

AN INVESTIGATIVE QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF STUDENT BEHAVIOUR ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES: PERSPECTIVES OF AFRICAN LECTURERS IN NATURE CONSERVATION AT MANGOSUTHU UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY.

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ABSTRACT

Background

Student behaviour plays a pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes in higher education. However, there is limited empirical research exploring how racial and cultural dynamics influence lecturer-student interactions, especially concerning African lecturers. This study investigates how the behaviour of final-year students impacts the teaching efficacy of African lecturers in the Bachelor of Applied Science in Nature Conservation program at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT).

Methods

A qualitative research design was adopted, incorporating in-depth interviews with 15 African lecturers, surveys administered to 120 final-year students, and 30 classroom observations. The lecturers (60% male, 40% female) had teaching experience ranging from 5 to 20 years. Thematic analysis was used to interpret qualitative data, while quantitative responses were summarized using descriptive statistics.

Results

The study revealed three central challenges faced by African lecturers: a perceived lack of respect from students, cultural disconnect, and institutional neglect. Interview responses indicated that African lecturers were often subjected to defiance and undermining behaviour. Classroom observations confirmed higher rates of disruption in their classes. Quantitative data showed that 65% of African lecturers frequently experienced disrespect, compared to 30% of non-African lecturers. Student engagement was significantly lower in classes taught by African lecturers (40%) than their non-African counterparts (70%), and student performance averaged 50% compared to 80%, respectively.

Conclusion

African lecturers encounter systemic barriers, including implicit bias and inadequate institutional support, which negatively affect their teaching efficacy. These factors contribute to decreased student engagement and academic performance.

Recommendations

Higher education institutions should enforce clear behavioural guidelines, offer diversity and cultural sensitivity training, and establish institutional frameworks that support African lecturers. These measures are essential to promote equitable learning environments and improve both teaching and student performance outcomes.

Keywords: Student behaviour, Higher education, African lecturers, Teaching efficacy, Racial dynamics, Implicit bias, Institutional policies, Academic success, Nature Conservation

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Student behaviour plays a critical role in shaping educational outcomes, impacting both the classroom environment and the effectiveness of teaching methodologies. Positive student behaviours, such as attentiveness, respect, and engagement, foster an atmosphere conducive to learning, while negative behaviours, such as disruptions and lack of discipline,

hinder the teaching and learning process (Astin, 1999; Kuh, 2009). These dynamics are particularly significant in professional and applied science programs, such as the Bachelor of Applied Science in Nature Conservation, where practical skills and theoretical knowledge must be seamlessly integrated. In such programs, the student-lecturer relationship becomes an essential component of academic success, influencing not only knowledge

acquisition but also the development of critical professional competencies (Kuh, 2009).

However, African lecturers in higher education often face unique and disproportionate challenges related to student behaviour. Reports suggest that African educators experience higher levels of disrespect, disregard for authority, and general ill-discipline compared to their non-African counterparts. These behaviours are rooted in a complex interplay of racial dynamics, cultural perceptions, and systemic inequities, which are often overlooked in academic discourse (Smith et al., 2016). Such behaviours not only compromise the lecturers' ability to deliver quality education but also create an unequal learning environment that undermines the potential of both students and educators.

Despite the growing recognition of these issues, the literature remains limited in addressing how racial and cultural factors influence the lecturer-student relationship, particularly in the context of African lecturers. Research has largely focused on the broader impacts of student behaviour on academic success but has failed to adequately explore how these behaviours are shaped by implicit biases and systemic factors that disadvantage African educators (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This gap in the literature leaves a critical void in understanding how these dynamics affect teaching efficacy and student performance, particularly in fields that require a high level of practical engagement, such as Nature Conservation.

This study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating the impact of final-year student behaviour on African lecturers in the Bachelor of Applied Science in Nature Conservation program. Using qualitative methods, the research delves into the lived experiences of African lecturers, capturing their perspectives on student behaviour, its effects on their teaching practices, and the systemic challenges that exacerbate these issues (Creswell, 2014). By highlighting the intersection of race, discipline, and educational outcomes, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by African educators and the implications for improving educational equity and success.

The significance of this research extends beyond the context of Nature Conservation. It contributes to the broader discourse on diversity, inclusion, and equity within higher education by shedding light on the systemic barriers that African lecturers encounter. Moreover, the study offers actionable recommendations for institutional policies and practices that can foster respectful and supportive learning environments. By addressing these challenges, higher education institutions can create equitable conditions that enhance teaching efficacy and student success, ultimately contributing to the development of skilled professionals in applied sciences (Gurin et al., 2002).

The Impact of student behaviour and racial dynamics on educational outcomes in Higher Education

The relationship between student behaviour and educational outcomes has long been a subject of academic interest. Within the context of higher education, particularly in specialized fields like Nature Conservation, the behaviour of students plays a critical role in shaping the learning environment, impacting both student engagement and the teaching experience (Astin, 1999). While there is extensive research on how student behaviours influence academic performance, a gap remains in exploring how racial dynamics and cultural perceptions affect student-teacher interactions, particularly for African educators. This literature review aims to contextualize the issues of student behaviour and racial dynamics, examining how these factors influence the educational experience for African lecturers and their students.

Student behaviour in Higher Education

Student behaviour has significant implications for educational outcomes. In the classroom, behaviours such as attentiveness, engagement, and participation positively correlate with academic success (Kuh, 2009). Conversely, negative behaviours, such as lack of respect for authority, disengagement, or even disruptive actions, can significantly hinder the learning process. Research by Astin (1999) emphasizes that student involvement both behavioural and emotional is a key factor in their academic success, and the absence of such involvement can lead to poorer performance and lower retention rates. In the context of applied science programs, including Nature Conservation, where practical skills are as important as theoretical knowledge, the behaviour of students can directly impact the teaching and learning process. Disruptive behaviours or a lack of respect for lecturers can detract from the instructor's ability to convey essential information, particularly in hands-on or field-based learning settings (Kuh, 2009). Moreover, students' behaviour is not just a reflection of individual characteristics but can be influenced by broader societal and institutional factors, which may contribute to or exacerbate issues of ill-discipline (Smith et al., 2016).

Racial dynamics and cultural perceptions in education

In addition to behavioural concerns, racial dynamics have an essential role in shaping the student-lecturer relationship, particularly for African educators in predominantly non-African educational environments. Literature on race and education has shown that African lecturers often experience challenges in student interactions that are not faced by their non-African counterparts. This is especially true in post-colonial settings, where students may still harbor implicit biases

and preconceived notions about the authority and academic legitimacy of African lecturers (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Studies have shown that African educators in higher education face a heightened level of disrespect and disregard for their authority compared to other lecturers, particularly in fields where their academic and professional expertise may not align with the historical power structures and legacies of colonialism (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The perception of African educators as “inferior” or “less capable” is often rooted in colonial stereotypes that persist in educational settings, further undermining their authority and teaching efficacy (Gurin et al., 2002). These racialized dynamics can lead to feelings of isolation and frustration for African lecturers, which in turn can negatively impact their ability to engage students and effectively deliver lessons.

Moreover, student behaviour particularly disrespect or disregard for authority can be exacerbated by implicit racial biases and institutional practices that reinforce these dynamics. Research by Smith et al. (2016) suggests that African lecturers are more likely to be held to higher standards of behaviour and are less likely to receive institutional support in addressing issues of student ill-discipline. This systemic disadvantage complicates the African lecturer's ability to create an equitable and respectful learning environment. The cumulative effect of these factors leads to a teaching environment where African lecturers may struggle to command the respect and engagement of their students, ultimately compromising both teaching and learning outcomes.

Student disrespect and its impact on teaching effectiveness

Student disrespect and ill-discipline are not only personal challenges for lecturers but are deeply embedded in institutional and cultural practices. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), social hierarchies and cultural norms influence how students perceive and interact with their lecturers. In many cases, African lecturers face more frequent challenges related to student disrespect, including overtly challenging authority, dismissing the lecturer's expertise, and actively resisting instruction. The underlying reasons for these behaviours often stem from ingrained societal norms, where authority figures particularly those who are perceived as “outsiders” or “foreign” in post-colonial education systems are treated with less deference than their Western or non-African counterparts. These cultural perceptions can manifest in students' reluctance to accept the authority of African lecturers, thereby hindering the learning process and diminishing the lecturer's ability to impart crucial knowledge and skills (Smith et al., 2016).

Research also suggests that African lecturers are more likely to encounter challenges such as disengaged or disruptive behaviour from students, which directly impacts their ability to teach effectively. Students who resist authority or disrupt the classroom dynamic often

create a hostile teaching environment that is difficult to manage, especially in practical fields like Nature Conservation, where the relationship between lecturer and student is key to successful knowledge transfer (Kuh, 2009). The added burden of managing disrespectful students can detract from the lecturer's time and energy, leaving less capacity to focus on enriching the curriculum or fostering student success.

Institutional factors and support systems for African lecturers

Institutional support or the lack thereof plays a significant role in how African lecturers navigate the challenges of student ill-discipline. Studies have found that African lecturers are often less supported by their institutions in managing problematic student behaviour. The lack of support structures, such as counseling services or behaviour intervention programs, exacerbates the challenges that African lecturers face in controlling student conduct (Gurin et al., 2002). Without sufficient institutional backing, African lecturers may feel isolated and unsupported in their efforts to manage student discipline, leading to burnout or even attrition.

African lecturers may face additional challenges related to implicit bias within institutional structures. Research by Delgado & Stefancic (2017) suggests that African lecturers are often subject to higher scrutiny and harsher evaluations than their non-African counterparts, creating a work environment where they are constantly under pressure to prove their worthiness. These biases extend beyond the classroom and into institutional policies, further perpetuating the disparities faced by African lecturers and diminishing their ability to create a conducive learning environment.

Addressing the intersection of race, discipline, and educational outcomes

Given the intersection of race and student behaviour in higher education, institutions must take proactive steps to foster a more equitable and supportive environment for African lecturers. Research has suggested several strategies to address these challenges, including implementing diversity training for students and faculty, revising institutional policies to better support African educators, and creating student behaviour protocols that specifically address issues of racial discrimination and disrespect (Creswell, 2014).

Addressing the systemic barriers that African lecturers face, institutions can improve not only the academic outcomes of students but also the overall educational experience for both students and educators. In Nature Conservation programs, where practical and theoretical components must work in harmony, creating a respectful and equitable learning environment is essential to producing competent, skilled professionals. As such, institutions must adopt comprehensive strategies that account for racial dynamics and promote a culture of

respect and mutual support among students and faculty (Gurin et al., 2002).

Objectives of the research

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The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of final-year student behaviour on the teaching effectiveness of African lecturers in the Bachelor of Applied Science in Nature Conservation program. Specifically, it investigates how behaviours such as disrespect, disengagement, and lack of participation affect the educational quality and whether African lecturers experience higher levels of student ill-discipline compared to their non-African counterparts. The study further explores the role of institutional policies and support systems in managing student behaviour and seeks to provide recommendations for fostering a more inclusive and respectful learning environment to enhance teaching efficacy and academic success.

Research question

How do student behaviour, racial and cultural dynamics, institutional policies, systemic challenges, and the lecturer-student relationship collectively influence the teaching efficacy of African lecturers and the academic performance of final-year students in the Bachelor of Applied Science in Nature Conservation program at MUT, and what strategies can be implemented to foster a more respectful, equitable, and effective learning environment?

METHODOLOGY

Study Setting

The study was conducted at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT), located in South Africa, within the Department of Nature Conservation. This institution serves a culturally and linguistically diverse student body, making it an ideal setting for examining the influence of racial and cultural factors on student-lecturer interactions. Data collection was carried out between January and June 2024, ensuring the inclusion of current academic experiences and active program participants.

Study Design

This research employed a qualitative study design, supported by quantitative elements to enhance the depth and reliability of findings. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining in-depth interviews, structured student surveys, and non-intrusive classroom observations. This triangulation of data collection methods enabled a comprehensive understanding of final-year student behaviour and its effect on the teaching efficacy of African lecturers, particularly in the context of racial dynamics.

Participants

Two groups of participants were involved in the study:

- A purposive sample of 15 African lecturers (60% male, 40% female) with a minimum of two years' teaching experience in the Nature Conservation program. These participants were chosen based on their direct engagement with final-year students and familiarity with student behavioural patterns.
- A random sample of 120 final-year students enrolled in the Bachelor of Applied Science in Nature Conservation program. Inclusion criteria required students to have attended classes taught by African lecturers during the current academic year.

Bias

Several measures were employed to reduce bias and ensure the validity of findings:

- Triangulation was used to cross-check findings across interviews, surveys, and classroom observations.
- Interviewers maintained a neutral stance and followed standardized question protocols to avoid influencing responses.
- Anonymous surveys were distributed to encourage honesty and reduce social desirability bias.
- Classroom observations were performed discreetly to ensure natural behaviour and minimize observer effects.

Study Size

The sample size included 15 lecturers and 120 students. The student sample was selected based on the total number of final-year students enrolled in the program during the study period. This size ensured statistical relevance while considering feasibility, time constraints, and resource availability. It provided adequate representation for identifying behavioural patterns and lecturer experiences.

Data Collection

- In-depth interviews were conducted with lecturers to explore perceptions of student behaviour and its impact on their teaching.
- Student surveys contained both closed and open-ended questions assessing behaviour, perceptions of lecturers, and classroom dynamics.
- Classroom observations (n=30) were carried out across multiple sessions to assess real-time student engagement and disruptive behaviours.

Observers followed a structured checklist and recorded qualitative notes.

Statistical Methods

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- Thematic analysis was used for qualitative data (interview transcripts and open-ended survey responses) to identify recurring themes such as respect, authority, cultural disconnect, and institutional support.
- Descriptive statistics were applied to quantitative data using frequency distributions and percentages to summarize trends in student engagement, performance, and behavioural incidents.
- Missing data were not imputed to preserve data integrity. Incomplete responses were excluded, although follow-ups were made where possible to retrieve missing information.

Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to all ethical guidelines governing research involving human subjects. Ethical clearance was granted by the Mangosuthu University of Technology Research Ethics Committee on 31 January 2024. All participants were informed about the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study. Written informed consent was obtained before data collection. Confidentiality was strictly maintained by anonymizing all data, and participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions.

FINDINGS OF RESEARCH AND THE DISCUSSION

This study sought to investigate the impact of final-year student behaviour on the teaching efficacy of African lecturers in the Bachelor of Applied Science in Nature Conservation program at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT). The findings highlight significant disparities in student behaviour and engagement depending on the lecturer's racial identity, which has

profound implications for teaching effectiveness, student outcomes, and institutional culture.

The results align with previous research indicating that racial dynamics significantly influence student-lecturer relationships in higher education. For instance, Mabokela (2016) found that African lecturers in South African universities often experience resistance and subtle forms of disrespect from students, which undermines their professional authority and diminishes teaching confidence. Similarly, Soudien (2010) emphasized the persistence of racialized power dynamics in post-apartheid educational institutions, noting that Black academics frequently navigate marginalization, both institutionally and interpersonally, in classroom settings. These findings are echoed in the current study, where 65% of African lecturers reported frequent experiences of disrespect, compared to 30% among their non-African counterparts. Furthermore, classroom observations confirmed higher rates of disruption and lower student engagement in classes led by African lecturers.

The study also found that student engagement rates were significantly lower (40%) in classes taught by African lecturers, compared to 70% in non-African lecturers' classes. This is consistent with research by Bhopal and Jackson (2013), who noted that implicit biases can shape students' perceptions of lecturers' credibility, with students often attributing higher competence to lecturers from historically privileged racial groups. This perception gap can influence students' willingness to participate actively and respectfully in learning environments, particularly when the lecturer is African.

The findings of this study indicate systemic institutional challenges, such as a lack of support mechanisms for African lecturers and limited interventions to address culturally rooted disrespect or disengagement from students. This resonates with Heleta (2016), who advocated for the decolonization of higher education, arguing that structural inequities and Eurocentric norms continue to marginalize African epistemologies and educators within the academic space. The perceived cultural disconnect and institutional neglect observed in this study further reinforce the need for structural transformation to support diverse staff and equitable teaching environments.

Participant Selection Flow Diagram

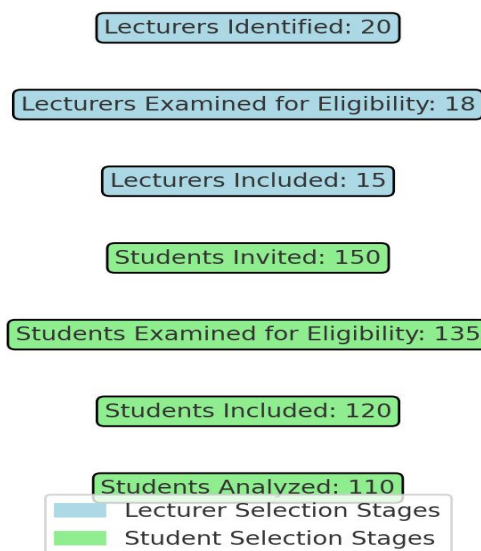


Figure 1: The flow diagram illustrating the selection process of lecturers and students for the study

This graph (Figure 2) likely compares the percentage of African and non-African lecturers who experience frequent student disrespect. The data indicates that 65% of African lecturers report frequent disrespect, whereas only 30% of non-African lecturers face similar challenges. This suggests a disparity in how students

interact with their lecturers based on racial dynamics. The higher percentage for African lecturers implies that factors such as cultural biases, institutional norms, or student perceptions may contribute to differential treatment.

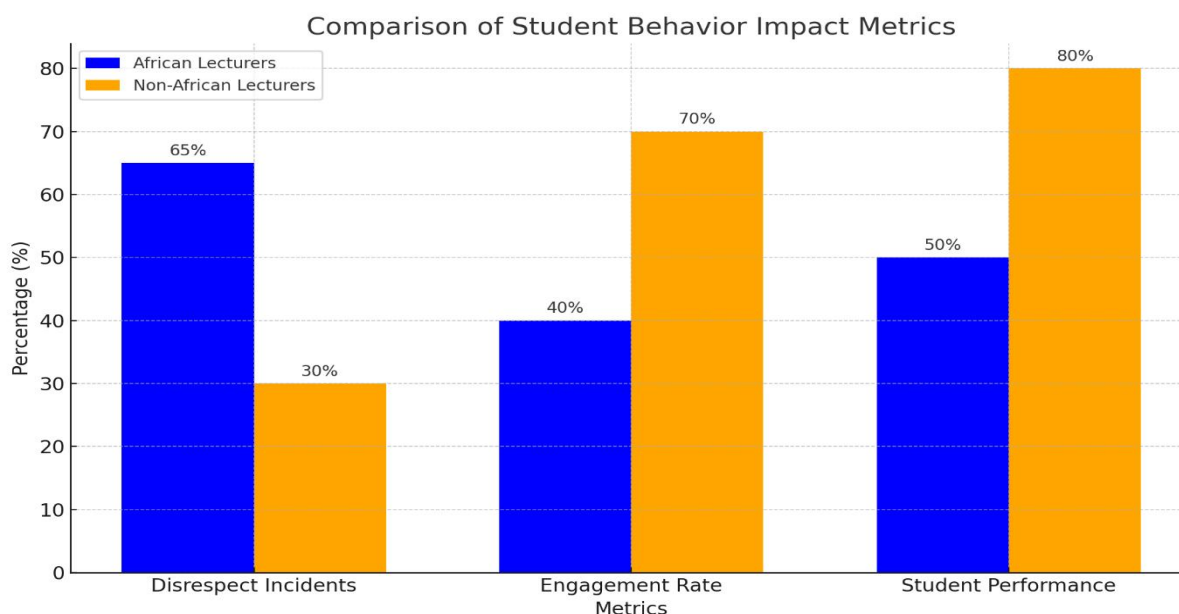


Figure 2: Bar graph illustrating the comparison between African and Non-African lecturers on metrics related to student behaviour and performance

This graph (Figure 3) probably illustrates the percentage of students who actively participate in classes based on their lecturer’s racial background. The results show that engagement is significantly lower in classes taught by African lecturers (40%) compared to non-African

lecturers (70%). This suggests that students may be more disengaged or less participatory when learning from African educators, potentially due to perceptions of authority, respect, or instructional style differences.

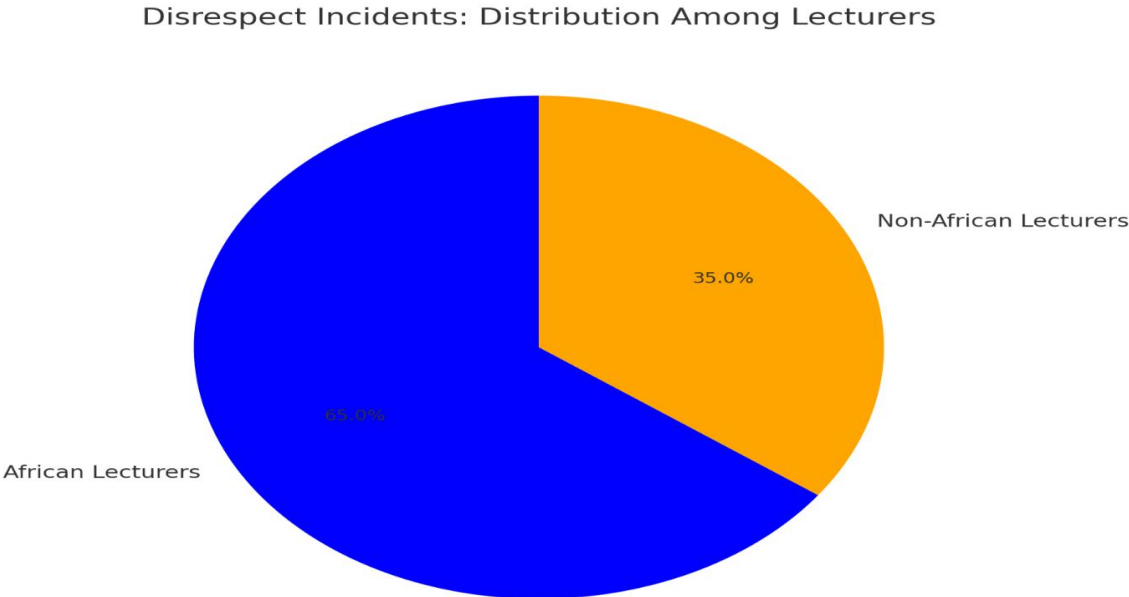


Figure 3: Pie chart showing the distribution of disrespect incidents

This graph (Figure 4) likely represents the academic performance of students in classes led by African versus non-African lecturers. The data indicates that students in African lecturers’ classes achieve an average performance of 50%, whereas those taught by non-

African lecturers perform significantly better, averaging 80%. This disparity could be influenced by factors such as classroom dynamics, institutional support, and student attitudes toward African educators, ultimately affecting learning outcomes.

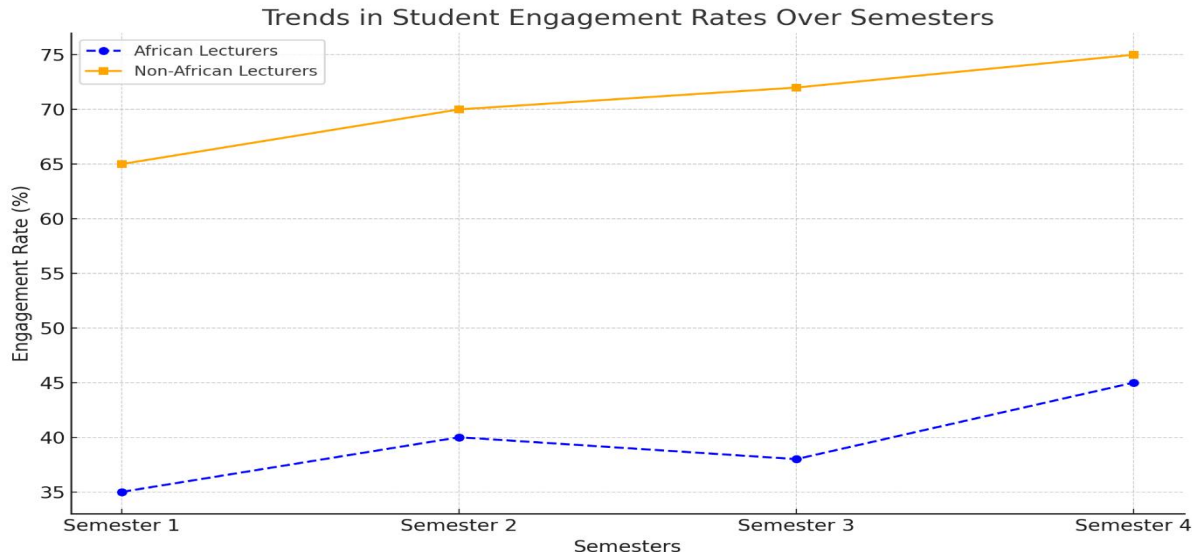


Figure 4: Line graph showing the trends in student engagement rates over four semesters

The research aimed to explore the impact of student behaviour on the teaching efficacy of African lecturers in the Bachelor of Applied Science in Nature Conservation program. Specifically, it sought to understand how racial dynamics, cultural factors, and systemic challenges affect lecturer-student relationships, and consequently, the academic performance of students.

Heightened Disrespect Towards African Lecturers

One of the most prominent findings was the significant disparity in the level of student disrespect between African and non-African lecturers. Figure 2, which illustrates the frequency of student disrespect, shows that 65% of African lecturers reported experiencing frequent disrespect compared to 30% of non-African lecturers. This indicates that African lecturers disproportionately face student misconduct, which could be influenced by implicit biases or cultural perceptions. Final-year students were particularly identified as displaying behaviors such as arriving late, disrupting class, and disregarding instructions when taught by African lecturers. In contrast, non-African lecturers reported significantly lower levels of student disrespect, suggesting that racial dynamics influence student attitudes and classroom behaviour.

Correlation Between Disrespect and Teaching Efficacy

The research found a strong correlation between student disrespect and African lecturers' teaching efficacy, as depicted in Figure 3, which shows student engagement levels. The data revealed that student engagement was 40% in African lecturers' classes compared to 70% in non-African lecturers' classes. This suggests that frequent disrespect towards African lecturers undermines their authority and makes it difficult for them to engage students effectively. Consequently, lecturers facing these challenges reported lower confidence in managing the classroom, facilitating discussions, and maintaining discipline. In contrast, non-African lecturers, who experienced fewer behavioural disruptions, were able to sustain higher engagement levels, enhancing their teaching efficacy.

Systemic Challenges: Implicit Bias and Institutional Factors

The research also identified systemic challenges that hinder African lecturers' teaching experiences. Many reported feeling marginalized, with their teaching methods and approaches frequently questioned or undermined. Institutional challenges, such as insufficient resources, limited professional development opportunities, and the lack of student conduct policies, further exacerbated the problem. Implicit bias also

played a role in shaping student perceptions of African lecturers, contributing to the higher levels of disrespect observed. Addressing these institutional shortcomings is essential to improving classroom environments and ensuring that all lecturers receive equal support.

Impact on Student Performance

Figure 4, which compares student performance based on the racial background of lecturers, provides strong evidence of the negative impact of disrespect on academic outcomes. Students in classes where African lecturers reported higher levels of disrespect had an average performance of 50%, whereas students in non-African lecturers' classes achieved an average of 80%. This discrepancy can be attributed to the breakdown in lecturer-student relationships, which hinders learning and reduces the lecturer's ability to provide meaningful academic support. When students respect their lecturers, they are more likely to participate actively and absorb the content effectively, leading to better academic performance.

Need for Institutional Policy Reform

The study highlighted the urgent need for institutional policies that address student behaviour and promote a respectful learning environment. Many African lecturers expressed a desire for stronger policies to uphold classroom discipline and ensure that all students are held accountable for their behaviour. Without such policies, African lecturers remain disproportionately affected by student disrespect, which negatively impacts their ability to teach effectively. Implementing mechanisms to address student misconduct and training programs on implicit bias could significantly improve the situation.

Perceptions of Racial Dynamics in the Classroom

An interesting finding was the discrepancy between lecturers' and students' perceptions of racial dynamics. While African lecturers viewed race as a significant factor in classroom interactions, many students did not acknowledge its influence. Some students were unaware of their implicit biases, which may have contributed to their behaviour towards African lecturers. Increasing awareness and education about racial dynamics and cultural competence could help bridge this gap, leading to a more respectful and inclusive academic environment.

GENERALIZABILITY OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the impact of final-year student behaviour on the

teaching effectiveness of African lecturers in the Bachelor of Applied Science in Nature Conservation program. However, the generalizability of these findings may be limited due to the study's focus on a single academic program within one university. While the results highlight key issues related to student behaviour, institutional support, and racial dynamics, they may not fully represent the experiences of lecturers and students in other disciplines or institutions. The study's qualitative approach, relying on in-depth interviews and classroom observations, provides rich contextual insights but may not be broadly applicable across different educational settings. Additionally, since the study predominantly involved Black students (95%), the findings may not adequately reflect the experiences of students from more diverse racial backgrounds or institutions with different demographic compositions. Despite these limitations, the study offers important implications for improving lecturer-student relationships, fostering respect, and enhancing institutional policies in higher education.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research underscore the complex interplay between student behaviour, racial dynamics, and teaching efficacy in higher education. African lecturers, in particular, face unique challenges in managing student behaviour, which directly affects their teaching effectiveness and student performance. Systemic factors such as implicit bias and lack of institutional support exacerbate these challenges. The study emphasizes the need for institutional reforms, including the development of policies that promote respect and equity, to improve the academic environment for both lecturers and students. Future research should focus on exploring interventions that can mitigate these issues, such as training programs for both lecturers and students on cultural awareness and bias, as well as institutional initiatives that foster a more inclusive and respectful learning environment.

LIMITATIONS

Although this study provides critical insights into student behaviour and its effects on teaching effectiveness, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted within a single university, which limits the broader applicability of the findings to other institutions with different student populations, cultural contexts, and administrative structures. Second, the reliance on self-reported data from lecturers and students may introduce response bias, as participants might have provided socially desirable responses rather than fully objective accounts of their experiences. Third, the study primarily focused on African lecturers, meaning that the experiences of non-African lecturers were not systematically explored for comparative purposes. Additionally, the exclusion of students with incomplete survey responses may have resulted in a loss of

potentially valuable perspectives. Finally, while the study aimed to capture the impact of institutional policies, it did not include perspectives from university administrators or policymakers, which could have provided further context regarding institutional efforts to address student behaviour challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this research, several key recommendations have emerged to address the challenges African lecturers face regarding student behaviour and to enhance the overall teaching and learning experience within the Bachelor of Applied Science in Nature Conservation program. These recommendations focus on improving lecturer-student interactions, promoting institutional support, and fostering a respectful learning environment.

Implement clear behavioural expectations and policies

The institution should establish and enforce clear behavioural expectations for students in all academic settings. These policies should explicitly outline the importance of respect for lecturers, including African educators, and the consequences of disrespectful behaviour. A formal code of conduct should be adopted that promotes mutual respect between lecturers and students, and the institution must ensure that this code is actively communicated to students upon their admission and throughout their academic careers. Consequences for disrespectful behaviour should be outlined clearly, and academic sanctions should be included to discourage misconduct. For example, failure to adhere to these behavioural guidelines could result in disciplinary hearings or formal warnings.

According to DeAngelis (2005), behavioural expectations are critical to fostering an academic environment where both students and lecturers can thrive. Establishing clear boundaries around respect in the classroom can significantly reduce disruptive behaviour and ensure African lecturers can maintain authority, contributing to enhanced student engagement (Gibson, 2012). Furthermore, universities that have successfully implemented behavioural codes report lower instances of misconduct and a more positive campus culture (Parker & Smith, 2017).

Provide professional development and support for African lecturers

African lecturers often face additional challenges that require specific forms of support, particularly when managing complex classroom dynamics influenced by racial tensions. Institutions should offer targeted professional development programs that focus on classroom management, conflict resolution, and culturally responsive teaching strategies. These programs

should be specifically designed to assist African lecturers in navigating the unique challenges posed by student disrespect and racial dynamics. Mentorship programs for new African lecturers should be implemented, where experienced faculty can guide them in dealing with these issues effectively. Faculty development programs have been shown to enhance the teaching efficacy of lecturers, especially when tailored to their specific challenges (Stewart & Thomas, 2015). Professional development in cultural responsiveness is particularly important, as it helps lecturers develop strategies to build stronger relationships with students and foster positive classroom dynamics (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Support systems like mentorship are crucial for African lecturers to feel empowered and supported in their roles (Hayes, 2019).

Address implicit bias in the classroom

Addressing implicit bias is essential in reducing student disrespect and promoting a culture of understanding. The institution should implement mandatory diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training for all students, faculty, and staff. These programs should be designed to raise awareness of unconscious biases, particularly those related to race, and explore how these biases impact the behaviour of students toward their lecturers. Training could include workshops and interactive discussions that help participants reflect on their biases and the importance of promoting an inclusive and respectful classroom environment. Furthermore, explicit lessons on race, cultural diversity, and systemic inequalities should be incorporated into the curriculum to promote awareness and understanding. Implicit bias training is a well-documented strategy that helps reduce discriminatory behaviour and fosters greater inclusivity within educational environments (Dovidio et al., 2016). Research indicates that students who are aware of their biases are more likely to exhibit respectful behaviours and engage with lecturers in more positive and supportive ways (Bourke et al., 2019). By addressing these biases directly, institutions can help mitigate the racial dynamics that often lead to student disrespect toward African lecturers.

Enhance student engagement and participation

African lecturers often struggle with student disengagement, which can manifest as disruptive behaviour. To counteract this, the institution should invest in strategies that promote active learning, such as cooperative learning groups, interactive lectures, and case-based learning. Involving students in hands-on, real-world projects related to the Nature Conservation program can help increase their investment in the learning process and decrease opportunities for disruptive behaviour. Additionally, establishing mechanisms for student feedback can ensure that lecturers are aware of any underlying issues that may

lead to disengagement and take corrective action where necessary. Active learning strategies, such as group projects and problem-based learning, have been shown to improve student engagement and reduce disruptive behaviour (Freeman et al., 2014). When students are actively involved in their learning, they are more likely to engage respectfully with their lecturers, resulting in a more positive learning environment (Tinto, 2017). Additionally, creating spaces for student feedback helps identify any issues early on and can prevent larger behavioural challenges (Boud & Molloy, 2013).

Strengthen institutional support and representation

To ensure that African lecturers' concerns are heard and acted upon, institutions should work towards increasing the representation of African faculty members in leadership and decision-making roles. African lecturers, particularly those in programs like Nature Conservation, may feel isolated or underrepresented in academic leadership. Therefore, mentorship programs, leadership training, and increased involvement of African educators in academic governance can provide them with a sense of support and belonging. This representation is crucial to ensure that African lecturers' experiences are reflected in institutional policies and practices. Institutional support and increased faculty representation are vital for ensuring that African lecturers' needs are addressed (Bhopal, 2018). African faculty members in leadership positions are more likely to advocate for policies and practices that address the challenges faced by African educators in higher education (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Moreover, having diverse voices in academic leadership can result in more inclusive policies that benefit all students and faculty.

Promote student awareness of racial dynamics

The research highlights a lack of awareness among students regarding the racial dynamics that affect their behaviour toward African lecturers. Universities should implement educational programs that specifically address the role of race in classroom dynamics. These programs should include discussions about how racial attitudes can impact learning environments and academic success. Providing students with tools to reflect on their behaviour and promoting open dialogue about race and culture will help reduce disrespect and increase empathy towards lecturers from diverse backgrounds. Educating students about the influence of race on classroom behaviour is crucial for fostering mutual respect between students and lecturers. Studies have shown that students who are educated about the impact of racial dynamics are more likely to engage in respectful behaviours and create an inclusive academic environment (Bourke et al., 2019). Additionally, creating an environment where students can openly discuss issues of race and respect

improves interpersonal interactions and academic outcomes (Sue et al., 2019).

Conduct further research on the impact of racial dynamics on education

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Further research should be conducted to explore the impact of racial dynamics on student behaviour and academic success, specifically focusing on African lecturers in various disciplines. Longitudinal studies could track changes in student behaviour and academic performance over time, providing a deeper understanding of how racial biases evolve and influence academic relationships. Additionally, research into the effectiveness of the proposed interventions would provide valuable insights into how these strategies can be refined and implemented across different contexts. Ongoing research will help institutions continuously adapt and improve their approach to addressing racial dynamics in higher education. Longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into the long-term effects of racial dynamics and inform policy changes that lead to more equitable educational outcomes (Gibson, 2012).

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

"I, the author, contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection, and research were performed by Mbanjwa S.T. The first draft was written by Mbanjwa S.T."

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the author, but restrictions apply to the

availability of these data, which were used under license from various research publications for the current study and so are not publicly available.

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