

Research Article

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An Exploration of the Psychosocial Wellbeing of the San Community in Platfontein in the Northern Cape



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Abstract

The focus of this research was to explore the psychosocial wellbeing of the San people in Platfontein in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. While there are some studies available about the many risk factors and problems linked to this San community's psychosocial wellbeing, there is a lack of information about the resources pertaining to their psychosocial wellbeing. A qualitative approach and a case study design were used. Data were collected by conducting individual interviews with younger and older members of this community. A focus group discussion was also conducted with community leaders according to the San's cultural practices, seeing that the San people's abilities of storytelling and connecting in groups are widely regarded as part of their cultural heritage. Thematic data analysis was used. Findings indicate the San community's wealth of cultural strengths; secondly, concerns obstructing the San's psychosocial wellbeing; and lastly, conflicting issues about community assets in Platfontein. It is recommended to develop a culture-sensitive intervention via a participatory action method to maximise the psychosocial wellbeing of the San people living in Platfontein.

Keywords: Psychosocial Wellbeing; San People; Community; Platfontein, Culture; Cultural Identity

Introduction

Famous for their distinctive "click" languages and their rich culture rooted in thousands of years of hunting and gathering, the ancestral San peoples have lived in Southern Africa since ancient times [1]. However, today's San are among the most disadvantaged, most impoverished, disempowered, and stigmatised ethnic group in Southern Africa [2,3]. The !Xun and Khwe are currently the largest San groups in South Africa. They are descended from San communities that were recruited in the 1960s, sometimes forcefully, by the then South African Defence Force (SADF) to serve as trackers for its operations in Namibia and Angola. When Namibia became independent in 1990, the SADF offered its trackers sanctuary in a tent town erected for them on the Schmidtsdrift plain in the Northern Cape. As settlement for the land claim, the Department of Land Affairs purchased the farm in Platfontein, approximately 15 kilometres outside of the Northern Cape provincial capital, Kimberley, for the two San communities who were represented by the Communal Property Association (CPA). The 12 500 hectares of bushveld with hundreds of ancient rock engravings was officially handed over in May 1991 [4]. The historical context of the group of San community, i.e., members of the !Xun and Khwe San (originally from the northern parts of

Namibia and Southern Angola), who was relocated in 2004 to Platfontein, is of key importance in this research [5].

Problem Statement

The San residents living in the Platfontein community close to Kimberley in the Northern Cape Province are viewed as a first generation of Africans who previously lived nomadically as members of small communities in some of the most isolated areas of Southern Africa [5]. This San community is "...grappling with urbanisation in a rapidly modernising South Africa" ([5] p. 52). Since 1993, the San experienced many challenges and changes related to their psychosocial wellbeing – due to various reasons. Gebregeorgis [1] states the San's social confusion currently is deep-seated in their background of dispossession, relocation, mass destruction, and war. Furthermore, this social confusion is fuelled by the unemployment and poverty which they are experiencing with a large impact on their psychosocial wellbeing. Bless, Higson-Smith, and Kagee's description of (2006) [6] psychosocial wellbeing includes "concrete problems encountered in everyday life of a certain community" (p. 20), such as, problems associated with unemployment, lack of proper medical care, and poor education, housing, and transportation [7]. Formerly the

military was the major employer for the San people in the Northern Cape, providing basic resources such as health (the clinic), food (a food store), and education [8]. Paying labourers with alcohol, i.e., a home-brewed beverage commonly referred to as “tombo”, was seen as a common practice in Namibia and Botswana ([9] p. 52). Soldiers in the military were provided with two beers after work, which became a social pattern [10].

However, when the military infrastructure “dissolved” with the dissolution of the SADF in 1993, the withdrawal had serious consequences for the San people. Because the San people depended on the military, there was suddenly a hunger problem [10]. Also, after the withdrawal of the army, the San people were faced with an increase in social problems such as alcohol abuse, unemployment, teenage pregnancies, malnutrition, tuberculosis (TB), sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence [11]; and, the continuous conflict between the !Xun and Khwe [10,12]. These difficulties also include problems with medical care, education, housing, and transportation [7]. Currently, many of the San people’s psychosocial problems associated with particularly alcohol abuse still persist in the Platfontein community [2,13].



Figure 1: Distribution of San communities across Southern Africa.
Source: WIMSA website, October 2010; <http://www.wimsanet.org/about-the-san> [2].

In summary, the historical context of the San community in Platfontein cannot be omitted when their psychosocial wellbeing is explored. See Figure 1 for the distribution of San communities across Southern Africa. While there are many risk factors regarding the San community’s psychosocial wellbeing, it is also imperative to uncover those resources pertaining to their psychosocial wellbeing. According to Gebregeorgis [1], there is a growing appreciation of the San people’s cultural heritages such as rock art and paintings, contemporary art, handicrafts, dance, and music. Also, the San have received the attention of anthropologists and the media with their survival and hunting skills, wealth of indigenous knowledge of the flora and fauna of Southern Africa, and their rich cultural traditions [14]. But, existing literature provides a bleak picture of the San people in the Northern Cape [12,15]. Ultimately, this research aims to add to those efforts “so

that the San do not become a forgotten people” ([2] p.13). In this regard, Ebersöhn et al. [16] urge us to intentionally investigate the non-Western psychosocial support practices that have been used traditionally in post-colonial Southern Africa. Therefore, it is of key importance to explore the ways in which the psychosocial wellbeing of these “oldest inhabitants” of South Africa living in the Platfontein community could be protected and promoted in the 21st century.

Theoretical Framework

The strengths perspective focusing on the strengths of the individual, group, organisation, and community provided a proper fit, since the individual or community is considered as the “best expert” in giving direction on what will or will not be helpful in resolving their problems ([17], p.3) [18]. The ecological perspective further states that human resources, needs, and problems must be looked at in the context of the environment. Therefore, it was important to understand the environmental circumstances of persons, since individuals or groups do not function in isolation but, for example, within the family. The family exists within the community, which is, in turn, influenced by the political, cultural, and economic environment [17].

Method

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore ways to protect and promote the psychosocial wellbeing of the San community in Platfontein in the Northern Cape via a case study design [19]. The researchers used a case study design in order to obtain “a familiarity with their social world, and to look for patterns in their lives, words and actions in the context of the case as a whole” ([20] p. 320). As we studied participants from a different culture, it was important to be “culturally sensitive of their language, experiences, norms, behaviour, characteristics, race and beliefs” [21]. Also, this approach was a proper fit for the planned study, seeing that the San people’s abilities of storytelling and connecting in groups are widely regarded as part of their cultural heritage [1].

Participants and Setting

Table 1: Information about the San living in the Platfontein community.

| The Number of Women, Children, and Youth in Platfontein | | | |
|---|------|------|-------|
| | !Xun | Khwe | Total |
| Women | 1438 | 537 | 1975 |
| Men | 1378 | 502 | 1880 |
| Youth (women) | 400 | 181 | 581 |
| Youth (men) | 394 | 187 | 581 |
| Children (girls) | 465 | 178 | 643 |
| Children (boys) | 494 | 170 | 664 |
| Total | 4569 | 1755 | 6324 |
| Traditional house of the !Xun and Khwe (!Xun chief; Khwe chief) | | | |
| Community Development Committee and Communal Property Association | | | |

The population for this study was all the San people living in Platfontein in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa.

This is the geographical area currently being occupied by the !Xun and Khwe communities situated north east of Kimberley [22]. According to Tempelhoff [5], the Platfontein area consists of a number of farms with a settlement housing complex accommodating about 7000 people and is currently an emergent urban area in which residents have the opportunity to lead urban lives (Table 1).

The abovementioned information is offered to give some information about the San population in Platfontein in the Northern Cape (the Platfontein Community Development Plan, March 2010). The functions of the traditional leaders (chiefs) entail the protection of the San people’s culture, such as ensuring that the customs or traditions including the dance, traditional

attire, medicine, and laws are practiced. In addition, the San population are also responsible for preserving the language. As a traditional community, every visitor should first get permission from the chiefs before entering the community. The Community Development Committee (CDC) is to assist in developing the community regarding any new projects, job opportunities, skills, et cetera available to the youth. The Communal Property Association (CPA) is responsible for the assets, such as the buildings and funds of the community. On 12 May 2018, the !Xun community lost its chief in a car crash [23]. The chief was also a chairperson of the CPA. The socio-demographic information of participants (interviews: n=32) was obtained in order to provide a profile of the participants via a demographical questionnaire (Table 2).

Table 2: Socio-demographic information of participants (interviews).

| Marital Issues/ Children | Housing/Sanitation | Health | Education Level and Employment | Transport |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| 99 % regard cohabitation as traditional marriage | Almost all participants live in RDP houses; all of the houses have pit toilets | No health issues except for one HIV treatment and other Tuberculosis (TB) | Only eight out of 32 participants have completed their matric. Those with matric have a job, except for three | All participants use public transport mainly “hitch-hiking” |
| Only two participants are legally married With the exception of one participant, all participants have children Only three have one child each | Two participants live at the back shacks with their partners Only one participant lives in an informal settlement in Platfontein | Two participants over 60 years suffer from high blood pressure | Only one participant was a learner | One participant owns a “bakkie” |

Age: Out of 31 participants (interviews), two had reached old age. They both suffered from high blood pressure. The male participant lived with his traditional wife and children. The female participant was a widow and lived with adult children as well.

Marital status. The information above shows that two of the participants are legally married, namely 43-year-old and 57-year-old female participants. There is a 60-year-old as well as a 40-year-old widow. One learner lives with his mother, and there are two single women of 36 and 39 years living separately, and both have 23-year-old sons. The rest (27) from age 18 to 66 years live with partners, and according to their culture, are traditionally married.

Education and employment. Eight (four men and four women) of the participants completed schooling/matric; two females and one male are unemployed. They are employed as: X-K FM radio presenter, community development worker at the Department of Human Settlements, female contract worker, political liaison officer at the mayoral office of Sol Plaatje Municipality, and two women are volunteers (receive stipend of R2500) at the local clinic as HCT (HIV and AIDS counsellors) as well as Home-Based Care. Only seven (three female and four male) participants out of the 31 who took part (interviews) in the research completed grade 10 and 11. An overall of nine participants are volunteers at the clinic, which consist of two HIV and AIDS counsellors and seven from Home-Based Care. One male participant is a learner (still at school – he is 20 years old), two female participants (aged 18 and 19) did not even complete their primary school education. Six of the participants are older than 50 years; they have never

attended school and one is a retired soldier. The remaining five participants also did not complete their schooling, and only one of them is employed at the Sol Plaatje municipality on a contract base in the water and sanitation section. Participants who are unemployed go out to work as seasonal workers on the farms. The unemployed women normally go with their partners to the farms.

Housing: All participants live in RDP houses except for 3=three. One female participant (19-year-old) lives with her partner in a shack behind the family house, and one male participant also lives with his partner and children in a shack. One male participant lives independently in an informal settlement with his partner and children.

Children: All the participants have minor children including the 57-year-old participant who is one of the traditional leaders who was included in the semi-structured interviews to get a varied perspective as well. The others who are over 50 have adult children with whom most still stay under one roof. Participants live with their extended families, except for those who own shacks. Only two female participants and the 18-year-old participant have only one child each. Most participants have two to five children, and those who have reached old age have up to seven children. Overcrowding may seem to be of concern with many children and extended family living together. Sanitation is a huge problem as “mealiemeel bags”/sacks are installed inside these pit toilets. It is a high health risk as one of the participants mentioned that these bags are collected only when they are full after having been left on the pavement the whole day before collection time.

Health. Illness/disease was not reported by most participants. Diseases which were reported are: HIV treatment (one female participant); tuberculosis treatment (two participants); and high blood pressure treatment (the older participants of over 50 years).

Participants

In this qualitative study, purposive sampling was used (Maree, 2016) and participants had to comply with inclusion criteria. Data were collected through semi-structured one-on-one interviews from 31 members of the San community living in Platfontein in the Northern Cape, i.e. complying with the inclusion criteria. Eight community leaders participated in a focus group discussion (FGD) to ensure the obtaining of rich data (a descriptive case study design).

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews: The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with San people living in Platfontein across the ages of 18 to 60 (youth 18 to 30; adults 31 to 60). A case study design was used, and the interviews were guided by an interview guide to explore the participants' psychosocial wellbeing. At the beginning of the interviews, participants were asked to complete the short demographical questionnaire.

Focus Group Discussion

Once the individual interviews were completed, a focus group discussion (FGD) took place. Since focus group discussions are relatively unstructured though guided, and are interactive, the participants had the opportunity to ask questions, challenge, or agree with one another [24]. The focus group was guided by an interview guide to explore the ways in which the psychosocial wellbeing of the selected San community can be protected and promoted. Since drawing is an old custom of the San people, the drawings of an animal (e.g., antelope) which might remind them of their hunting experiences were used to encourage participation and the gathering of rich information. This was linked to ways

to protect and promote the San community's psychosocial wellbeing in ways that are meaningful to them. Every group member was able to give his/her opinion, since this is according to the San custom. For example, during the FGD, every participant (community member) responded to all the questions presented by the researcher. A traditional dance was used as an ice-breaker for the focus group, because the San people enjoy dancing, and this helped in creating a positive atmosphere at the start of the session. The FGD was conducted in accordance with the cultural practices of the San people.

Content of the Focus Group Data Collection Opportunity

- i. Greetings and introduction
- ii. Ice-breaker
- iii. Completing the demographical questionnaire
- iv. Purpose of the FGD
- v. Orientate participants about tools to be utilised (such as drawings) and encourage freedom to utilise space available (e.g., sit on the chair or lie on the floor if desired)
- vi. Duration of the FGD was about two hours (justification of the use of more time for the focus group discussion is based a culturally appropriate standpoint, since the San people value group discussions and having enough time to converse)
- vii. Explain issues of confidentiality

The researcher acting as "the facilitator" as explained by Thorogood ([25], p. 127) used a symbolic drawing of an animal, namely a blesbuck (significant to the San), to commence the FGD. Questions were used, for example:

- i. What does this animal symbolise with regard to the life of the San people in the past?
- ii. Tell me about its significance in the present-day life of the San people? (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Photographs of researcher using the picture of a blackbuck during the FGD.

The above questions tapped into the past life of the San people as hunters (the animal drawing).

This opened communication where, especially those who were born in Angola and Namibia, could share their happy experiences of their life in the past, in order to gain information about their cultural heritage and the possible wealth that can be associated with the San's psychosocial wellbeing. Effective probes were used, such as "tell me more" or "can you please explain". The questions following thereafter concentrated on those factors around the San's psychosocial wellbeing and led to lengthy discussions, as everyone expected his/her opinions or problems or disappointments to be heard.

Procedure and Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was given by the Ethics Committee (HREC) of the North-West University (NWU-00131-17-S1), and legal permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in Southern Africa (WIMSA). Written consent was obtained from the participants, and they agreed to participate on a voluntary basis. Particular attention was paid to adhere to all ethical guidelines, such as matters of confidentiality, privacy, and cultural sensitivity.

Data Analysis

The visual data were analysed based on transcripts of the discussion on the visual data. Thematic analysis was done according to Braun and Clarke's [26] exposition: raw data were organised into specific categories (descriptions or words used by the participants) and thematic patterns were identified.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this qualitative study are presented as identified themes and subthemes. The findings are authenticated by presenting it as consistent with the research aim and supported (or not) by existing studies/literature. Three main themes were identified: firstly, recognising the strengths inherent to the San people in the Platfontein community; secondly, concerns obstructing the San's psychosocial wellbeing; and thirdly, conflicting issues community assets.

Theme 1. Recognising the Strengths Inherent to the San in the Platfontein Community (A Wealth of Cultural Strengths)

The first main theme covers the San community's beacons of hope and enjoyment in the wealth of their culture, including their languages, their leadership structure, and a pride in their cultural identity.

Subtheme

Cultural heritage: The San people enjoy nature. This was evident during the FGD, where the discussion took them back to their hunting era and happy life in the veld. Their passion in describing animals also stirred an interest in the student researcher who learnt a lot. The community leaders spoke freely

about the significance of animals in the life of the San. This also brought sad feelings to them, for the fact that they are restricted from hunting animals or wild game as these are now considered by the government as privately owned.

San people's culture and their intimate knowledge of nature/animals: The older people and community leaders are very much aware of the "past", and they have an outstanding knowledge of animals. For example, during the focus group discussion (FGD), the researcher used the picture of blesbuck as part of the ice-breaker. The immediate recognition by the community leaders of the animal gave the researcher impression that she was conversing with people who know about the animal kingdom. This also confirmed the San people's tradition as hunters, as is widely known. Okay. Blesbuk, yes. We call it 'glugu'. But as it is standing, it can hear something, as it is standing...and if its ears are like this, then it is looking in the direction where it heard the sound. (Male participant – FGD) The blesbuk heard a sound. And the sound it heard made it realise there is danger. This is why the ears are now straight up, so that it can hear from where, that it can be absolutely sure, from where the sound comes. And if you see, the head is suddenly also straight up. It's searching for the smell to detect, is this a familiar hunter, or is it a lion or is it a tiger? (Female participant – FGD).

Participants (community leaders) spoke in a colourful way describing the mannerisms, typical behaviour and qualities of the blesbuk (chosen by the researcher for an ice-breaker). For example, they mentioned the alertness of the blesbuk and its ability to warn other buck and animals of possible danger. And if many of the, lots of the wild standing together and, in the veld and the zebras, let us just say the animals are mixed, they 'mixed' among each other. You will recognise that the first animal to detect danger – the blesbuk is an alert animal. (Male participant – FGD) Participants' animated talking about the characteristics of the blesbuk confirmed their intimate knowledge of and living close to nature.

Knowledge of Animals – Part of The San People's Practices: Participants spoke about their cultural practices as closely linked to their interaction with nature. For, example, the San people view the eland as a holy animal. Formerly, a male person who succeeded in killing an eland proved that he is fit to be married, since he has the ability to provide for his wife and family. This achievement also implies that the hunter has been well-educated and that he has the ability to teach his children as to the ways of being a hunter. The eland was the holy animal for the San people. Other situations, when the hunter goes to hunt and kill the eland, then he will fetch the people from the village to where he has killed the eland. This entails different places, because I mean from time to time things change. From different territories, that young person who killed the animal, he can now be offered a wife because he is a good hunter. If he has a wife, he will know how to take care of his wife and will know how to care for the wife's family and the people in his village. And for such a person the elders had always

felt that he is the right person who will be able to take good care of the people. (Male participant – FGD).

Various South African authors such as Sir Laurens van der

Post, who introduced the world to the Kalahari Bushmen, write about the San people's understanding of the eland as a holy animal and the shamans seeking its blessing and "eland power" ([27], p. 132). (Figure 3)



Figure 3: Picture from J. David Lewis-Williams' pioneering work on Southern African rock art, *Believing and Seeing*.

The San people's relationship to the eland is an example of an intimate, sophisticated bond with the animal world, one in which the rigid separation of the "sacred" and "mundane" spheres of existence has not yet manifested [28]. Jooste [27] also refers to this relationship as the eland "in his power and beauty, in his strength and fleetness of foot; in the sleekness of his hide, in the aloneness and the wisdom of his ways he allows us to lay our eyes upon him and see, reflected in him, the smallest part of the Greater god's majesty" (p. 132).

Knowledge of animals and hunting – San's survival: The participants' (community leaders) spiritual worldview entails God's provision of the meat of animals to be a source of food for the San and to feed their children. These stories stress their tradition as hunters and are closely associated with their survival and self-respect. In the past, or the olden days, God created all, wild (animal) and human being. If you teach the children skills, you teach [them] how to use the bow, how to trace the footprints of the specific buck. And as soon as it is slaughtered, the meat is slaughtered, then the buck will be brought home. And this was the lifestyle they had during that time, those years, when you felt hungry, you had to go to the veld to hunt something for yourself, for the pot. So the wild, if you have the wild and you have the freedom to hunt, then you will feel you are a human being. (Male participant: church leader – FGD)

The role of fathers and grandfathers: The community leaders spoke eagerly about their traditional hunting practices and that the grandfather will introduce the grandson to hunting, starting with smaller animals; but eventually this apprentice must be able to kill an eland in order to prove to himself and the community that he can be respected as an adult. They teach them how to use the bow and arrow. And then the grandfather informs him on what he is supposed to kill, and he will go from a situation starting first with the springbok, may be a hare then a springbok and then may be a kudu or whatever he will get. But the main one

he must find, the last one which he is supposed to kill is the eland. If he can kill the eland, then he is a good hunter and a man who will care for and can look after his people. (Male participant – FGD)

San's awareness of limitations regarding hunting nowadays: The leaders of the community express their sadness that they cannot still be "hunters" (like in the past) – also, they are frustrated with being prevented to hunt due to the controls (government), e.g., of fences, and several restrictions not to hunt on the properties of people, such as the farmers and the fences indicating the borders of the farms. In the olden days it was easy and not very difficult. In different territories it was, very easy but where the government is involved, then you get the situation of fences being built. All the wild is inside those fences. You do not have free access to go in to go and hunt it. (Male participant – FGD)

The unique San culture: All participants referred to the uniqueness of their culture. Participants generally spoke with great pride about their culture, language, and customs. Integral to the San's culture is the practice to share; although unemployment is rather high in the community (most participants mentioned that the unemployment rate is about 80 % in this community for the San), participants mentioned that the families who have supplies, such as flour, will share gladly with other members of their tribe. The San is a unique person. They are a people who can share. So one, if one person has money, then people will, he himself will make sure that the people around him get something to eat. If he bought a lot of flour, such as 12kg, they will share. The one can get [inaudible], then he can receive in a bowl, then he goes to prepare food, then the family eat. And the other family also eat there. (Interview: Male participant – youth, no. 3). However, there are different opinions among adults, older members of the community, and youth as to the use and eagerness to protect and promote the San's cultural practices. We also have our traditional games, but these games are not taken seriously. We are just playing at home and now as in Platfontein, it is not happening, because the

children are involved in a much modernised life. Children are at the disco, on TV and very busy on their cell phones. (Interview: Male participant – youth, no. 3).

Language and identity: Knowledge of the San indigenous languages. !Xun and Khwedam are the indigenous languages of the Platfontein San. While a large proportion of the Khwe still speak Khwedam, a minority can speak !Xun. The older participants (60 years old) spoke about their traditions and the use of their language....then the women sing and the men dance...Khwe dance. You must not abandon your language. (Interview: Adult female participant, no. 11 – did not attend school)

Us here in Platfontein of the San community feel very bad because nobody knows us, our languages are not (documented) written. Our languages are becoming weak. (Interview: Adult male participant, no. 6)

Crawhall (as cited in Miti et al., 2011) points out that many of the San languages in South Africa are extinct. As an example, Penn (1996) cites the language /Xam to have become extinct as early as 1875 and attributes this to the slavery of the /Xam people, imposition of the Afrikaans language, and later assimilation into the population group classified Coloured (of mixed heritage) under apartheid. Although the older participants spoke about their language, they did not offer practical examples of ways in which to protect and promote the use of their languages. Participants were rather “silent” about strategies for protecting and promoting their language(s). Since the San people view themselves as socially active and that they “need enough time per day to socialise”, their language is clearly one of the important ways to describe their existing reality as well as to compose their social identities and social relations. As stated by Gebregeorgis [1], language is indeed a vital tool for the San people as it “generates and constitutes their social world” (p. 103). The local radio station fulfils a special function in caring for the community’s culture and its stories. All participants mentioned the importance of their culture and the appreciation of their languages. Participants understood positive psychosocial wellbeing as friendliness as expressed in their communal greetings.

Yes, then you can see this is a happy person. Or someone who is passing, they greet each other. Someone wave his hand, if he is far, then those who are sitting in the yard, can also wave back and they greet each other in their languages. (Interview: Youth male participant: 3). Leadership is also a fundamental part of San culture. The older participants mentioned the importance of leaders, and how they are respected for offering guidance, especially regarding difficult matters: “If you encounter a problem, you go and tell the leaders, I have this problem. Then the leaders will bring you together in order to find a solution” (Interview: Adult female participant, no. 11 – 60 years old).

The importance of leadership for the San was also clear with the conducting of the FGD, and each community leader introduced him-/herself by stating his/her name and the group/tribe he/she represents. For example:

- i. “My name is XX and I am member of the !Xun community” (FGD: female participant).
- ii. “I am Mr YY. I am the “siener”/see-er of my tribes, my Kutshi” (FGD: male participant).
- iii. “I am ZZ, I am member of the committee and my tribe is also Mavinga”.

Cultural identity. The San community living in Platfontein consists of the two groups, namely the !Xun and Khwe. These two San groups each have an own identity (issue of cultural identity) and they have no desire to integrate. This was clear from the fights that occurred due to the sudden death of the late chief Mahongo who was well-respected by all the community leaders, both the Khwe and !Xun, nationally as well as abroad. However, the exclusion of the Khwe community from attending the chief’s funeral worsened the bitterness and hatred among the !Xun and Khwe members. A handful from the Khwe community attended. In the past, leaders from both sides at least shared leadership responsibilities, but it seems the relationship has now changed. The !Xun believe that the Khwe community caused the accident through witchcraft, which led to death of their chief. The provincial government, the African National Congress (ANC; also responsible for funeral costs) intervened by requesting the communities not to take revenge, but rather to live in harmony with each other. During the funeral, the mayor of the Sol Plaatje municipality suggested that the main road be named after the deceased. A week thereafter, two Khwe (also calling themselves leaders and who did not attend the funeral) appeared on national television news disagreeing with the notion (broadcast on Setswana News, 2018, June 10).

The first theme reveals the San people’s pride in their culture, issues associated with collective self-esteem, and a good understanding of those elements comprising psychosocial wellbeing (although some differences were indicated among younger and older participants). In alignment with this finding, Tsholofelo [29], distinguishes between collective self-esteem as the evaluation of the social group to which one belongs and private collective self-esteem, which is about the type of self-esteem linked to one’s own evaluation of one’s social group or “the in-group” (p. 165). Seemingly, an understanding of the San community’s collective self-esteem as well as private collective self-esteem is an important matter for this community, considering, for example, the centrality of community leaders; their understanding of their past and the maintaining of traditional practices; and, of course, language.

Also fundamental to the San community’s cultural identity is their knowledge and connectedness to nature. Recent studies indicate that engagement with nature – both via direct sensory exposure and a sense of connectedness – has a positive effect on psychological health [30]. It was clear that members of the San community at Platfontein have an intimate knowledge of the sensory contact and connectedness to nature. Kamitsis and Francis [30] refer to studies conducted with cultures such as the

Native Americans [31] and Australian Aborigines [32] to illustrate the strong spiritual connection with nature as an important feature of the psychology of indigenous peoples across the world. Their findings suggest that spirituality may be an avenue through which the positive effects of experience with nature are derived. This is noteworthy, since the San people of Africa are hunters (connection with nature for the provision of daily needs) and they see their engagement with nature as a “given” related to their psychosocial wellbeing (see their viewpoint of the “eland as a holy animal”).

The older persons of the San community referred to the past many times, with specific reference to their traditions as hunters and how the land their ancestors had relied on for centuries for food and medicinal security was taken away from them. According to the San Baseline Research Report findings ([2] p.17) the San were the first people in Southern Africa. However, historically, their communities have suffered from centuries of displacement by other African groups, the British and Dutch colonial forces, and then the apartheid regime. The participants expressed frustration about the marginalisation they experience in post-apartheid South Africa as a direct consequence of the centuries of neglect and/or apartheid-era policies that had stripped them of their ethnic identity, as supported by existing studies [1]. Participants expressed their concern and even anger as they spoke about their serious desire to be acknowledged as heirs of this land and their culture. Some aspects of the complexity of this issue are explained in the second main theme.

Theme 2: Viewpoints about Psychosocial Wellbeing: Constructive and Destructive Factors

Sub-theme

Constructive factors: Participants – particularly the younger participants – had a clear understanding about health and positive functioning as a San person in this community. They referred to a healthy lifestyle; being part of a healthy family; being employed; and enjoying positive relationships, namely being socially active as well as having the ability to delight in daily activities. A healthy and happily successful San is someone who is active, he cleans his yard. He does something with his hands and when you look at him, you can physically see he is healthy. He sings and plays with the children. He is very active at home. (Interview: Adult male participant, no. 11). A San person who is happy, if you don't want to waste your life, for example if you decide not to drink and you decide at times we look always at people who are employed and they have good lives, but this is not only about employment. At times it is about you and the relationships you have with other people. (Interview: Youth male participant)

You can wash clothes, you can water your garden, you can clean. You can cook. You can do everything in the house because you are healthy. (Interview: Khwe adult female participant – no. 15)

Destructive factors (associated with the concerns obstructing the San community's psychosocial wellbeing): Unemployment and the impact thereof were on top of the list of participants' concerns linked to their psychosocial wellbeing.

Unemployment: All participants referred to the high incidence of unemployment in the Platfontein community as well as the scarcity of prospects for employment. If I say like this, the employment opportunities are few, yes they are few. It is only a few people who are working at the clinic, here at the school and there at the radio station. (Interview: Adult male participant, no. 12). The unemployment rate in Platfontein is 80%. Only 20% of the community work. At times the older people are in the military and then the little contract work they find somewhere and the incomes they receive, that 80% receive, is what we can call, most receive from the social grants, child support grant.” (Interview: Youth male participant, no. 3)

South Africa has a high rate of unemployment. (“South Africa Unemployment Rate”, 2018). The unemployment rate in South Africa increased to 27.2 per cent in the second quarter of 2018 from 26.7 per cent in the previous period. Miti et al. [2] showed that San men were more likely than females to be engaged in formal employment or working as farm labourers. Also, a few San community members in formal employment worked either as farm labourers or security guards (Kalahari and Platfontein), or, in the case of some Platfontein respondents, as miners in the surrounding Kimberley diamond mines, or as shop attendants in Kimberley.

Negative Spirals of Poverty. An accumulation of many negative factors is linked to the high ratio of unemployment in this community. Participants mentioned that, due to the high incidence of unemployment, men choose seasonal/contract work, for example, to work on farms. In order to provide for their children, some families take the children – including children attending school – with them to the farms. This means that children are absent from school for six months. Look, it affects a lot because the children will not receive good care at home and some parents take the children along with them. At some places, at the farmers where he will be working, in the middle of a town which is not even near houses or people, where there is no school, then the child cannot attend school. And the child will grow up there during the period that the parents will be spending there. May be for five years, then the child will be growing up there without attending school. (Interview: Youth male participant, no. 3). Another serious implication of unemployment and poverty was mentioned, namely that young women choose to have many children in order to survive, since they are dependent on social grants for children. Most get SASSA since the unemployment ratio increased by us, that people do not get jobs, live most of SASSA. And because there are no jobs children are born. When you are a young female, young females who do not have children, they want children to be able to survive with the income of SASSA. (Interview: Adult participant, no. 5)

The primary income here in our community is the old age grant and the children's grant and disability grant. The people live off of this. (Interview: Adult male participant, no. 12). Gebregeorgis [1] refers to the fact that the majority of the San people in Platfontein are not yet involved in the job market and business and are still suffering from severe problems of unemployment and poverty. He gives the following examples to illustrate the extreme poverty: young people are compromising their health for the sake of grants; couples are facing divorce because of a shortage of income; students are dropping out of schools; and teenage pregnancy is prevalent, for girls are being forced to have unsafe sex in exchange for small gifts. (p. 108). This is also supported by Miti et al. [1], who showed significant differences regarding the primary source of livelihood for women and men. Women were more likely than men to be dependent on government grants, various unnamed sources, and selling of items. For example, some participants spoke about alternative plans that some persons make, such as having a vegetable garden and selling some items of their small produce. Some participants spoke about using their skills to create items to sell to community members, such as knitting and the plaiting of hair: I knit, the things of the traditional to carry babies in the (bag made of wool) wools, then I sell them. Some of the women, bake bread, then sell to the community. Or like my daughter and I, we plait our hair then someone comes, she pays, then we plait that hair, we wash that hair. This is our livelihood. (Interview: Adult male participant no. 12)

However, these plans are made to generate some income aimed at survival. The second theme involves the San community's perspectives of "a good life" in terms of those aspects contributing towards their survival and those aspects not supporting their psychosocial wellbeing in order to live and love well. "a good life" was described mainly in terms of the experience of the provision of basic needs, healthy lifestyles, and the presence of positive interpersonal health. Both younger and older members of the San community in Platfontein agreed that the high rate of unemployment and the accumulating impact of the negative spirals of poverty are obstructing their psychosocial wellbeing.

Theme 3: Conflicting Issues Regarding the Assets of the Platfontein Community

Participants spoke about the impact of enduring poverty. They did not refer directly to the quality of their residences, such as being exposed to the heat and cold in the dilapidated tents at Schmidtsdrift, and/or matters of water and sanitation services. However, the San people are not happy with service delivery in their permanent settlement. According to Tempelhoff [5], they frequently complain about the quality of water, sanitation services, houses, roads, and power supply. They say that the water they are using is not clean. Evidence for their complaint is the fact that other people, such as teachers who come from other living areas, do not drink the water in Platfontein. The health and dignity of the community is compromised by polluted water and a dysfunctional sanitation system [1]; therefore, people prefer to move into the

veldt around the village to relieve themselves. The construction of their houses, a project started in 2003, had not been completed by August 2014. One of the three residential housing zones in the !Xun part of Platfontein had never been provided with electricity or proper water services.

There are frequent power interruptions. The community is still urging for quality water, a flush toilet system, a better solid waste removal system, better roads, and an uninterrupted power supply. Problems with residences were described tellingly by one of the youth participants. There is also the house, when the rain comes now, then we go into the house that the house can now protect us, but those houses, its roofs are not right. The house, those bricks when the wind is blowing strong, the roof it goes up and down, up and down, kor-kor-kor-kor. I cannot sleep, I only hear how the bricks fall. Kor-kor-kor. (Male youth participant: Interview, no. 2)

According to the participants, leadership, poverty, alcohol abuse, and health matters linked to HIV are some of the serious problems of the community. Gebregeorgis [1] mentions that the San leadership in Platfontein is branded as divided, unfair and not participatory; while, on the other hand, the community is described as not supportive of the leadership. Seemingly, both the elected and traditional leaderships are suffering from inter- and intra-ethnic divisions. This ethnic distrust was clearly illustrated during the data collection opportunities, particularly the arrangement of the focus group discussion to be held with community leaders, it happened that the focus group could be conducted with community leaders only of the !Xun community. Since the sudden death of the chief (car accident in May 2018), the members in Platfontein have been deeply divided. There seems to have been a lot of in-fights, gossip, back-stabbing, and mistrust.

The San's process of urbanisation and relocation since 1990 [5] involved an ethnic merging (also due to their fear of becoming extinct). However, people from both ethnic groups hold the view that the separation of the residential areas is necessary, because they have different social and cultural backgrounds [1]. They believe that there was misunderstanding when they were first merged, and that misunderstanding persists. For example, the majority of the !Xun do not visit the Khwe area and vice versa; this also applies to greeting, one must be very careful not to address a Khwe in !Xunthali or a !Xun in Khwedam, seeing that the person greeted would become very offended and will reprimand the speaker not to confuse them with the other. Despite their misunderstanding, there are a few who are inter-married. Normally, the !Xun person will go to join/stay with the Khwe person in the Khwe area, or vice versa. It is surprising that the majority of both the !Xun and the Khwe have never visited the other area and are not even interested to know each other's language.

Sub-theme-Education at school: Although appreciation for education and the importance of school education is valued by youth for further studies and better opportunities for

employment, schooling is regarded as a problem. One of the youth participants (20 years old and in grade 11) expressed his concern about schooling and the need to obtain additional support and mentoring: There is this situation, that all those who do not understand, who do not understand that subject, are not offered extra time, therefore if you do not understand, then you understand nothing. Only when you reach grade 12, yes there you are offered extra time to go through that subject, but presently if you don't understand, you will not be able to understand anything. (Male youth participant: Interview, no. 2). Then again, many problems were indicated as to school education, such as the restricted subject choice which limits learners' variety of options to study. Participants mentioned that the inclusion of other subjects for the children of this community is needed, such as agriculture (how to farm). Also, issues related to language were talked about, for example, learners are fluent in Afrikaans, but are expected to study in English (which is difficult for them). Similar frustration is found in research conducted by Stell [33] who investigated the uses and functions of English in Namibia's multi-ethnic society. Although English is taken to be the language of education in Namibia; while merely 8% of Namibia are shown to be English-speaking citizens [33]. Finally, participants also mentioned the risks when children are absent from school for months or even longer due to their fathers' seasonal/contract work situation.

Sub-theme-Medical services (clinic): Participants mentioned the medical services (medical staff) and community services (social workers). Participants spoke in general about their concerns about their health. It was also implied that, in spite of the local clinic, the lack of needed resources associated with daily needs impact their health negatively. Things that makes it difficult for someone is now things like these, may be for example you are HIV, you are HIV positive and you want to take care of yourself, but may be you don't have the resources to take care of yourself, well we do have state clinics, but if you don't eat good, if you don't have an income and don't eat well, this has a negative impact on that. (Interview: Adult participant, no. 5). According to Miti et al. [2], in spite of references to there being a negative relationship between the local clinic in Platfontein and the community in general, the majority of respondents were found to have consulted with the clinic or other biomedical practitioners in the year preceding the study. It is interesting that a report on sexual health indicated that although almost two-thirds of respondents indicated having multiple sexual partnerships, the study found that the vast majority perceive multiple partnering by married people and by unmarried women as unacceptable.

Overwhelming impact of enduring poverty and many social ills: Although the community members do have access to services rendered by social workers, they are overwhelmed by the immense influence of many social ills associated with alcohol and drug abuse.

Terrible: It is terrible, most of the people drink. And when they drank, there is fighting. And when they fight then we go to the

radio station. There we ask the security; we ask them to help us to phone the Police. The Police come. They help with that situation where the people drank and why they fought. (Interview: female adult). A number of studies including Felton and Becker [9], and Becker [34] have indicated alcohol abuse to be a major concern within San communities. According to the San Baseline Research Report ([2] p. 35), many of the young people pointed out that if their observations of drinking patterns of the older generation in their settlements were an indication of the habits of the past, then nothing had changed. This is an interesting position in that it clearly indicates that drinking patterns of the past and the present are not that different. This means that the abuse of alcohol is not exclusively a youth problem. This report confirmed that the two communities were plagued with poverty, high crime levels, and unemployment, and suggested the link/correlation to drug and alcohol abuse. It is also noteworthy that participants blamed the drug (and alcohol) problems in the two communities on the depression that came with feelings of hopelessness because of living in such poverty and isolation.

Gender-based attitudes and violence: The San communities have been the focus of gender-based studies for well over 30 years with a number of anthropologists having conducted studies as early as in the 1970s. According to Becker [34], Draper (1975), and Shostak [35] most of this research has described the San as the most non-sexist society in existence. Contemporary research, however, suggests that gender-based violence and other negative gender attitudes are on the rise within these communities [34]. The findings of this study reveal a number of these negative attitudes in existence among the Platfontein San people ([2] p. 37).

Sub-theme - Law and order/policing: Participants spoke about the policing as an asset of the community, but they also referred to the San people in Platfontein having their own unique way of dealing with conflict; for example, when a killing happened, they would leave the corpses for the police to be collected. If you had murdered someone, it is not us, it is not the traditional leaders. There is the police and the court. But like fighting and insulting each other, steal from each other, as the owner of the money that was stolen, if you don't think I should now go to court...or will report at the police station. That is like rape and the murder that is for the police and to the court.. But if you have decided to go to the traditional leaders then it is sorted out at the, within the community. (Interview: adult male participant, no. 23) [36-40].

Sub-theme- Lack of community resources: This sub-theme refers to the lack of recreational resources, e.g., no swimming pool; little opportunity for sport (e.g., soccer) and cultural activities (e.g., music/singing for the community). Other negative influences due to the scarcity of resources include: the youth are bored; negative friendships; abuse of alcohol/substances; young women are being raped; and the possibility of being infected with HIV. Another issue is the fact that many young single mothers rely on social grants (income).

In summary, the findings reveal three main matters: firstly, the recognition of the strengths inherent to the San in the Platfontein community (their wealth of cultural strengths); cultural heritage and their intimate knowledge of nature/animals; the knowledge of animals being part of the San people's practices; the knowledge of animals and hunting linked to the San's survival; the San's awareness of limitations regarding hunting nowadays; and their indigenous languages as an integral aspect of their identity and collective self-esteem; secondly, the San's perspectives about the constructive and destructive factors as to their psychosocial wellbeing; and, finally conflicting issues regarding the assets of the Platfontein community – with specific reference to education, medical services (clinic), law and order/policing, and the lack of community resources [41-46].

Limitations of the study

While rich information was obtained during the data collection opportunities, only members of the !Xun community took part in the focus group discussion due to conflict related to the sudden death of the respected chief. Therefore, it is a limitation that no members of the Khwe tribe were involved in the group discussion. If the Khwe participated in the focus group discussion, this would have made the findings more satisfactory, because the same information might have been shared by a different group. It would have been interesting to note if the Khwe group had a slightly different experience compared to the other group. Maybe the Khwe would have added more experiences of the wildlife which might not have been mentioned in the !Xun group. This would have provided even richer information. Another limitation is linked to a lack of women leadership in the focus group discussion. According to the literature, women were food gatherers; this would have brought confirmation by hearing from them how they perceived these experiences. The discussion could have been deeper, and maybe they would have shared how they were affected by the men having to leave home for the whole day, hunting and coming back late at night. The men in the focus group spoke with a lot of passion about hunting and at times having to move from one place to the other, depending on the availability of the wild game. If more women participants were present, they would have shared how these movements affected them and their families in the presence of men in a joint group discussion.

Recommendations

Although participants spoke with an eagerness to protect their cultural heritage, they did not indicate possible ways for how this could be done by the San themselves. It is recommended that this silence could be looked at in future research about ways for the San to actively protect their unique cultural and social heritage by giving the women of the community "a voice". Future research is also needed about specifically those concerns indicated by participants, but also the encouragement of those valuable protective factors acting as pointers of the San towards future thriving (see Sustainable Development Goals, 2030). Such research should look at a culture-sensitive approach to enhance

the education of this San community's children as well as holistic ways of offering "new paths" towards thriving via the protection of their cultural wealth, and practically and efficiently dealing with those factors damaging their psychosocial wellbeing. It is recommended that the research findings and the particular contribution regarding indigenous languages to be incorporated for improved academic performance. Such effort should enhance existing cultural efforts, such as the continued support of the !Xun Khwe Radio Station (this radio station is playing an important role in the preservation of the !Xun and Khwe indigenous languages); implementing ECD programmes that promote Xun and Khwe literacy to pre-school and primary school aged children in order to maximise the probability of the sustainability of the languages.

Conclusion

The members of the San community in this area are overwhelmed by the complexity of negative spirals of many factors associated with their psychosocial wellbeing. While the historical context of the San community in Platfontein is part and parcel of their current situation, this research aimed to reveal the "good stuff" of this ancestral people of South Africa's psychosocial wellbeing to be enjoyed and encouraged.

The San community living in Platfontein experience many challenges and this information is vital since it can serve as a guideline for future government policies and the realisation of the Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) for 2030 as well as for possible interventions in the South African context, considering indigenous knowledge.

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