

International Journal of Culture and Religious Studies

Cultural Heritage Preservation and Intergenerational Identity Continuity
(IJCRS) among Indigenous Communities in East Africa



Cultural Heritage Preservation and Intergenerational Identity Continuity among Indigenous Communities in East Africa

Dr. Amina Nankya
Makerere University, Uganda



Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study was to investigate the cultural heritage preservation and intergenerational identity continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa.

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop research methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low-cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Findings: The findings indicated that cultural heritage preservation plays a significant role in promoting intergenerational identity continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa through indigenous language preservation, traditional ceremonies, oral history transmission, and cultural education. Findings suggest that family mentorship, community participation, and indigenous knowledge transmission strengthen cultural identity retention, traditional value continuity, and cultural belonging among younger generations. However, modernization, urbanization, and changing lifestyles threaten the sustainability of these cultural practices, highlighting the need for community-led preservation initiatives and intergenerational cultural education.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Cultural transmission theory, social identity theory, collective memory theory may be used to anchor future studies on the cultural heritage preservation and intergenerational identity continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa. The study is expected to provide practical insights for indigenous community leaders, cultural organizations, educational institutions, museums, and development practitioners seeking to strengthen cultural heritage preservation and intergenerational identity continuity in East Africa. The study is expected to provide empirical evidence that can inform cultural heritage protection policies, indigenous language preservation strategies, and inclusive educational frameworks across East African countries.

Keywords: *Cultural Heritage Preservation, Intergenerational Identity Continuity, Indigenous Communities*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage preservation refers to the deliberate protection, maintenance, documentation, and transmission of indigenous languages, cultural practices, traditional knowledge, and historical experiences to ensure continuity across generations. In this study, cultural heritage preservation is conceptualized through four dimensions: indigenous language preservation, traditional ceremonies, oral history transmission, and cultural education. These dimensions are expected to influence intergenerational identity continuity, measured through cultural identity retention, intergenerational cultural knowledge, traditional value continuity, and cultural belonging. Intergenerational identity continuity refers to the preservation, transmission, and adaptation of cultural identities, traditional values, ancestral knowledge, and community belonging across successive generations. It encompasses four dimensions: cultural identity retention, intergenerational cultural knowledge, traditional value continuity, and cultural belonging. The following analysis uses peer-reviewed studies published in 2021 or earlier, with statistical evidence where available. Because identity is multidimensional, statistics on ethnic identification, indigenous-language use, and traditional knowledge transmission are treated as related indicators rather than interchangeable measures. In developed economies, intergenerational identity continuity reflects how families and communities maintain ancestral identities despite migration, cultural assimilation, globalization, and changing social environments. In the United States, Duncan and Trejo (2018), using Current Population Survey data collected between 2003 and 2016, established that ethnic identification among people of Hispanic origin declined from 98.6% in the first generation to 93.7% in the second generation and 82.9% in the third generation. Among people of Asian origin, the corresponding identification rates declined more sharply, from 96.5% to 79.7% and 58.8%, respectively, indicating substantial differences in identity retention across immigrant generations. These findings suggest that cultural identity continuity may weaken as successive generations become increasingly integrated into mainstream society, although the rate of change differs considerably between ethnic groups. Consequently, the American experience demonstrates the importance of family cultural socialization, ancestral language use, and community participation in sustaining ethnic identification across generations (Duncan & Trejo, 2018).

A second example from the United States demonstrates that cultural identity continuity also changes throughout an individual's life rather than exclusively between generations. Feliciano and Rumbaut (2019) examined the ethnic identities of immigrants' children over more than 20 years and established that 31% of respondents changed ethnic identity labels during adolescence or the transition to adulthood, compared with 17% between early and middle adulthood. Their longitudinal analysis further revealed that 51% maintained broadly similar ethnic identity labels from adolescence to middle adulthood when national and hyphenated identity categories were treated as equivalent. These findings demonstrate that cultural identity can remain relatively stable while individuals negotiate competing ancestral, national, and social identities within developed societies. The evidence suggests that intergenerational identity continuity should be understood as

a dynamic process involving both the retention and adaptation of inherited identities rather than the complete preservation of unchanged cultural expressions (Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2019).

In developing economies, intergenerational identity continuity is influenced by indigenous language preservation, cultural education, economic modernization, and the relationship between ancestral identity and national integration. In Mexico, research examining indigenous identification using census data established that 42.1% of individuals classified as indigenous through household-based identification could speak an indigenous language, indicating that cultural identification may persist even when ancestral language proficiency declines. The same study found that 89.9% of children whose parents were both identified as indigenous through household-based classification retained that identification, compared with 67.4% of children whose parents both spoke an indigenous language who could speak an indigenous language themselves. These findings reveal a distinction between cultural identity retention and linguistic continuity, suggesting that indigenous communities may maintain ancestral identification despite weakening intergenerational language transmission. Therefore, the Mexican experience demonstrates the importance of examining cultural belonging, traditional values, and indigenous knowledge alongside language proficiency when assessing intergenerational identity continuity (Villarreal, 2014).

Another example from Mexico concerns the Yucatec Maya, whose indigenous language and cultural practices face increasing pressure from integration into wider market economies. Padilla-Iglesias and Woodward (2021) examined changing language input among Yucatec Maya children and demonstrated how economic integration and changing household circumstances can influence the language environments in which younger generations develop. Their study provides evidence of changes in language exposure associated with socioeconomic transformation, although it does not establish a single population-wide percentage of cultural identity loss. At the broader national level, research using Mexico's 2020 census reported approximately 7.36 million indigenous-language speakers aged three years and older, representing 6.1% of that population, demonstrating the continuing significance of indigenous languages within the country. These findings indicate that maintaining intergenerational identity continuity in developing economies requires attention to household language practices, cultural participation, and the pressures associated with economic and educational change (Padilla-Iglesias & Woodward, 2021).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, intergenerational identity continuity remains closely associated with indigenous knowledge systems, family relationships, oral traditions, cultural ceremonies, and community-based learning. In Kenya, Nankaya. (2019) investigated traditional medicinal knowledge among 80 Loita Maasai children aged 6–17 years and established that 88% acquired ethnomedicinal knowledge primarily from their parents. The study further revealed that 53% learned through experiential participation, 35% through oral instruction, and 12% through observation and investigation, demonstrating the importance of different cultural transmission mechanisms. Indigenous medicinal knowledge also increased significantly with age, with a Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.490, suggesting that continued participation in traditional activities supports knowledge accumulation across childhood. These findings demonstrate that

family mentorship, oral knowledge transmission, and practical cultural participation are important mechanisms for sustaining intergenerational cultural knowledge, although medicinal knowledge retention alone does not establish continuity across every dimension of cultural identity (Nankaya., 2019).

In Uganda, intergenerational identity continuity is illustrated by efforts to preserve indigenous musical traditions among the Basoga community. Isabirye (2021) examined a cultural revival initiative involving two surviving master musicians and younger learners, demonstrating how mentorship and participatory learning supported the transmission of endangered indigenous musical knowledge. The study established that learners' cultural identity, agency, enthusiasm, and interaction with experienced musicians were important in sustaining traditional musical practices. Although the research did not report a representative percentage of cultural identity retention, the involvement of only two master practitioners in the documented initiative highlighted the vulnerability of specialized cultural knowledge when transmission depends on a limited number of knowledge holders. These findings suggest that indigenous music education, elder-led mentorship, cultural documentation, and youth participation can contribute to intergenerational cultural knowledge and cultural belonging among indigenous communities in Sub-Saharan Africa (Isabirye, 2021).

Cultural heritage preservation refers to the deliberate safeguarding, maintenance, and transmission of indigenous languages, traditional practices, historical knowledge, and cultural values to ensure continuity of collective identities across generations (Jandreau & Berkes, 2016). Indigenous language preservation, involving the continued use, teaching, and documentation of native languages, is expected to strengthen cultural identity retention by enabling younger generations to understand ancestral values, cultural expressions, and community histories (Jones & Mutumba, 2019). Traditional ceremonies, encompassing initiation rituals, cultural festivals, ancestral commemorations, and communal celebrations, may enhance cultural belonging by reinforcing shared traditions, collective participation, and identification with indigenous communities (Isabirye, 2021). Oral history transmission, involving storytelling, ancestral narratives, indigenous knowledge sharing, and intergenerational dialogue, is likely to strengthen intergenerational cultural knowledge by facilitating the transfer of historical experiences, traditional wisdom, and community values from elders to younger generations (Nankaya., 2019). Collectively, these dimensions demonstrate how cultural heritage preservation may support identity continuity through language use, cultural participation, and intergenerational knowledge transmission, although the strength of these relationships requires empirical investigation (Jandreau & Berkes, 2016; Nankaya., 2019).

Cultural education, conceptualized as the integration of indigenous knowledge, traditional skills, cultural values, and community histories into formal and informal learning environments, is expected to promote traditional value continuity by encouraging younger generations to understand, appreciate, and practice inherited cultural principles (Jones & Mutumba, 2019). Isabirye (2021) established that intergenerational indigenous music education among the Basoga in Uganda facilitated cultural knowledge transmission and strengthened learners' cultural identities

through mentorship and participatory learning. Similarly, Nankaya . (2019) demonstrated that parental instruction and experiential learning were important mechanisms through which Maasai children acquired traditional medicinal knowledge, highlighting the significance of family-based cultural education. Conceptually, indigenous language preservation is primarily associated with cultural identity retention, traditional ceremonies with cultural belonging, oral history transmission with intergenerational cultural knowledge, and cultural education with traditional value continuity, although these dimensions are interconnected and may influence multiple aspects of identity continuity (Jones & Mutumba, 2019; Isabirye, 2021). Therefore, cultural heritage preservation can be hypothesized to have a positive relationship with intergenerational identity continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa, with the nature of these relationships potentially influenced by modernization, migration, formal education, and changing intergenerational interactions (Jandreau & Berkes, 2016; Nankaya ., 2019).

Problem Statement

Cultural heritage preservation is fundamental to sustaining indigenous identities, traditional knowledge, cultural values, and collective belonging across generations. Indigenous communities in East Africa possess diverse cultural heritage expressed through indigenous languages, traditional ceremonies, oral histories, ancestral knowledge, and community-based educational practices that contribute to cultural identity formation and continuity. However, globalization, urbanization, modernization, migration, and changing educational systems increasingly challenge the transmission of indigenous cultural knowledge from older to younger generations. According to UNESCO (2022), at least 40% of the more than 6,700 languages spoken globally are threatened with extinction in the long term, raising concerns about the potential disappearance of indigenous knowledge systems and cultural identities.

Despite ongoing cultural preservation initiatives, evidence from East African communities indicates that the transmission of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices faces significant challenges. Nankaya . (2019), in their study among Loita Maasai children in Kenya, established that 88% of respondents acquired traditional medicinal knowledge from their parents, demonstrating the importance of family-based cultural transmission. Similarly, Isabirye (2021) found that intergenerational musical mentorship among the Basoga in Uganda supported the acquisition of indigenous musical skills and strengthened learners' connections with their cultural heritage. However, Jandreau and Berkes (2016) observed that changing land-use systems, acculturation, and declining opportunities for traditional learning were disrupting indigenous ecological knowledge transmission among Maasai communities in Kenya. More recently, Kamau and Motanya (2024) established that Shona communities in Kenya employed indigenous language use, traditional ceremonies, community meetings, and elder-led teaching to maintain cultural identity, demonstrating the continued importance of community-based cultural preservation.

The central problem is that the relationship between cultural heritage preservation and intergenerational identity continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa remains insufficiently understood within the reviewed empirical literature, particularly regarding the combined contributions of indigenous language preservation, traditional ceremonies, oral history transmission, and cultural education. Although previous studies have established the importance of indigenous knowledge transmission, limited comparative evidence has been identified

concerning how these preservation practices relate to cultural identity retention, intergenerational cultural knowledge, traditional value continuity, and cultural belonging across different generations and communities. UNESCO (2022) emphasized the importance of safeguarding indigenous languages as vehicles for transmitting cultural knowledge, while Oluoch (2023) highlighted the potential contribution of translation, interpretation, and digitization to African cultural heritage preservation.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Transmission Theory

Cultural transmission theory was advanced by Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman (1981) and further developed by Boyd and Richerson (1985). The theory explains how cultural knowledge, beliefs, languages, values, and practices are transmitted between generations through social learning, imitation, and teaching. Mesoudi (2021) emphasized that cultural practices undergo selection and transformation as individuals acquire and transmit knowledge across generations. This theory is relevant to the study because it explains how indigenous language preservation, traditional ceremonies, oral history transmission, and cultural education contribute to intergenerational cultural knowledge and traditional value continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory was developed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner (1979) to explain how individuals develop their identities and sense of belonging through membership in social groups. The theory emphasizes that shared cultural values, traditions, and group membership influence self-perception, collective identity, and social belonging. Research on indigenous Māori identity demonstrates the relevance of social identification to understanding cultural belonging and psychological well-being (Houkamau., 2021). This theory underpins the study by explaining how cultural heritage preservation strengthens cultural identity retention and belonging among younger generations of indigenous communities in East Africa.

Collective Memory Theory

Collective memory theory was originated by Maurice Halbwachs (1925) and explains how communities construct, preserve, and transmit shared memories through social interactions, historical narratives, ceremonies, and cultural traditions. The theory maintains that collective memories reinforce cultural identity and sustain connections between past and present generations. Kupprat (2022) demonstrated that cultural memory is transmitted through communal practices, ritualization, and cultural representations, influencing identity formation and continuity. This theory is relevant because it explains how oral history transmission and traditional ceremonies preserve ancestral knowledge, reinforce traditional values, and promote intergenerational identity continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa.

Empirical Review

Nankaya (2019) investigated how indigenous medicinal knowledge is acquired and transmitted across generations among Maasai children in Kenya. The researchers employed a quantitative research approach involving interviews with 80 children aged 6–17 years and applied Mann–Whitney U tests, Kruskal–Wallis tests, and Spearman's rank correlation to examine the influence of age, gender, and education on traditional medicinal knowledge. The findings established that

88% of children acquired medicinal plant knowledge primarily from their parents, while 53% learned through experiential participation, 35% through oral instruction, and 12% through personal observation and investigation. Furthermore, indigenous medicinal knowledge increased significantly with age ($p = 0.490$, $p < 0.000$), demonstrating the importance of intergenerational learning and continued exposure to cultural practices. The findings support strengthening family-based mentorship, practical indigenous knowledge education, and community initiatives that facilitate the transmission of traditional medicinal practices to younger generations. However, the study concentrated on ethnomedicinal knowledge rather than examining how indigenous language preservation, traditional ceremonies, oral history transmission, and cultural education collectively influence cultural identity retention and intergenerational identity continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa.

Isabirye (2021) investigated how an endangered indigenous musical tradition among the Basoga people of Uganda could be revitalized through intergenerational teaching and learning. The researcher employed a qualitative approach involving analysis of audiovisual recordings, photographs, reports, and documented interactions between two surviving master musicians and young learners participating in a cultural revival project. The findings revealed that successful transmission of indigenous musical knowledge depended on nurturing learners' cultural identity, personal agency, enthusiasm, and meaningful interaction with experienced cultural practitioners. The study further established that intergenerational musical mentorship enabled young people to acquire traditional performance skills while developing stronger connections with their cultural heritage. These findings support the integration of indigenous music into educational programmes, the involvement of cultural elders in youth mentorship, and the use of audiovisual documentation to preserve endangered cultural practices. Nevertheless, the study focused on indigenous musical heritage among the Basoga and did not comprehensively examine how multiple cultural heritage preservation practices influence cultural identity retention, traditional value continuity, and cultural belonging across diverse East African indigenous communities.

Jandreau and Berkes (2016) investigated how sociocultural and environmental transformations influence the preservation and application of traditional ecological knowledge among Maasai pastoralists. The researchers employed a qualitative research design involving semi-structured interviews with 130 residents, transect walks, focus group discussions, participatory mapping, and participant observation conducted in Narok County, Kenya. The findings revealed that traditional knowledge concerning livestock management, environmental observation, and pastoral practices remained important within Maasai society, although acculturation, changing land-use systems, and restrictions on traditional practices increasingly disrupted knowledge transmission. The study further established that the declining importance of traditional learning spaces, including storytelling gatherings and customary pastoral education, reduced opportunities for younger generations to acquire knowledge from community elders. Jandreau and Berkes (2016) recommended greater recognition of indigenous knowledge holders and the integration of traditional ecological knowledge into participatory resource management and decision-making processes. However, the study primarily examined pastoral ecological knowledge and environmental governance rather than directly assessing how cultural heritage preservation contributes to cultural identity retention, traditional value continuity, and cultural belonging among younger generations.

Lew-Levy (2021) investigated how indigenous subsistence knowledge and practical skills are acquired and transmitted across generations. The researchers employed a comparative empirical research design involving interviews with Hadza foragers in Tanzania and BaYaka foragers in the Republic of Congo to examine the relationships between task difficulty, age of skill acquisition, teaching practices, and sources of cultural knowledge. The findings revealed that task difficulty had no significant relationship with age of acquisition or learning from non-parental adults, although a weak positive relationship was observed between task difficulty and the frequency of teaching. Furthermore, the study established that same-sex knowledge transmission was common in both communities, while differences in teaching patterns reflected variations in gender roles and subsistence activities. The findings suggest that cultural preservation initiatives should recognize community-specific learning systems, support practical intergenerational teaching, and create opportunities for young people to acquire indigenous knowledge through participation in everyday activities. Nevertheless, the study concentrated on subsistence skills rather than examining the broader relationship between cultural heritage preservation and intergenerational identity continuity, particularly cultural belonging, traditional values, and identity retention (Lew-Levy ., 2021).

Scarpa (2021) investigated how indigenous food knowledge and culturally specific dietary practices could be documented through community participation. The researchers adopted a community-based research approach involving collaboration with Batwa and Bakiga communities to develop a food database reflecting locally consumed foods and their sociocultural and environmental contexts. The study demonstrated the importance of incorporating community knowledge into food documentation and nutritional research rather than relying exclusively on externally developed food classification systems. Its findings highlighted the value of culturally appropriate research methods for recognizing indigenous food practices and preserving knowledge that might otherwise be overlooked in conventional nutritional databases. The study supports greater community participation in cultural documentation, recognition of local knowledge holders, and the development of culturally responsive information systems that reflect indigenous practices. However, the research concentrated on indigenous food knowledge and nutritional documentation rather than directly examining how cultural preservation practices influence cultural identity retention, intergenerational cultural knowledge, traditional value continuity, and cultural belonging

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Research Gap

Previous empirical studies have examined various dimensions of cultural heritage preservation, including indigenous medicinal knowledge, traditional music, mother-tongue education, ecological knowledge, subsistence skills, and traditional cultural practices, without comprehensively establishing their collective relationship with intergenerational identity continuity. Nankaya (2019) investigated the transmission of ethnomedicinal knowledge among Maasai children in Kenya, while Isabirye (2021) examined the preservation of indigenous musical traditions and learner identity among the Basoga in Uganda. Similarly, Jones and Mutumba (2019) explored mother-tongue instruction and cultural identity development in Uganda, whereas Jandreau and Berkes (2016) concentrated on traditional ecological knowledge and pastoral cultural practices among the Maasai in Kenya. Although these studies provide valuable insights into specific cultural preservation mechanisms, they do not comprehensively examine how indigenous language preservation, traditional ceremonies, oral history transmission, and cultural education collectively relate to cultural identity retention, intergenerational cultural knowledge, traditional value continuity, and cultural belonging. The present study therefore seeks to address this conceptual gap by developing and empirically examining a multidimensional framework connecting cultural heritage preservation with intergenerational identity continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa.

Contextual Research Gap

Existing studies have predominantly examined cultural heritage preservation within specific livelihood activities, educational environments, and traditional knowledge systems rather than investigating intergenerational identity continuity within the broader sociocultural experiences of indigenous communities. Lew-Levy . (2021) investigated the transmission of subsistence skills among Hadza and BaYaka foragers, while Dietrich Leurer . (2019) examined traditional maternal knowledge and breastfeeding practices among Maasai women in Tanzania. Similarly, Scarpa . (2021) explored indigenous food knowledge documentation among the Batwa and Bakiga in Uganda, whereas Isabirye (2021) focused on indigenous musical learning within a cultural revival initiative. These studies demonstrate the importance of indigenous knowledge transmission but provide limited evidence on how different cultural preservation practices contribute to identity continuity across children, youth, adults, and elders within everyday community settings. Furthermore, the influence of modernization, formal education, urbanization, migration, and changing intergenerational relationships on cultural identity continuity remains insufficiently integrated into the reviewed studies. The present study seeks to address this contextual gap by examining how indigenous communities preserve and transmit cultural identities across generations while negotiating contemporary social, educational, economic, and technological transformations.

Geographical Research Gap

The reviewed empirical literature demonstrates that research on cultural heritage preservation and indigenous knowledge transmission in East Africa has largely concentrated on selected communities and localized geographical settings, limiting the extent to which findings can be generalized across the region. Nankaya . (2019) and Jandreau and Berkes (2016) conducted their studies among Maasai communities in Kenya, while Isabirye (2021), Jones and Mutumba (2019), and Scarpa . (2021) examined cultural practices and knowledge systems within selected

communities in Uganda. Similarly, Dietrich Leurer . (2019) investigated traditional maternal knowledge among Maasai women in Tanzania, whereas Lew-Levy . (2021) examined subsistence knowledge transmission among Hadza communities in Tanzania and BaYaka communities in the Republic of Congo. Although these studies provide valuable community-specific evidence, they do not establish how the relationship between cultural heritage preservation and intergenerational identity continuity varies across indigenous communities in different East African countries. In particular, the seven reviewed studies do not provide an integrated comparative assessment covering diverse indigenous communities across the East African region, including communities in Rwanda and Burundi. The present study therefore seeks to address this geographical gap by generating comparative empirical evidence on cultural heritage preservation and intergenerational identity continuity among selected indigenous communities in East Africa, subject to the geographical coverage established in the study's research design.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Cultural heritage preservation plays a fundamental role in promoting intergenerational identity continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa by facilitating the transmission of cultural knowledge, traditional values, indigenous languages, and historical experiences across generations. The reviewed literature suggests that indigenous language preservation, traditional ceremonies, oral history transmission, and cultural education are essential mechanisms through which communities maintain cultural identity, strengthen cultural belonging, and sustain traditional values despite increasing globalization, urbanization, and technological transformation (Assmann, 2011; Mesoudi, 2011). However, changing lifestyles, declining use of indigenous languages, rural-to-urban migration, and reduced intergenerational interactions present potential challenges to the continuity of indigenous cultural identities. Although existing theoretical perspectives emphasize the importance of cultural transmission and collective memory, further empirical investigation is necessary to establish how different cultural preservation practices relate to cultural identity retention, intergenerational cultural knowledge, traditional value continuity, and cultural belonging within diverse East African indigenous communities. Therefore, the proposed study seeks to address these knowledge gaps by examining the relationship between cultural heritage preservation and intergenerational identity continuity, with particular attention to the role of community elders, educational institutions, cultural organizations, and younger generations. The study is expected to contribute to theoretical understanding, inform community-based cultural preservation strategies, and provide evidence for developing inclusive cultural and educational policies that recognize indigenous communities as custodians of their heritage. Ultimately, strengthening culturally appropriate and community-led preservation initiatives may enhance intergenerational knowledge transmission, safeguard indigenous cultural identities, and promote sustainable cultural continuity among indigenous communities in East Africa (UNESCO, 2003).

Recommendations

Theory

The study on Cultural Heritage Preservation and Intergenerational Identity Continuity among Indigenous Communities in East Africa is expected to contribute to theoretical knowledge by extending the application of Cultural Transmission Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Collective

Memory Theory to the preservation of indigenous cultural identities across generations. Cultural Transmission Theory explains how cultural knowledge, traditional practices, indigenous languages, and social values are transferred from older to younger generations, while Social Identity Theory demonstrates how shared cultural membership influences individuals' sense of belonging and identity formation. Collective Memory Theory further explains how oral traditions, historical narratives, ancestral knowledge, and communal ceremonies sustain shared cultural identities over time (Assmann, 2011; Mesoudi, 2011). The study's unique theoretical contribution will be the development of an integrated conceptual framework linking indigenous language preservation, traditional ceremonies, oral history transmission, and cultural education to cultural identity retention, intergenerational cultural knowledge, traditional value continuity, and cultural belonging. It is recommended that future researchers empirically test this framework across different indigenous communities in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi to establish how cultural transmission mechanisms influence identity continuity under varying social, economic, and technological conditions.

Practice

The study is expected to provide practical insights for indigenous community leaders, cultural organizations, educational institutions, museums, and development practitioners seeking to strengthen cultural heritage preservation and intergenerational identity continuity in East Africa. Indigenous communities should establish community-led cultural mentorship programmes in which elders actively transmit indigenous languages, oral histories, traditional knowledge, cultural values, and customary practices to younger generations through storytelling, cultural festivals, and participatory learning activities. Educational institutions should collaborate with local communities to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems, traditional arts, and culturally relevant learning materials into educational programmes while ensuring that indigenous communities retain authority over how their heritage is represented and transmitted. Cultural organizations should also adopt community-controlled digital preservation initiatives, including audiovisual documentation of oral traditions, indigenous language archives, and digital storytelling platforms, to strengthen cultural accessibility without exposing sacred or restricted knowledge to unauthorized audiences (UNESCO, 2003). The study's unique practical contribution will be the development of a community-centred cultural preservation model that integrates traditional knowledge transmission with modern educational and digital approaches, thereby promoting meaningful youth participation, cultural identity retention, and sustainable intergenerational cultural continuity.

Policy

The study is expected to provide empirical evidence that can inform cultural heritage protection policies, indigenous language preservation strategies, and inclusive educational frameworks across East African countries. National ministries responsible for culture, heritage, education, and community development should strengthen policies supporting indigenous language instruction, cultural documentation, community museums, and the integration of indigenous knowledge into formal and non-formal education systems. Policymakers should establish participatory cultural

heritage governance mechanisms that recognize indigenous communities as custodians of their cultural resources and ensure their meaningful involvement in decisions concerning heritage preservation, cultural tourism, research, and the commercialization of traditional knowledge. Regional institutions, including the East African Community, should encourage cross-border cultural cooperation, support endangered language documentation, and promote culturally sensitive heritage programmes that respect the diversity and autonomy of indigenous communities. These recommendations are consistent with the principles of community participation and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage articulated in the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003). The study's unique policy contribution will be the development of an evidence-informed framework for integrating indigenous cultural heritage preservation into educational, cultural, and community development policies, with particular emphasis on intergenerational knowledge transfer, cultural rights, community ownership, and sustainable identity continuity.

REFERENCES

- Dietrich Leurer, M., Petrucka, P., & Msafiri, M. (2019). Maternal perceptions of breastfeeding and infant nutrition among a select group of Maasai women. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 19, Article 8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-018-2165-7>
- Duncan, B., & Trejo, S. J. (2018). Identifying the later-generation descendants of U.S. immigrants: Issues arising from selective ethnic attrition. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 677(1), 131–138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218763293>
- Feliciano, C., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2019). The evolution of ethnic identity from adolescence to middle adulthood: The case of the immigrant second generation. *Emerging Adulthood*, 7(2), 85–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696818805342>
- Houkamau, C. A., et al. (2021). Indigenous ethnic identity, in-group warmth, and psychological wellbeing: A longitudinal study of Māori. *Current Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01636-4>
- Isabirye, J. (2021). Indigenous music learning in contemporary contexts: Nurturing learner identity, agency, and passion. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 43(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X20954548>
- Isabirye, J. (2021). Indigenous music learning in contemporary contexts: Nurturing learner identity, agency, and passion. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 43(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X20954548>
- Isabirye, J. (2021). Indigenous music learning in contemporary contexts: Nurturing learner identity, agency, and passion. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 43(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X20954548>
- Jandreau, C., & Berkes, F. (2016). Continuity and change within the social-ecological and political landscape of the Maasai Mara, Kenya. *Pastoralism*, 6, Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13570-016-0048-y>
- Jandreau, C., & Berkes, F. (2016). Continuity and change within the social-ecological and political landscape of the Maasai Mara, Kenya. *Pastoralism*, 6, Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13570-016-0048-y>
- Jones, S., & Mutumba, S. (2019). Intersections of mother tongue-based instruction, funds of knowledge, identity, and social capital in an Ugandan pre-school classroom. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 18(4), 207–221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2019.1607349>
- Kamau, S. N., & Motanya, M. M. (2024). Culture preservation through language maintenance among linguistic minority groups: A case study of the Shona speakers of Kenya. *Journal of the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.62049/jkncu.v5i1.204>
- Kupprat, F. (2022). Rethinking theories of memory from the vantage of ethnography and archaeology. *Anales de Antropología*, 56(2), 41–53. <https://doi.org/10.22201/ia.24486221e.2022.77993>

- Lew-Levy, S., Ringen, E. J., Crittenden, A. N., et al. (2021). The life history of learning subsistence skills among Hadza and BaYaka foragers from Tanzania and the Republic of Congo. *Human Nature*, 32, 16–47. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-021-09386-9>
- Mesoudi, A. (2021). Cultural selection and biased transformation: Two dynamics of cultural evolution. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 376(1828), 20200053. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2020.0053>
- Nankaya, J., Gichuki, N., Lukhoba, C., & Balslev, H. (2019). Sustainability of the Loita Maasai childrens' ethnomedicinal knowledge. *Sustainability*, 11(19), Article 5530. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11195530>
- Nankaya, J., Gichuki, N., Lukhoba, C., & Balslev, H. (2019). Sustainability of the Loita Maasai children's ethnomedicinal knowledge. *Sustainability*, 11(19), 5530. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11195530>
- Nankaya, J., Gichuki, N., Lukhoba, C., & Balslev, H. (2019). Sustainability of the Loita Maasai childrens' ethnomedicinal knowledge. *Sustainability*, 11(19), Article 5530. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11195530>
- Oluoch, S. J. (2023). Language of languages: Translation, interpretation and preservation of African heritage in the new frontier of development. *Journal of the Kenya National Commission for UNESCO*, 2(1). <https://journals.unesco.go.ke/index.php/jknatcom/article/view/20>
- Padilla-Iglesias, C., & Woodward, A. L. (2021). Changing language input following market integration in a Yucatec Mayan community. *PLOS ONE*, 16(6), Article e0252926. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0252926>
- Scarpa, G., Berrang-Ford, L., Twesigomwe, S., et al. (2021). A community-based approach to integrating socio, cultural and environmental contexts in the development of a food database for indigenous and rural populations: The case of the Batwa and Bakiga in South-Western Uganda. *Nutrients*, 13(10), Article 3503. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13103503>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2022, December 9). UNESCO celebrates the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-celebrates-international-decade-indigenous-languages>
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2024, February 20). International Mother Language Day: Why multilingual education is key to intergenerational learning. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/international-mother-language-day-why-multilingual-education-key-intergenerational-learning>
- Villarreal, A. (2014). Ethnic identification and its consequences for measuring inequality in Mexico. *American Sociological Review*, 79(4), 775–806. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122414541962>