza-Sul (Angola), as well as the camps Old Farm (Zambia) and Nyango (Zambia) were such refugee camps (Krause & Kaplan, 2017).

The Independence of Namibia on 21 March 1990 signified the end of the struggle against colonialism. A voluntary repatriation of approximately 40 000 - 50 000 exiled Namibian people, including children born and/or raised in exile, back to Namibia happened as from 1989 (Preston, 1997; Wallace & Kinahan, 2011). These children who were born and/or raised in exile are referred to as the Children of the Liberation Struggle (CLS). In Namibia, the CLS fall under the mandate of the Namibian Ministry of Youth, National Service, Sport and Culture (MYNSSC). In 2008, as per cabinet decision no. 17 \16.09.002, the MYNSSC (2008) stated that the CLS are children of veterans [veterans as defined in the Veterans Act which is Act no. 2 of 2008 (Parliament of the Republic of Namibia, 2008)], inclusive of exiled children, who until 21 March 1990 were under the age of 18 years. Thus, in this research study, CLS is the term used to refer to the children of veterans, including exiled children of veterans, who were under the age of 18 years before Independence, although they are now adults.

Since 2008, CLS demonstrations and demands for jobs and national documents from government have been making headlines in the media (Shiningayamwe et al.,

2014). Due to their demands and their protests, many Namibians often label the CLS as deviant and unproductive (Shivangulula, 2012) and call them 'struggle children', 'exile kids', 'returnees children', or 'SWAPO kids' (Iipumbu, 2009; Nghiwete, 2009). Nonetheless, the perceived demanding behaviour of a group of CLS in Namibia prompts one to consider possible reasons for such behaviour. An understanding of what drives behaviour can assist in meaning-making of behaviour whilst determining strategies to modify behaviour into more acceptable, appropriate and productive conduct (Parker, 2002) and thus indirectly assisting the CLS to achieve their goals. For example, past trauma which remains unresolved can have a detrimental effect on current and future behaviour (Van der Kolk, 2003). The CLS experienced traumatic events such as witnessing horrific sights, being attacked by the enemy and hearing artillery (Kaxuxuena & Janik, 2020). Shiningayamwe et al. (2014) found in a study with the CLS that they faced social and economic challenges in Namibia after Independence. This study thus focusses on the post-Independence experiences of the CLS in an attempt to make better sense of their current behaviour.

2. Materials and Methods

The Namibian Exile Kids Association (NEKA) classifies the Namibian CLS in three generations (B. Nakaambo, personal communication, March 11, 2016). The first generation of CLS were born between 1972 and 1978, the second generation between 1979 and 1986 and the third generation between 1987 and 1989/90. The population of CLS in Namibia is estimated at approximately 20,000 (R. V. Nghiwete, 2010), distributed all over Namibia. CLS who were employed and could speak English, from the Khomas region, were recruited to participate in this study. Only employed CLS were interviewed due to safety concerns amid ongoing protest demonstrations of the unemployed CLS. The researchers selected research participants from the first and second generation of the CLS as they were old enough in exile to have a recollection of events and experiences (Table 1).

Table 1: The gender, generation, refugee camp and country raised in, and country of birth of participants

Participant no	Gender	Generation	Refugee camp and country raised	Country of birth	Age of arrival in Namibia	Current age of participants
1	Male	First	Kwanza - Sul (Angola) and Nyango (Zambia)	Angola	13	39
2	Female	Second	Kwanza - Sul (Angola)	Angola	10	38
3	Female	Second	Kwanza - Sul (Angola)	Angola	8	36
4	Male	Second	Kwanza - Sul (Angola)	Angola	8	36
5	Female	First	Kwanza - Sul (Angola) and Nyango (Zambia)	Namibia	12	40
6	Female	Second	Kwanza - Sul (Angola)	Angola	7	35
7	Female	Second	Nyango (Zambia)	Zambia	5	33
8	Female	First	Kwanza - Sul (Angola) and Nyango (Zambia)	Zambia	13	40
9	Female	First	Kwanza - Sul (Angola) and Nyango (Zambia)	Zambia	14	40
10	Male	First	Kwanza - Sul (Angola) and Nyango (Zambia)	Tanzania	13	41

An interview guide was developed by the researchers

and used as the main instrument of data collection. Questions like "What challenges did you experience as a CLS in Namibia after repatriation?", "What opportunities did you receive as a result of being a CLS in Namibia after repatriation?" and "What are you facing now as a CLS?" were posed to the participants.

The sampling process commenced via NEKA with the design of a register of potential participants. NEKA linked the researchers to the potential participants by informing the potential participants of the research study and enquiring about their interest in participating. After potential participants granted permission to NEKA, they were contacted telephonically by the researchers. Consenting participants were scheduled for an individual interview of about 45 minutes. The interviews were digitally recorded whilst conducted at the People's Education, Assistance, and Counselling for Empowerment (PEACE) Centre in Windhoek. The PEACE Centre was established "to develop and provide appropriate psycho-social services for victims of trauma, including the victims of organised violence, such as war" (PEACE Centre, 2005, p. 1). Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the University of Namibia (FHSS/252). The researchers were aware that participation in this study might re-traumatise participants. All the participants were therefore debriefed by the researchers, who are clinical psychologists.

The recorded data were transcribed by the researchers based on the steps described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data were coded with the aid of the qualitative data analysis instrument ATLAS. ti, 7th version (Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2013). After the initial coding, the data were sorted into potential themes by creating mind-maps. The relationship between codes and between different levels of themes was considered and sub-themes were also identified. The discovered themes and sub-themes were then defined and named to derive the final themes and subthemes for the analysis.

3. Results and Discussion

Eight main themes with some sub-themes were formulated regarding post-Independence experiences of the CLS as depicted in Table 2.

Table 2 Post-independence themes and sub-themes

Main themes	Sub-themes
1 Homecoming	Excited versus disappointed
2 Safety	Felt unsafe during repatriation
3 Separation	Lived with relatives
	Separated from siblings
4 Adjustment difficulties	Cultural differences
	Sense of belonging
	Relationship with parents
	Unmet expectations
	Poor school performance
5 Counselling support	Counselling services
	Dysfunctional home
	Sought counselling
	Persistent nightmares
6 Privileges/opportunities	Assistance received.
	Parental/family support
	Smooth school entry
	No school
	Exclusion
7 Inspiration	Lived difficult experiences
8 Connectedness	Common story
	Negative comments towards CLS

Homecoming

Most of the participants expressed that they felt excitement with the prospect of repatriating back to Namibia. On arrival in Namibia, participants had positive and negative impressions. Those who arrived in Windhoek before they progressed to the northern part of the country reported to have felt positive about what they saw. Some participants expressed disappointment about the north of Namibia:

> [Arrived in the northern part of the country] I was excited. I mean the way they used to talk about Namibia is the way we talk about heaven right now… So at the end of the day I was excited to come to Namibia the land of milk and honey and gold but as time went on it became more of a disappointment because I felt like life was hard you know. (Male, 36 years old, participant 4)

In a study done by Kropiwnicki (2014) on South African second-generation exiles who were born and/or spent their formative years in exile, it was discovered that "myths of homecoming" were constructed due to their parents' narrated memories and hopes of a new South Africa. These myths heightened expectations of the experience of homecoming. Thus, the romantisation of homecoming could have produced a feeling of misfit between what the CLS expected and what they actually found in Namibia. Studies about the experiences of South African returnees also indicate a feeling of estrangement and poor fit with mainsteam society after return (Enloe & Lewin, 1987; Sahin, 1990). The experience of misfit between person and environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) can lead to behavioural-, physiological-, and psychological strain which can culminate into increased morbidity and mortality (Caplan, 1987). The misfit between anticipation and reality could have led to disillusionment amongst some of the CLS. Disillusionment is the gap between what is and what ought to be (Block, 2010). For some of the CLS, "what is" might mean joblessness, severe financial constraints and lack of opportunities versus living well

in the "land of milk and honey". Disillusionement carries feelings of regret, capitulation, and hopelessness with an accompanying inability to puzzle out what can be done in order to make things better (Niehuis et al., 2001). It was also found that re-entering own ground after a prolonged period of absence can be deeply disorienting more so than entering a host country (Adler, 1981). Having been changed by the experiences in the host country and at the same time not having experienced daily life in the home country, can be deeply alienating to returnees (Hammond, 1999; Skinner, 1998; Steyn & Grant, 2007). People in the home country might also expect of the returnees to adapt immediately, which exerts more stress on the returnees (Steyn & Grant, 2007).

Safety

Some of the participants in this study disclosed to have *felt unsafe in Namibia during and after the repatriation process*:

> Because I remember when we were at the centre at Döbra there were quite a couple of 'Boers' [white people] around.... they were just in the neighbourhood.... we were also informed that we have to be careful because now we are in the country, we are about to get Independence but you will never know your enemy because we were actually surrounded by so many enemies, you know. (Male, 41 years old, participant 11)

It should be kept in mind that Namibians fled the country and went into exile elsewhere because of harsh and discriminatory conditions implemented by the apartheid government of South Africa, which was/is associated with white people. Returnees to Namibia found white people (boers) in the country, which could elevate feelings of unsafety, and prevent returnees from becoming embedded into society. Embeddedness has to do with how individuals find a place in society, how they define this place, whether they get a sense of belonging and what their possibilities of participation in society are (Ruben et al., 2009). Psychosocial embeddedness deals with identity formation, feeling at home, feeling safe and psychologically well (Ruben et al., 2009). Returning to a perceived unsafe space, returnees might have struggled to feel psychosocially embedded. Eisenbruch (1997) mentions that the prospect of returning home can invoke multiple anxieties in refugee youth, such as rekindled uprootedness, mismatched skillsets and also the risk to become reverse refugees in their country of origin (Zetter, 1999). Cassarino (2004) and Gmelch (1980) question the possibility of returning refugees to feel physically and psychologically safe if they in the first place fled the country due to unsafe circumstances.

Separation

Most of the participants remember how they looked forward to meet with their biological parents and living with them in Namibia. However, critical life circumstances such as a parent's ill health, lack of employment and parents having remarried did often not permit happy reunification. Thus, many first and second generation CLS *lived with relatives* for some three years and longer in Namibia before they were reunified with their biological parent(s), while others never stayed with their biological relatives and only visited them. Many of the CLS thus continued experiencing instability and movement from house to house, which was a repetition of the exile experience for some of the returnee CLS:

> …when we came to Namibia… I lived with that lady [caretaker in exile] for about two or three months if not more. I think my father came to get me from that house… he came to get me from that house and he took me to my uncle's house where I lived for almost 4 years. He left me there, at my uncle's house, and then he went to work as a soldier now in Namibia… I came to live with my mom in 94 [1994]. (Female, 33 years old, participant 8)

As documented by Leinaweaver (2014), kinship fostering is common in several traditional societies where children may live with relatives in order for them to ascribe to better opportunities in life. However, the delayed reunification with biological next of kin or lack of it may have led to feeling abandoned, and possibly experiencing feelings like hopelessness and anger (Sherr et al., 2017). Siblings and half siblings grew up together in exile looking after and protecting each other when their parents were absent. After arriving in Namibia, the different biological parents/relatives fetched their children from the various reception centres and this resulted in *half siblings being separated*:

> …her parents did not come and fetch her from Mweshipandeka [school]. But she did know where I lived so she would come and visit me at our village…. She [participant's mother] just said, no I can't take [paternal sister's name mentioned] until her parents come for her, or until I've spoken to them because maybe they are still coming. But years went by and they were still just there. They were then taken from there and brought to PPS. As for [maternal half-sister's name mentioned], her paternal family was in Ondangwa, they were the ones who took her…we were separated, I went with my mother, and [maternal half-sister's name mentioned] went to her father, and [paternal

sister's name mentioned] remained there. But I didn't feel good about it that my sister remained while I went. I also wanted to be where my sister was... (Female, 40 years old, participant 10)

Ample of evidence exists about the guiding and protective influence that siblings can have on one another (Gass et al., 2007; Jenkins, et al., 1989; Steward, 1983). For example, it was found that in the absence of parents, siblings may serve as a valuable source for the provision of security, comfort and psychological support whereas the break of the sibling bond through involuntary separation can have serious lifelong emotional consequences (Gong et al., 2009).

Adjustment difficulties

Participants of both generations mentioned how they had to adjust to the many cultural differences after repatriation. The different ways of going about things due to *cultural differences* were experienced as a shock to some participants:

> So the major problem was trying to fit in this new culture, and it was not just one culture but many cultures. And it was this culture of our tradition, of Oshiwambo, and then there's this culture of when I am now here in Windhoek, so there was a lot of adjustments. (Female, 40 years old, participant 5)

Although researchers like Leung et al. (2008) found that exposure to different cultures can increase individual creativity, Ward et al. (2001) caution that the *multicultura*l experience is a double-edged sword. According to Ward et al. (2001), individuals who encounter a foreign environment may experience culture shock. Culture shock is the psychological disorientation that people experience when they suddenly enter radically different cultural environments to live and work in (Eschbach et al., 2001). Depression, anxiety and helplessness often accompany culture shock, which, when becoming worse, sees to increased psychological disorientation, causing difficulties in the ability to make decisions or solve problems. Adaptation is then bad with poor interpersonal relations and consequently increased alienation (Bocher, 2003; Ferraro, 2006).

A few participants recounted that they grew up in Namibia, after repatriation, seeking where they *belonged*:

> I think also that transition of always moving from family to family, and different people looking after you, and different rules. It also has an effect on you because as a child you know you feel like you want to belong. I think I had difficulty to really place myself in a

situation and feel like I belong there....Cause it felt like it was still just going to be a transition. Like something else was going to happen and I was going to have to move on or something...like for the next level. It's like there's no stability. (Female, 33 years old, participant 8)

A sense of belonging is that feeling of personal involvement in a system, and of being an integral and indispensable part of that system (Anant, 1966). The person will feel valued, needed and accepted and will have a great fit experience i.e. feeling that her/his personal characteristics complement the system (Hagerty et al., 1992). Human beings have an innate need for belongingness (Maslow, 1943; 1954). Sargent et al. (2002) found that a sense of belonging contributes greatly to the feeling of overall well-being. Werner et al. (2017) emphasise that citizenship refers to a person's legal relationship with a state whilst belonging denotes a person's emotional attachment to a place.

With regard to their *relationships with their parents*, participants whose biological fathers were still alive during the time of repatriation reported to have met them again in Namibia. The participants related that during the years in exile, they did not have ample of contact with their fathers as most of the adult males were either actively engaging in combat or were abroad for further studies. Some of the participants also reported that they could at last live with their mothers in Namibia for the first time when they were 10 years and older. They reported their relationships with their parents to have been challenging:

In 93 [1993] that's when I started living with her... My relationship with my mom was completely not what I expected. It was difficult, it was painful. We could not, I don't know if it was acceptance or maybe I expected too much from her, or she, I don't know, but it was abusive, physically and mentally.... from her side.... (Female, 36 years old, participant 3)

A prolonged separation between parents and children due to migration can have a disrupting effect on the parent-child relationship (Zhao et al., 2018). The loss of or the separation from a parent or a primary care-giver is one of the worst experiences a child can have. Such a separation leaves children vulnerable, which renders them at risk of exposure to additional types of adverse childhood experiences (Manyema & Richter, 2019). Left-behind children are often exposed to non-traditional family structures which can become a risk factor for the development of future psychopathology in these children (Cohen & Brook, 1987). Young children who do not/did not have a relationship with at least one devoted parent/caregiver can display an

array of developmental deficits like retarded physical and cognitive development, aggressiveness, dependency anxiety, social maladjustment, affectionless psychopathy, depression and delinquency (Bowlby, 1940; Malekpour, 2007).

In an independent Namibia, some participants' expectations of love, care and protection from parents, particularly their mothers, were not met:

> …when I was in exile, I actually thought, you know, my mom went to study, we are going to have a good life. So I didn't really feel bad for that because I believed she was sacrificing for me… Only when I came back, that disappointment, that not meeting that expectation. That's what killed. …that's what kept me going all the difficult times…and things are even worse. So I think that's why I find it so hard to even forgive her more because the expectation, the hope that I had in our relationship was even more than what transpired. (Female, 36 years old, participant 3)

The experience of *unmet expectations* is similar to the experience of chronic stress with the accompanying chronic negative psychological effect (Wheaton, 1999). Disappointment and regret are often the emotional products of unfulfilled expectations, which can escalate into depression (Lecci et al., 1994). The psychological result of the experience of unmet expectations is often depression (Irving & Montes, 2009; Taris et al., 2006).

Participants from the first generation of CLS mentioned *poor school performance* as a challenge after repatriation to Namibia:

> Imagine you don't have much support and stuff; you can't even discuss this at home because the parents just expect you to go to school and get A's…. So it was just at a point where you don't feel supported. I remember one time when my dad was asking, 'so you didn't do well?'(…) At a point where I think I wanted to kill myself. And ja [yes], I remember, I don't talk about it… I think it's just everything go on your shoulders and you carry it for so long and then it's just like you are tired, so I think I went and drunk some chemical or something then I end up in hospital. And I think it was my first year of high school. (Female, 40 years old, participant 5)

Thomas and Collier (1997) found that young people who experienced interrupted schooling and traumatic events can be expected to take 10 years and longer to come cognitively and academically on par with their peers who did not endure these debilitating

circumstances. Thlabano and Schweitzer (2007) indicate that people who experienced a refugee situation before they were resettled, take longer to participate educationally equally in their resettled destination. Fransen et al. (2018) mention that the negative effects of displacement can cause instability which could impact schooling negatively.

Counselling support

The research participants expressed that they needed *counselling services* when they were repatriated to Namibia:

> … to give us counselling. At least the basic so we could say okay, now I'm fine. You don't heal completely but at least they could have given us support so that we can support ourselves. If somebody is sick, how can they support themself? Psychologically, if you are not fine? (Female, 40 years old, participant 5)

Lie (2004) comments that trauma is a significant factor in the refugee and returnee experience (Mollica et al., 1992). Sundquist and Johansson (1996) found in their study that Chilean and Uruguayan refugees who lived in exile in Sweden suffered more in terms of mental health after return to their countries of origin than those who remained in Sweden.

A few participants stated that their parents were not in happy marriages when they lived with them after repatriation. Some of the CLS thus also had to come to terms with *dysfunctional home* circumstances after returning. This consequently had a negative impact on their well-being:

> I always felt, had my dad not gone into exile he would have probably been better off than having been a soldier and coming back to be a soldier…he had gone away from home, but that was common amongst other soldiers… My mom was the one that lived with me, and maybe sometimes she would take the frustration of my dad's situation, or the situation at home, on me... Maybe we needed that [psychological intervention] to bring the bond back or to create that environment. Maybe things would have turned out better or we could have functioned as a normal family rather than the way things turned out to be… Everybody was on their own… (Female, 36 years old, participant 3)

The physical and psychological demands of the exile situation surely can have a negative impact on the marital and family bond. Bloch (1997), for example found that Somali refugees in Britain experienced a high rate of marital breakdown with a subsequent disintegration of families. These refugees ascribed the

stress that men experienced due to their inability to provide for their families or fulfill their assumed male role as a reason for such familial breakdowns.

As a result of the experiences related to the liberation struggle, one of the participants highlighted her experience when she *sought counselling*:

> ...I decided to see a psychologist for the first time in my life. When I went there I was even in a very bad situation and I think it's because I was also not getting support from my spouse... So I discovered that I was angry that I didn't grow up with my parents and it really has affected me. And I realized that I was also angry with the 'Boers'. I was very upset with them. And obviously I couldn't tell him that I was angry with the 'Boers' because I don't know whether he was coloured or white. I couldn't really tell because his hair was red. So I couldn't really fully tell that I'm really upset with the 'Boers'. (...) I think I had this anger since as a child growing up without my parents in a refugee camp and I just kept it in. (Female, 40 years old, participant 5)

By the time that exiled people returned to Namibia, the many years of social engineering (van Omen & Painter, 2008) ensured that resources and opportunities in Namibian society were still unequally distributed, with white people in key positions. A returnee seeking for psychological services would probably have ended up with a white counsellor/therapist, regarded as a 'Boer' and thus the enemy. Not much of an open and trusting relationship would culminate out of this combination. Written accounts of organised psychotherapy and counseling services for returnees to young Namibia are scarce, leaving the nuance that such services were not high on the agenda of the authorities. Shisana and Celentano (1985) found that many Namibian adolescent refugees showed symptoms of depression already during their time as refugees. As late as 2014, Shiningayamwe et al. (2014) found that the Namibian CLS were in dire need of psychotherapy, not only for the trauma that they suffered during the exile years but also due to stigma and isolation many of them experienced after their return to Namibia. The People's Education, Assistance, and Counselling for Empowerment (PEACE) Centre in Windhoek reports that many returnees are coping via their defense mechanisms like denial, repression, projection and substance abuse (Curling, 2002).

Some participants recounted to have experienced *persistent nightmares* as children growing up in exile after witnessing or experiencing so many traumatic events. For one participant these nightmares persisted into adulthood after she returned to Namibia:

> And then I used to have dreams even after exile that I was falling, even recently I had dreams that those mountains and hills like I am trying to cross them and I was afraid...Even now I still have dreams running away from those planes in exile, running away like there's war. (Female, 40 years old, participant 5)

It was found that recurrent nightmares can be a defining symptom of PTSD and may also be associated with other psychiatric illnesses (Pagel, 2000).

Privileges/opportunities

A few participants reported to have been *assisted* to further their education from the limited government supported initiatives that had been set up to assist the CLS, especially those whose parents died during the liberation struggle:

> "...I happen to get assistance from the SIPE company [Socio-Economic Integration Programme for Ex-Combatants]... When we received maybe only ones money, 2 500 [Namibian dollars]... I only benefitted ones ...because it found me already in matric [Grade 12, final school year]" (Male, 39 years old, participant 1).

Some of the participants acknowledged the emotional and financial *support they received from their parents and relatives* as one of the major contributing factors to obtaining an education:

> ...he [father] asked what is it that I wanted to do and he would support me, so he was always there for emotional and financial support. ...I can say if it wasn't for my dad I wouldn't be here today... I was lucky to have had 4 parents, two fathers and two mothers. (Male, 36 years old, participant 2)

One participant mentioned that her "status" of being a CLS helped her with *smooth entry* into her desired school:

> "...I wanted to go to Peoples Primary School because that is where my friends are schooling and it was easy for me to get admitted at PPS. So I feel like that was because of who I am as an CLS and my application was taken serious, I don't think my dad 'hustled' much for me to get in..."(Male, 36 years old, participant 4).

However, some of the CLS also had *difficulty in finding a placement at a school*:

> "So me I was left out... That time I even didn't find school. People were going to school." (Male, 39 years old, participant 1).

Some of the CLS were *excluded* from helping initiatives:

> "…I didn't get anything. (…) I don't know what it is but some of my colleagues got things. But me, no, I didn't get anything, nothing at all." (Female, 40 years old, participant 10)

Being left out from resource allocation if one qualifies for such help might make people feel cheated and deflated. The perceived unequal and unfair distribution of resources has psychological consequences. Buttrich and Oishi (2017) found that living in such unequal environments can cause mistrust, anxiety about social status, lower happiness, lower social cohesion, weaker morality, higher mortality and ailing physical health.

Inspiration

The majority of participants cited that their *lived difficult experiences* in exile and during post-Independence years served as a motivating factor to continue with life:

> …What I experienced, things have never been good, and when I came here again it has never been good again up to coming to Wanaheda [location]. And there was a time also when my mom could not afford a 20 dollar to pay for the school… She just didn't know what to do, she went to make a ghetto just because of me to assist… Selling chips… I didn't find it that conducive for her. This is just suffering again so I must just struggle myself… I motivate myself to just do whatever can be done to provide for myself… I happen to get some casual job which I assisted myself and also my mom. …she didn't work also… Its many things. Many things. Cause I happen to pay for myself until when I completed. (Male, 39 years old, participant 1)

Voulgaridou et al. (2006) mention that even when people leave all that is familiar to them like family, culture and support systems, they still have their innate abilities for coping. Also, it was found that people, when exposed to difficult circumstances over the long term, can learn new ways of coping which leads to positive transformation and can be referred to as post-traumatic growth (PTG) (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996).

Connectedness

Most of the participants, particularly from the first generation, affirmed to be more connected and comfortable with fellow CLS because of their shared past and *common story*:

> …we grew up like in a group, and these are people that you grew up together with and these are people you look at as your own brothers and sisters, it's like we are family. We have this bond that we grew up with, it's something I will say you can't really break it easily… (Male, 41 years old, participant 11)

The *negative comments* of some members of the Namibian society regarding the behaviour of the CLS were expressed as *hurtful* by both generations:

> As CLS we are also judged…now we are just seen as 'idiots'… Somebody, a friend of mine even said it on Facebook, 'you guys are talking about you have fought for this country, I think us, our parents who have stayed here fought for this country than your parents because your parents were just in camps making love, having a good time making you guys'… (Male, 36 years old, participant 4)

4. Conclusion

Privilege is, amongst others, what human beings did not have to endure. To live the exiled life and going through the stress of repatriation are traumatic human experiences. Namibia gaining independence and the return of refugees back home is not enough to wipe the trauma of the exiled and returnee experience, as narrated and confirmed by the CLS who participated in this study. Coming home was not always a happy experience as expectations did not match realities. Many of the returning CLS felt unsafe as they were suspicious of white people who were regarded as the enemy. The yearning for the unification with parents was often disappointed and CLS had to continue moving between relatives. Half siblings, who relied on each other during the exile years were often separated, leaving more emotional scars. Adjustment difficulties were significant. Having to adapt to the many different cultures in Namibia, often being separated from loved-ones, and unstable living conditions was all difficult. As the CLS did not see their parents often during exile, the quality of parent-child relationships were compromised when suddenly having had to live together in Namibia. The turmoil of exile and returning also created problems with parental spousal relationships which again impacted children negatively. Parents expected their children to start schooling in Namibia and perform academically well, but children were still mentally occupied by all they went through, thus often disappointing parental dreams of academic achievement of their children. Besides that, many of the CLS could not find placement in schools and did also not receive assistance from the authorities of the day. Despite a clear need for counselling and psychotherapy for the returning CLS, such services were scarce. The CLS mention that in a sense all the hardships that they had to endure provided them with the resilience to

continue to fight for their survival. Staying connected with each other is also a blessing, as they share a common story. Labelling and stigmatisation of some members of the Namibian public is hurting, as those who dish out the labels and stigma are most probably not aware of the traumatic life stories of the CLS.

5. Recommendations

The lack of integration programmes involving psychological services appears to have disadvantaged the Namibian CLS. Psychoeducation of the Namibian CLS on the possible consequences of their lived experiences which have an influence on their current behaviour can still be undertaken. Psychological interventions should be offered in the form of therapeutic group session for employed and unemployed Namibian CLS to reflect on the past, make sense of it and find healing in order to move on with their lives. Group sessions may be beneficial for the Namibian CLS as they revealed to find comfort in one another and have a sense of oneness. Group sessions should be complimented by individual counselling sessions for those that need them. Government, non-governmental institutions and the private sector should take hands in a coordinated way to provide targeted psychological interventions for CLS alongside with some training and employment opportunities as part of alleviating the plight of the CLS. Furthermore, an active effort should be undertaken by government to sensitise the Namibian public regarding the lived experiences of the Namibian CLS in order for the public to understand their behaviour, have empathy and connect with the CLS.

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