

# The Impact of *Izidlalo Zabafazi* (Women's Traditional Songs) on AmaXhosa Women's Psychosocial Health

**Siphenkosi Wayise**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0393-6555>  
Walter Sisulu University, South Africa  
swayise@wsu.ac.za

**Sinoyolo Nokutywa**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4818-4358>  
Walter Sisulu University, South Africa  
snokutywa@wsu.ac.za

**Pheliwe Mbatyoti**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9386-3387>  
Walter Sisulu University, South Africa  
pmbatyoti@wsu.ac.za

## Abstract

*Izidlalo zabafazi* (women's traditional songs of amaXhosa) were and are still used as a platform for amaXhosa women to express, mostly, their unpleasant experiences in their marriages and relationships. This article explores the role of these songs in helping women to deal with the issues they face. It highlights the impact of *izidlalo zabafazi* in women's psychosocial health and foregrounds *izidlalo zabafazi* as an accessible indigenous therapy for women. The article is underpinned by a dual theoretical framework, namely, the psychoanalytic theory, which examines the psychological effects of *izidlalo zabafazi* on amaXhosa women, and the African feminism theory, which emphasises the equalisation of power and authority between the sexes and asserts that women should not be subservient to men and that they have a voice, even in patriarchal societies. Using a textual analysis approach, the article relied on a selection of songs from two folklore books, *Kusadliwa ngendebendala* and *Ilifa lethu*. The findings reveal the songs' therapeutic effect on women's psychological well-being. Therefore, the songs are delineated as highly effective in promoting mental recuperation, especially for the adherents of *izidlalo zabafazi*. Suffice to say, *izidlalo zabafazi* have an impact on the psychological well-being of amaXhosa women.

**Keywords:** *Izidlalo zabafazi*; women, psychosocial health; therapy



Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies  
Volume 34 | Number 2 | 2025 | #20148 | 17 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/2663-6697/20148>

ISSN 2663-6697 (Online)

© Author (s) 2025



Published by Unisa Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License  
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

## Introduction

Since time immemorial and even before the arrival of white people or colonists in South Africa, black people were living in this country and had their lifestyle, culture, socio-economic system and religion. The question an academic might ask is, “What was that life like?” This question arises because of the current unpleasant conditions that people live in, especially black people, which are caused by Western-based systems. This results in black people largely living a Western lifestyle, which sometimes is not accessible to everyone because of lack of affordability. Consequently, the indigenous systems of living such as African therapeutic systems, despite being ignored currently because of colonisation, remain priceless and accessible at all times of need to indigenous peoples. Among such long-standing systems is the oral traditional literature of amaXhosa, which was not written down or learnt from the so-called “formal education,” but was learnt and passed down orally from one generation to the next (Vansina 1985). Singing traditional songs was one of the common oral activities among Africans for various reasons.

African tribes used to use singing as a distinctive way to deal with their challenges, including to address mental health issues (Williams 2018). As a result, an African woman sings when she is melancholic. Dlepu (2009) adds that amaXhosa, the focus of this article, and surrounding tribes in Southern Africa would perform traditional songs as a means of identifying themselves and transmitting their native education, identity, culture, and religion. Included here were *izidlalo zabafazi* (amaXhosa women’s traditional songs). Cairncross, Fraser, and MacGregor (2016) state that *izidlalo zabafazi* are songs of social groups that circulate orally among members of that group, precisely the amaXhosa group. The term “amaXhosa” in this article refers to one of the African tribes that performs *izidlalo zabafazi* for various purposes and under different circumstances.

*Izidlalo zabafazi* play significant roles in addressing African women’s conditions. Hoza (2013) observes that the patriarchal system constrains women’s rights mainly through patriarchal communal structures that portray women as second-class members within their communities. In patriarchal communities, women have limited rights to express their concerns and worries. In fact, in patriarchal communities, especially among some African tribes, it is a taboo for a woman to talk back directly to a man. *Izidlalo zabafazi* assist in this case, as they are a communication tool through which women express their feelings, ideas, and concerns through singing and performance. AmaXhosa women have been observed using *izidlalo zabafazi* to communicate their feelings, which might encompass joy or pain. *Izidlalo zabafazi* would be performed during various joyful gatherings (Moropa and Tyatyeka 1995). These songs were seen as therapeutic since they provided women with a forum to consciously discuss their struggles. They had an

enormous impact on how amaXhosa women lived and remain a part of isiXhosa culture and traditional songs (Dlepu 2009).

*Izidlalo zabafazi* are typically poetic in nature as they have a distinctive rhyme that repeats one word or a few consonants inside a line. For the objective of making the song's message more apparent, rhyme is employed to stress certain parts of the message, which usually gives the actual theme of the song. Since among amaXhosa anything that creates rhythm has significance linked to it, Mayer and Zignago (2011) observe that the words, dance (body movements), and instruments (where applicable), as in *izidlalo zabafazi*, all contribute to the songs' meaning. Women's songs, as Dlamini et al. (2009) attest, exemplify how women may articulate their female sexuality without alienating men or undermining patriarchal societies. Colonisation has resulted in a poor consideration of *izidlalo zabafazi* among amaXhosa women. Contemporary women disregard *izidlalo zabafazi*, because they live in a culturally modernised society, where they opt for a Western lifestyle (Lindsay 2020). Yet not every woman can access Western therapeutic systems (which form part of the Western lifestyle, prioritised by women nowadays) because of financial limitations and lack of education, among other factors. Hence, Jakupcak et al. (2010) state that the rate of female abuse in the modern era is extremely high, to the point where it causes depression for many affected females because there is no place for them to talk about these issues. Although there are some legal systems, such as the South African Police Services (SAPS), in some cases, women affected by gender-based violence are threatened and fear to report such incidents (Habraken et al. 2016). Women who are affected by such cases need indigenous therapeutic sessions, possibly from *izidlalo zabafazi* performances, because when they perform them, they will be telling their stories in a discreet manner. *Izidlalo zabafazi* have always been used by amaXhosa women as a means of communication. In contrast to the Western therapeutic system, *izidlalo zabafazi*, which were once seen as influential in helping people find solutions to their issues by providing a platform to exchange their views, laying the problems open and advising each other, offering counsel, educating them, and providing rapid responses, are no longer regarded as being significant (Mai et al. 2013), yet they are a particularly important and easily accessible indigenous therapeutic system. The aim of this article is to closely examine a representative sample of *izidlalo zabafazi* and their impact on the psychological health of amaXhosa women from psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives.

## Literature and Theoretical Review

*Izidlalo zabafazi*, like any other genre of music, has the power to narrate, explore, instruct, comfort, and heal women's minds, especially women who are experiencing challenging times. Applying psychoanalytic theory enabled the authors to illustrate that the performance of *izidlalo zabafazi* among amaXhosa women has a huge impact on the mind, resulting in certain personalities and behaviours. After listening to and/or performing *izidlalo zabafazi*, there should be a better understanding and way of doing things. Clearly, *izidlalo zabafazi* is a genre of music that draws inspiration from the

daily struggles and amaXhosa women's way of life. AmaXhosa's lifestyle is patriarchal by nature, as Hoza (2013) believes, and this patriarchal society is mostly influenced by nature, events, culture, and the economy, which inspire the composers of *izidlalo zabafazi* to express their feelings and emotions. Hoza (2013) adds that unlike Western institutions, amaXhosa lacked a platform and resources that allowed women to communicate their sentiments, emotions, and psychological issues. Hence, *izidlalo zabafazi* are recommended to fill the gap of platforms needed by women to express themselves.

Mamajonova (2024) views *izidlalo zabafazi* as a tool to combat gender inequality. Gender inequality is one of the impactful elements that lead to unstable societies, because there is no cooperation between genders. However, not much has been written about the psychosocial impact of these songs, which is why, guided by psychoanalysis, the authors decided to explore, investigate, and unpack the psychosocial impact of *izidlalo zabafazi* among amaXhosa. Ugwuoke, Ugwuanyi, and Ngwu (2022) examined women's traditional music in some parts of Igbo land and found that traditional women's songs, *izidlalo zabafazi* in this instance, played a crucial role at weddings. In African societies, weddings legitimise a relationship between two families, which brings social harmony and collaboration. The scholar suggests that *izidlalo zabafazi* carry the fears, anxieties, and worries of women who are going to get married, as well as the advice from those who are already married.

Women may use *izidlalo zabafazi*, particularly in amaXhosa regions, as a means of expressing their inner discomforts, which may lead to mental illnesses. According to Narayan (1995), women, particularly those of a middle age, not only in Africa but also in several other parts of the world, have their own songs and always sing them at gatherings. By singing their songs, they get an opportunity to express themselves. Dlepu (2009) states that singing is the focal point of African women's meetings. Women's gathering songs, which belong under the category of traditional songs, are used not just for cultural purposes but also for enjoyment (Narayan 1995). Women are not expected to speak up against men in some African nations and tribes, such as those in Angola, Tanzania, Kenya, and other places; those who do so are seen as colonised women (Randolph 2015).

In African communities, women were not included in socio-political issues as they ought to be; instead, they were assigned chores that were thought to be "women's tasks." In accord, Hoza (2013) asserts that women in amaXhosa tribes do not enjoy the same position, dignity, obligations, or respect as men. This illustrates that African women's intelligence was taken for granted, as they were viewed as people who cannot think productively about socio-economic and socio-political matters. In essence, they were viewed as people who could not even make decisions about their lives. This marks the level of oppression women experienced. The scholar's notion unpacks the portrayal of the deprivation of women's rights in society, including the fact that they were not even allowed to make their own decisions regarding their own lives and bodies. These points

of view raise the tenable possibility that women are emotionally depleted because they are oppressed. They are not heard or given enough opportunity to express themselves. Psychoanalytic theory by Elliot (2017) suggests that when an individual has a lot in mind that they cannot talk about, that brings mental fatigue. Therefore, the article proffers that *izidlalo zabafazi* are an ideal medium for them to convey their emotions under such circumstances. Srivastava (1999, 269) believes that

it is a critical analysis of the folk songs that deal with women's common wishes, unexpressed emotions, unfulfilled desires, hopes, disappointments and their reactions to their social environment. The portrait of woman as depicted in these songs is often at variance with the conventional stereotype of an obedient, acquiescent, and conformist woman that is conjured up in one's mind.

According to the foregoing notion, men see women as helpless and powerless. However, John (2003) and Hoza (2013) essentially view *izidlalo zabafazi* as a tool to combat gender inequality. *Izidlalo zabafazi* can be considered as an intervention tool that encourages and helps women to communicate their views, piques their interest and as a result, an emotional outpouring occurs. When examining how a woman's voice affects men, Griffin (1998) found that a man who has a singing woman is privileged because a woman's voice sounds graceful to a man's ears and men react favourably. Similarly, *izidlalo zabafazi* can bring about positivity, peace, and respect between these two genders. This beneficial contact between the sexes can help women feel less mentally exhausted because they can express themselves through songs. This resonates with the article because less mental weariness leads to mentally healthy women. Gold (1997, 104) says: "Traditional women's songs are inhabited by outspoken women who commonly address men directly, often making explicit demands upon them." Women use their songs as a means of communication (Gold 1997). Guzana (2000) contends that women will always have a voice; this perspective is at odds with Gold's (1997) point of view. Often, the main goal of a performance is to communicate a story, particularly an unpleasant one. Guzana (2000, 75) states that "African women, particularly Xhosa women, were never and are still not silent. To support this assertion, this in brief draws on oral tradition, as one of the main sources that reflect the voices of women." Both Guzana's (2000) and Zondi's (2008) works submit that all the burdens placed on women result in stress and, occasionally, mental diseases. When Guzana (2000) asserts that women communicate through song, it affirms that *izidlalo zabafazi* are a communication medium used to express dissatisfaction.

## Theoretical Framework

The article uses psychoanalytic theory and African feminism. Both theories address the psychological impact of *izidlalo zabafazi* and women's lives in general. A reflection on psychoanalytic theory affirms that *izidlalo zabafazi* enhance amaXhosa women's mental health and provide a forum for them to effectively communicate with men, their in-laws, and about everything that they encounter in their lives. Bondi's (2007) research examines the use of psychoanalytic theory in the study of Sigmund Freud's work; the

researcher also indicates the appropriate usage of the theory in the study. Bondi (2007, 5) says: "It offers a distinctive way of thinking about the human mind and of responding to psychological distress." Pine (1998) proffers psychoanalytic theory as a framework for comprehending the unconscious mind's influence on thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. Therefore, the essence of psychoanalytic theory can be summed up as a theory that alters one's perspective on or memory of another person and alters feelings, which in turn alters attitude and ultimately action. Psychoanalytic theory can also be applied to literature (Hossain 2017). It informs psychoanalysis and is viewed as a theory of personality organisation or disorders and the dynamics of personality. Furthermore, Kernberg and Caligor (2005) believe that personality, mental problems, disorientation and being disordered can all be seen or examined in literature through the lens of psychoanalytic theory. Overall, psychoanalytic theory benefits this article because it combines two aspects: the human mind (women's minds) and literature, in this case, *izidlalo zabafazi*. Asghari et al. (2014) state that psychoanalysis is used to analyse literature, as there is an interaction between literature and the human mind.

According to Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein (1953), psychoanalytic theory refers to human behaviour that is largely driven by the unconscious mind, which contains repressed thoughts, desires, and early childhood experiences. In relation with *izidlalo zabafazi*, this notion suggests that the physical movements and words articulated during *izidlalo zabafazi* performance have a positive impact on the performers' minds. Thus, the theory explores the unconscious mind to understand human behaviour and motivations, psychological conflicts and distress, and therapeutic techniques (Friedman 2002). These aspects shape a woman's personality to align it with her cultural values. *Izidlalo zabafazi* are decoded in this article through a textual analysis to highlight their literariness. Elliott (2017) adds that the academic discipline of literary criticism or literary theory has traditionally used the analogy between literature and psychoanalysis. Blum, Younis, and Wilson (2017) state that psychoanalytic methods can be used to evaluate literature and how the mind works. Considering that most amaXhosa have abandoned their indigenous therapeutic systems in favour of Western therapeutic systems, this article sought to re-centre *izidlalo zabafazi* to foreground their value in a context where even children are taught to consult Western-oriented doctors, therapists, or psychologists for therapy. As such, this article advocates the decolonisation of the mind and subsequent restoration of indigenous remedial methods. Through psychoanalytic theory, the article delineates the psychological, semiotic, and semantic significance of *izidlalo zabafazi* to empower African women towards appreciating their indigenous culture.

This article also employed African feminism, which is best explained by Rowland (2021) as a theory that enhances the living conditions of women, particularly African women. This theory encourages equality between African men and women but without overlooking the cultural aspects of Africans. Rowland (2021) concurs that several women writers have sought to re-theorise feminism in a manner that fittingly captures their socio-cultural beliefs, leading to multiple feminisms in African literature. The

theory best affirms *izidlalo zabafazi* as a cultural tenet that empowers women to engage in matters that affect their living conditions, without “undermining” the cultural aspects of amaXhosa. Women often feel that their voices are not heard in their cultures, which results in their suppression (Bunch 2023). The article proposes *izidlalo zabafazi* as a forum to express their sentiments about the mistreatment they typically experience in marriages and in society at large. Through *izidlalo zabafazi*, which resonates with African feminism, women can raise their voices and agentively address the challenges they face. Pande (2018) asserts that African feminism takes colonialism into account in addition to history and is deeply rooted in African cultures, traditions, and socio-political realities, unlike Western feminism. *Izidlalo zabafazi* enable women to share knowledge and counsel about various matters of life, including African politics, religions, and cultures. Ekwueme and Onakeke (2021) state that African feminisms encompass a variety of equality beliefs and initiatives aimed at improving the status of African women. Josephine (2014, 7) concurs that:

African feminism owes its origin to different dynamics than those that generated Western feminism. It has been shaped by African Women’s resistance to Western hegemony and its legacy within African culture and it does not grow out of bourgeois individualism and the patriarchal control over women.

Thus, African feminism is concerned with the real struggles African women face daily, struggles ascribable to historical injustices. In foregrounding *izidlalo zabafazi*, the article encourages the use of indigenous therapy to validate African women’s agency and solidarity. Hansen (1981) affirms that amaXhosa women used to and still endure emotional distress, which affects their psychological health and thus affects their social roles. Hence, the dual theoretical framework herein employed fortifies the article’s analytical thrust to reveal the effectiveness of *izidlalo zabafazi* in attaining and sustaining women’s mental health.

## Methodology

This article, which employs desktop research, is qualitative in nature and approach. A qualitative study, according to Mullangi et al. (2020), entails gathering and examining non-numerical data such as text, video, and audio to comprehend concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to acquire a comprehensive understanding of a situation or come up with creative research ideas. In desktop research, a researcher gathers information from already existing sources, including books, the internet, newspapers, and a variety of other sources. Diko (2022) claims that this type of research methodology enables a researcher to explore viewpoints on the subject using current literature to acquire data and discover gaps in knowledge. Desktop research, as defined by Van Lang et al. (2006), refers to secondary data or information that can be gathered without going to the field.

For data collection, *izidlalo zabafazi* were acquired from two books, *Kusadliwa ngendebendala* (Moropa and Tyatyeka 1995) and *Ilifa lethu* (Bhatyi et al. 2020). The

thematic analysis technique was employed to analyse the songs. The themes were formulated based on the central focus of each song, which mainly entailed the challenges prevalent in women's lives. According to Jafta (1978), such challenges are: (1) a "barren" bride, (2) a bride whose husband is cheating on her, and (3) a woman who is tired of supporting her lazy husband. Secondary sources, including books, journals articles, and the internet, aided the authors in corroborating the views proffered during the analysis. Three songs were analysed and discussed in the article.

## Analysis and Discussion

The selected songs are analysed to unpack their impact on women's mental health and how they improve women's societal roles in the context of isiXhosa culture. In other words, the selected songs clarify the social role of psychological healing among women. The hope is to build a harmonious society occupied by vibrant women who are mentally and emotionally healthy. According to Dormolen (1986), textual analysis yields a good understanding of what a text contains and how its contents are presented to the reader or audience. This analysis elucidates the messages included in the selected songs to provide a clear understanding of *izidlalo zabafazi* and their psychological and social role among amaXhosa women. The application of psychoanalytic theory aids in the discussion of how these songs cure the mind, relieve stress, and combat potential mental diseases.

### Theme 1: A Woman's Experience of Being Cheated on

Umqambi: Ndiba ngakhela Le nkuku Le ndod'iyahamba  
Abavumisi: o-hoyi—mama Uyavuy' umnt! endimthandayo.  
(Leader: Every time I slaughter this chicken this man goes away  
Chorus: O-hoyi—mama the happy one is the person he loves.)

This song was taken from Jafta's (1978) master's dissertation. In African communities, cheating is mostly considered to be committed by women. Baloyi (2017) states that the proponents of polygamy or advocates of having multiple sexual partners claim that the more wives or sexual partners a man has, the more children he is likely to have, and the more children, the greater the chances that the family will enjoy immortality. This means that among some African men, polygamy and infidelity are often not considered as cheating, but as a cultural practice meant to expand the family (Batyra and Pesando 2021). However, to most married women, polygamy implies their husbands' dissatisfaction with them. For this reason, women try their level best to please and keep their husbands so that they will not consider another wife or concubine. Miricescu et al. (2020) state that in many African cultures, women often take various steps to maintain a strong and fulfilling relationship with their husbands. This can include efforts to keep their partners from seeking attention elsewhere. One of the ways which amaXhosa married women use to maintain their relationships with their husbands was *izidlalo zabafazi* by disclosing their marital conditions. By so doing, they sought and acquired counsel from fellow women, especially older women, on how to navigate their marital

challenges. Jahura (2020) opines that it is not easy for African women to approach and inform their partners about the negative things that affect them. *Izidlalo zabafazi* are the preferred option in this regard.

### **Psychosocial Impact of the Song**

Infidelity or cheating often leads to divorce. It brings uncertainty in marriage relationships. Meuse and Harvey (2022) agree that adultery ranks among the most agonising experiences a person can have. In addition to grief, infidelity can make people doubt their value as individuals and their relationships with others. This means, as psychoanalysis theory suggests, infidelity does not only affect the physical body but also the emotional state, resulting in the victim's behavioural change. A person who experiences infidelity may feel betrayed, bewildered, and alone. This is why the woman who sings the song is confused; she does not know what to do anymore to keep her husband. In her state of grief and confusion, she opts for a change of behaviour. The song leader seeks help in how to deal with the stress caused by her husband's infidelity. Sarnoff (1960) states that the mechanism of ego defence, which serves to protect the individual against internal and external threats, is best described by psychoanalytic theory. In narrating her ordeal through song, the woman feels she has exhausted all her tricks for keeping a man and yet he continues cheating. Instead of giving up or terminating the marriage, she considers *izidlalo zabafazi* to engage with other women who might be experiencing or have experienced the same problem. By singing this song, she informs other women about her problem. Slaughtering a chicken in this context means "giving my best shot to impress this man." Realising that she has exhausted her options and is at a *cul de sac*, she seeks advice on how to solve the problem.

The women's response reassures her that she has done nothing wrong because if there had been anything wrong that she did, they would have informed her. The response speaks to a frustrated mind, aiming to bring ease because women often blame themselves when a man cheats on them. Hence, women end up doing everything they can to please their men, including stopping them from infidelity, as evinced in the lyrics of the song: "Every time I slaughter this chicken, this man goes away." In response, the audience sings, "O-hoyi, mama, the happy one is the person he loves," conveying the idea that it was the man who chose to be disloyal to his wife and not his wife. The response relieves her from self-blame, fruitless efforts of trying to keep her man, or shouldering the responsibility of trying to please him. It was his decision to cheat. This response relieves the woman of feelings of inadequacy. According to Hoza (2013), women are oppressed in patriarchal social structures because men do as they wish, including treating women as second-class citizens. This performance is a form of expression, encapsulating listening and giving feedback. These are the fundamental elements of a therapy session.

### **Theme 2: A Song about a Woman's Barrenness and Social Stigma**

The following is taken from Jafta's (1978) work:

Umqambi: We mtshakazana

Abavumisi: Wabetha abantwan' emzin' ufika

Umqambi: We mtshakazana

Abavumisi: Zala abakho 'Zubathume, zala abakho.

Leader: Bride

Followers: You beat a child while you were still new at the marital home

Leader: Bride

Followers: Give birth to your own [children] and send them, give birth to your own.

From an African cultural perspective, a married women's main goal, especially among amaXhosa, is to bear children. When a man looks for a wife, the common adage is *ukuvusa umzi kabawo* (to rebuild the father's house), which essentially means the woman he will marry must bear children that will keep the family name alive for eternity. Even though some modern women have professional careers, they are still expected to bear children in marriage. In common cases, when a woman gets married, it is almost as if she naturally prepares herself psychologically to become a mother. Further, the institution of marriage may even compel a woman to think and behave in a decent, submissive, and motherly manner. It is commonly thought that men prefer to marry young and fertile women (Lundberg and Pollak 2015). Corbett et al. (2014) say having children is the most significant aspect of marriage since, upon marriage, a woman is expected to expand her new family—the in-law family.

In African societies, a woman's inability to bear children is seen largely as a curse. In addition to bringing shame, barrenness also exerts immense pressure on some women, which according to psychoanalytic theory causes married women more stress because they think they are failing their marriage (Hoza 2013). Suffice to say, in childless marriages, a woman is readily held responsible for the absence of children. Where indeed a married woman cannot bear children, she suffers scorn, abuse, and social shame from her in-laws and society at large.

### **The Psychosocial Impact of the Song**

In situations where a woman is barren, a husband may be encouraged to take another wife who will give birth to children and “perpetuate the husband’s surname.” Baloyi (2017) affirms that in African societies, the glory of a woman is childbirth. Therefore, if a woman is barren, such a woman does not have glory and is regarded as an incomplete woman. Ultimately, this treatment affects her psychological state and diminishes her confidence. Doubtless, there are women who opt to not have children even when they are married, which is a different subject altogether. The song cited above reminds a married woman that she should give birth to her own children to gain the right to discipline other women's children. This statement is hurtful, especially to a woman who is barren. Barrenness, also known as nulliparity, is not inherently a medical problem, but can be associated with certain health risks (Jonhson 2019). However, in African societies this fact is hardly considered, making it look like a wife is solely responsible for the birth of children. Considering the weight of shame, melancholy, and

alienation that befalls barren women, *izidlalo zabafazi* becomes a conducive environment for therapy. Whatever the cause of barrenness, be it spiritual, cultural, religious, medical or personal (Timmins 2019), *izidlalo zabafazi* remains a safe space to air the issues faced. Prieto, Algado, and Vigué (2023) state that for many, spirituality involves finding meaning, purpose, and connection in life. As such, for some people, childlessness, whether by choice or not, may be seen as part of their spiritual journey, as they must focus on other forms of creation, nurturing, and contribution to the world. Still, a barren woman largely remains misunderstood, ostracised, and even oppressed, irrespective of the reasons behind her childlessness. In the context of the song, however, the leader singer battles social shame and alienation because she is childless.

### **Theme 3: A Song That Portrays a Woman's Tiredness of Supporting her Husband**

The following song is taken from the book *Ilifa lethu* by Batyi and others (2020):

Umhlabeli: Yhe bafazi!	Leader: Yhe women!
Abahlabeleli: Iyho Nomfazana	Followers: Yho Young woman
Umhlabeli: Ndidikiye	Leader: I am annoyed.
Abalandeli: Iyho Nomfazana	Followers: Yho Young woman
Umhlabeli: Kunenj' esendlini	leader: There is a dog in the house.
Abalandeli: Iyho Nomfazana	Followers: Yho Young woman
Umhlabeli: Ayifuni' uzingela	Leader: It does not want to hunt.
Abalandeli: Iyho Nomfazana	Followers: Yho Young woman
Umhlabeli: Iman' ukundikhonkotha	Leader: It sometimes barks at me
Abalandeli: Iyho Nomfazana	Followers: Yho Young women

The woman is worn out, as implied by the title given to this song. The use of an exclamation mark in the first line of the song shows an intense expression of emotion. According to Rollins et al. (2022), a song's most significant effects include reducing weariness, stress, and grief in the singer's thoughts. Lehtonen (2021) states that music of any genre can help reduce tension and mental fatigue. As the song leader sings about her problem, her frustration and stress are reduced, and her mind is at ease. The metaphor of the "dog" referring to a "man" connotes her perception of the man and the feelings he arouses in her. Vrijkotte et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between mental exhaustion and physical performance and found that mental exhaustion leads to physical exhaustion and subpar performance. Vrijkotte et al. (2017, 2) further say: "Mental fatigue is a psychobiological state caused by prolonged periods of demanding cognitive activity. It has recently been suggested that mental fatigue can affect physical performance." For the lead singer, despite the presence of the head of the household, she struggles alone for the entire family, which has left her physically exhausted. In most societies, a man is expected to provide for his family, but in this case, the woman is solely responsible for the role. Using *izidlalo zabafazi*, the women will receive timely counsel on how to address her challenge and will also be guided towards healing.

## Conclusion

*Izidlalo zabafazi* and their performance require a high regard for all things traditional. They contain elements such as cultural values and beliefs. They may be performed for their entertainment, but the central purpose is to permit women to express themselves regarding their marital problems, and problems in general. When performed, these songs help in restoring women's psychological health. Moreover, women educate each other, warn each other, comfort each other, criticise each other, and most importantly, show each other love and support during the performance of *izidlalo zabafazi*. Therefore, *izidlalo zabafazi* fulfil a dire need of modern-day women, especially those who have no form of outlet to air their grievances and challenges in life.

## Recommendations

Traditional songs in general are a key part of cultural formation in African communities. They are among the most fundamental elements of culture. Traditional songs, which include *izidlalo zabafazi*, can be used to understand more about how African societies operate. *Izidlalo zabafazi* also provide knowledge of traditional values of amaXhosa and help women to confront various issues that they come across daily. Different academics have attested to the notion above that *izidlalo zabafazi* are not merely songs but also a forum for women to express themselves. Considering the above notions, it is recommended that *izidlalo zabafazi* be utilised as one of the therapeutic sessions where women would assemble, sing, and perform them.

However, the introduction of Western therapeutic systems has resulted in a loss of indigenous therapeutic systems, which were mostly the use of *izidlalo zabafazi* amongst amaXhosa. The complexity of colonisation has, in fact, eradicated the use of indigenous lifestyles, which include indigenous therapy that was used by amaXhosa. As part of decolonising the African therapeutic system, the analysis and discussion that have been provided above clearly indicate that *izidlalo zabafazi* provide a platform or a talking stage for women where they can share or talk about their problems. Therefore, they should be given the same amount of attention and dignity as that of the Western systems.

It is recommended, therefore, that *izidlalo zabafazi* be treated like other therapeutic systems needed by the community of amaXhosa women, and this can be achieved by making sure that the importance of *izidlalo zabafazi* and their performance are included in school curriculums as a compulsory discipline, so that young women can start at a very young age to understand that there is an accessible platform where women can express themselves about their problems at any time, which is *izidlalo zabafazi*. Although this song often referred to "iingoma zabafazi," which means married women's songs in the amaXhosa context, considering the fact that in our societies women (young, old, married, not married) have a lot of problems that are gender-based, the composers of *izidlalo zabafazi* can compose songs that addresses all those problems, regardless of statuses.

## References

Amarnani, D., A. I. Machuca-Parra, L. L. Wong, et al. 2017. "Effect of Methotrexate on an In Vitro Patient-Derived Model of Proliferative Vitreoretinopathy." *Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science* 58: 3940–3949. <https://doi.org/10.1167/iovs.16-20912>.

Asghari, A., B. Barfi, A. Barfi, et al. 2014. "Comparison between Conventional Solid Phase Extraction and Its Simplified Method for HPLC Determination of Five Flavonoids in Orange, Tangerine, and Lime Juice Samples." *Acta Chromatographica* 26 (1): 157–175. <https://doi.org/10.1556/AChrom.26.2014.1.12>.

Baloyi, M. E. 2017. "Gendered Character of Barrenness in an African Context: An African Pastoral Study." *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 51 (1): a2172. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v51i1.2172>.

Batyi, Z., S. Dlephu, M. C. Hoza, et al. 2020. *Hiifa lethu*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Batyra, E., and L. M. Pesando. 2021. "Trends in Child Marriage and New Evidence on the Selective Impact of Changes in Age-at-Marriage Laws on Early Marriage." *SSM - Population Health* 14: 100811. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100811>.

Blum, I. R., N. Younis, and N. H. F. Wilson. 2017. "Use of Lining Materials under Posterior Resin Composite Restorations in the UK." *Journal of Dentistry* 57: 66–72. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdent.2016.12.008>.

Bondi, L. 2007. "Psychoanalytic Theory." Institute of Geography Online Paper Series: GEO-035, University of Edinburgh. <https://era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/1894/;jsessionid=55C483A507E7D6853701DBAFB2D1C0EA?sequence=1>.

Bunch, T. J. 2023. "Hope, Hype, and Reality of Pulsed Field Ablation for Atrial Fibrillation." *New England Journal of Medicine* 389 (18): 1720–1721. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMMe2309476>.

Cairncross, B., A. Fraser, and S. MacGregor. 2016. "The Thabazimbi Mine Cave, Limpopo Province, South Africa."  *Rocks and Minerals* 91 (4): 322–331.

Corbett, K., M. Dimen, V. Goldner, and A. Harris. 2014. "Talking Sex, Talking Gender: A Roundtable." *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 15 (4): 295–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15240657.2014.970493>.

Diko, M. 2022. "SisiXhosa osikhathalele ngantoni na esi ude usindwe ziincwadi ezingaka? Why Do You Care about Isixhosa So Much That You Are Overwhelmed by So Many Books." *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* 40 (2): 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2021.1999831>.

Dimka, R. A., and S. L. Dein. 2013. "The Work of a Woman Is to Give Birth to Children: Cultural Constructions of Infertility in Nigeria." *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 17 (2): 16–102.

Dlamini, S., M. Taylor, N. Mkhize, et al. 2009. "Gender Factors Associated with Sexual Abstinent Behaviour of Rural South African High School Going Youth in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa." *Health Education Research* 24 (3): 450–460. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyn041>.

Dlepu, S. E. 2009. "From Song to Literary Texts: A Study of the Influence of IsiXhosa Lyrics on Selected IsiXhosa Texts." PhD diss., Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/145054083.pdf>.

Dormolen, J. V. 1986. "Textual Analysis." In *Perspectives on Mathematics Education*, Mathematics Education Library, Vol. 2, edited by B. Christiansen, A. G. Howson, and M. Otte, 141–171. Springer: Dordrecht. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-4504-3\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-4504-3_4).

Elliot, K. C. 2017. *A Tapestry of Values: An Introduction of Values in Science*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ekwueme, C. M., and N. Onakeke. 2021. "Effect of Liquidity Risk on the Profitability of Mortgage Banks in Nigeria." *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development* 5 (5): 2339–2352. <https://journals.indexcopernicus.com/api/file/viewById/1464340.pdf>.

Friedman, S., ed. 2002. *Analysing the Freud: Letters of H.D. Bryher, and Their Circle*. London: New Directions.

Gold, A. G. 1997. "Outspoken Women: Representations of Female Voices in a Rajasthani Folklore Community." *Oral Tradition* 12 (1): 103–133.

Griffin, F. J. 1998. "When Malindy Sings: A Meditation on Black Women's Vocality." In *The Jazz Cadence of American Culture*, edited by R. G. O'Meally, 102–134. New York: Columbia University Press.

Guzana, Z. 2000. "Exploring Women's Silence in IsiXhosa Written and Oral Literature." *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 46: 75–81. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4066283>.

Habraken, W., P. Habibovic, M. Epple, and M. Bohner. 2016. "Calcium Phosphates in Biomedical Applications: Materials for the Future?" *Materials Today* 19 (2): 69–87. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mattod.2015.10.008>.

Hansen, D. 1981. "The Music of the Xhosa Speaking People." PhD diss., University of Witwatersrand.

Hartmann, H., E. Kris, and R. M. Loewenstein. 1953. "The Function of Theory in Psychoanalysis." In *Drives, Affects, Behavior*, edited by R. M. Loewenstein, 13–37. New York: International Universities Press.

Hossain, M. 2017. "Psychoanalytic Theory Used in English Literature: A Descriptive Study." *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: G Linguistics and Education* 17: 41–45. [https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS\\_Volume17/3-Psychoanalytic-Theory-used.pdf](https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume17/3-Psychoanalytic-Theory-used.pdf).

Hoza, M. C. 2013. "The Place of a Woman Is in the Kitchen": Individualism Versus Communalism in Belebesi's *UNongxaki nezakhe*." *South African Journal of African Languages* 33 (1): 29–37. <https://doi.org/10.2989/02572117.2013.793936>.

Jafta, D. N. 1978. "A Survey of Xhosa Drama." MA diss., University of Zululand.

Jahura, F. T. 2020. "Determinants of Consumers' Sustainable Disposal Behavior of Clothing Items: An Application of Triandis's Theory of Interpersonal Behavior (TIB)." MA diss., Auburn University. <https://etd.auburn.edu/handle/10415/7409>.

Jakupcak, M., M. T. Tull, M. J. McDermott, D. Kaysen, S. Hunt, and T. Simpson. 2010. "PTSD Symptom Clusters in Relationship to Alcohol Misuse among Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans Seeking Post-Deployment VA Health Care." *Addictive Behaviors* 35 (9): 840–843. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2010.03.023>.

John, M. 2003. *Children's Rights and Power: Charging Up for a New Century*: Jessica Kingsley Publishers: New York.

Jonhson, M. H. 2019. *Essential Reproduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Josephine, A. 2014. "Clinicopathological Study of Prostatic Biopsie." *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research* 8 (9): FC04–FC06. <https://doi.org/10.7860/JCDR/2014/8591.4843>.

Lehtonen, L. 2021. "Japanese Women Singer-Songwriters of the 1970s: Female Agency, Musical Impact and Social Change." *Popular Music* 40 (1): 14–138. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143021000088>.

Lindsay, J. 2020. "Decolonizing the Curriculum." *Academic Questions* 33: 448–454. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12129-020-09899-2>.

Kernberg, O. F., and E. Caligor. 2005. "A Psychoanalytic Theory of Personality Disorders." In *Major Theories of Personality Disorder*, M. F. Lenzenweger and J. F. Clarkin, 114–156. New York: The Guilford Press.

Loewenstein, R. M. 1957. "A Contribution to the Psychoanalytic Theory of Masochism." *Journal of American Psychoanalytic Association* 5 (2): 197–234. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000306515700500201>.

Lundberg, S., and R. A. Pollak. 2015. "The Evolving Role of Marriage: 1950–2010." *The Future of Children* 25 (2): 29–50. <https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2015.0011>.

Mai, L.-Q., A. Minhas-Khan, X. Tian, et al. 2013. "Synergistic Interaction between Redox-Active Electrolyte and Binder-Free Functionalized Carbon for Ultrahigh Supercapacitor Performance." *Nature Communications* 4: 2923. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms3923>.

Mamajonova, N. 2024. "The Role of Imagination in Teaching the Mother Language to School Students." *Bilgi Çeşmesi* 1 (2): 65–69.

Mayer, T., and S. Zignago. 2011. "Notes on CEPPI's Distances Measures: The GeoDist Database." CEPPI Working Paper No. 2011-25. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1994531>.

Meuse, K. D., and V. S. Harvey. 2022. "The Science and Application of Learning Agility: Introduction to the Special Issue." *Consulting Psychology Journal* 74 (3): 207–214. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000233>.

Miricescu, D., A. Totan, I.-I. Stanescu-Spinu, S. C. Badoiu, C. Stefani, and M. Greabu. 2021. "PI3K/AKT/mTOR Signaling Pathway in Breast Cancer: From Molecular Landscape to Clinical Aspects." *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* 22 (1): 173. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijms22010173>.

Moropa, C. K., and D. M. Tyatyeka. 1995 *Kusadliwa Ngendeb'endala*. Umtata: Shuter and Shooter.

Mullangi, S., R. Bhandari, P. Thanaporn, M. Christensen, S. Kronick, and B. K. Nallamothu. 2020. "Perceptions of Resuscitation Care among In-Hospital Cardiac Arrest Responders: A Qualitative Analysis." *BMC Health Services Research* 20: 145. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-020-4990-4>.

Narayan, K. N. 1995. "The Practice of Oral Literary Criticism: Women's Songs in Kangra, India." *The Journal of American Folklore* 108 (429): 243–264. <https://doi.org/10.2307/541878>.

Pande, R. 2018. "The History of Feminism and Doing Gender in India." *Revista Estudos Feministas* 26 (3): e58567. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1806-9584-2018v26n358567>.

Pine, F. 1998. *Diversity and Direction in Psychoanalytic Technique*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Prieto, I. C., S. Algado, and P. Vigué. 2023. "Peer Interventions in Severe Mental Illnesses: A Systematic Review and Its Relation to Occupational Therapy." *Occupational Therapy in Mental Health* 39 (2): 99–136. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0164212X.2022.2085645>.

Randolph, B. 2015. "Colonized Women Talk Back." Howard University, 1–5. <https://www.bu.edu/africa/files/2016/04/Colonized-Women-Handout.pdf>.

Rollins, P. R., A. M. De Froy, S. A. Gajardo, and S. Brantley 2022. "Pragmatic Contributions to Early Vocabulary and Social Communication in Young Autistic Children with Language and Cognitive Delays." *Journal of Communication Disorders* 99: 106243. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcomdis.2022.106243>.

Rowland, R. C. 2021. "The 2020 Presidential Debates: Reasoned Argument or Political Theater." *Argumentation and Advocacy* 57 (3–4): 218–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511431.2021.1949535>.

Sarnoff, I. 1960. "Psychoanalytic Theory and Social Attitudes." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 24 (2): 251–279.

Simanjuntak, M. B., Z. Zuriyati, and N. Lustyantie 2022. "Metamorphic Analysis in Song Lyrics Batak Toba 'Aut Boi Nian' Written by Wervin Panggabean." *Social Information and Consumer Heterogeneity* 5 (1): 2615–3084.

Srivastava, I. 1991. "Woman as Portrayed in Women's Folk Songs of North India." *Asian Folklore Studies* 50 (2): 269–310. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1178387>.

Timmins, N. 2019. "Leading for Integrated Care." The King's Fund, November 27. <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/reports/leading-integrated-care>.

Ugwuoke, C. O., L. C. Ugwuanyi, and E. C. Ngwu. 2022. "Domestic Terrorism, Religious Insurgency, and the National Security Question in Nigeria." *University of Nigeria Journal of Political Economy* 12: 308–325. [https://www.academia.edu/105036260/Domestic\\_Terrorism\\_Religious\\_Insurgency\\_and\\_the\\_National\\_Security\\_Question\\_in\\_Nigeria](https://www.academia.edu/105036260/Domestic_Terrorism_Religious_Insurgency_and_the_National_Security_Question_in_Nigeria).

Van Lang, N. D. J., R. F. Ferdinand, J. Ormel, and F. C. Verhulst. 2006. "Latent Class Analysis of Anxiety and Depressive Symptoms of the Youth Self-Report in a General Population Sample of Young Adolescents." *Behaviour Research and Therapy* 44 (6): 849–860. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2005.06.004>.

Vansina, V. 1985. *Oral Tradition as History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Vrijkotte, S., R. Meeusen, C. Vandervaeren, et al. 2017. "Mental Fatigue and Physical and Cognitive Performance During a 2-Bout Exercise Test." *International Journal of Sports Physiology and Performance* 13 (4): 510–516. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsspp.2016-0797>.

Williams, R. 2018. "Stress and the Mental Health of Populations of Color: Advancing Our Understanding of Race-Related Stressors." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 59 (4): 466–485. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146518814251>.

Zondi, S. 2008. "South Africa in Southern Africa: A Perspective." Maputo: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/mosambik/09403-no-8.pdf>.