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## **HARNESSING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE (IK) FOR SUSTAINABLE ECD CENTRES IN RURAL KARANGA COMMUNITIES OF ZIMBABWE**

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### **Abstract**

*The Karanga people hold beliefs and practices that profoundly influence environmental management. Traditionally, the Shona, of which the Karanga are a dialectical subgroup, exhibited strong stewardship of their environment. However, this ethos has waned due to the effects of Western hegemony (Mabvurira, Muchinako & Smit, 2021). This exploratory qualitative study examines how rural Karanga communities currently leverage local flora and fauna for sustainable development, focusing specifically on Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. Grounded in Afrocentricity and Heritage-Based Education, the study aligns with Zimbabwe's Education 5.0 framework. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with participants from various community sectors. The findings reveal that Indigenous Knowledge (IK) plays a crucial role in areas such as nutrition, medicine, and employment generation. We conclude that rural Karanga communities can effectively utilize IK to foster sustainable practices in ECD.*

**Keywords:** *Indigenous Knowledge, flora, fauna, sustainability, Afrocentricity, Early Childhood Development*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Zimbabwe is rich in flora and fauna, but modernization threatens the sustainability of these natural resources. Many commercial products prioritize profit over ecological balance and disregard Indigenous Knowledge (IK). Mapara (2009) defines IK as local knowledge unique to specific cultures and societies. Altieri (1995), cited in Mapara (2009), describes it as knowledge that

originates locally and evolves naturally, linked closely to the communities that generate it.

IK is crucial for cultural continuity and sustainable development. Hoppers (2005) notes that from an African epistemological perspective, knowledge is stored in collective memory and passed orally through myths, stories, and songs. Unfortunately, colonization and modern technologies have disrupted this transmission. Mushuku (2014) notes that