



**6<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
UNICAF UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE CONFERENCE**  
16-20 March 2026

**ABSTRACT BOOKLET**



## Table of Contents

Welcome	2
The UGrac 2026 Committees	3
Information	4
Programme	5
<b>DAY 1   MONDAY, 16 MARCH 2026</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>DAY 2   TUESDAY, 17 MARCH 2026</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>DAY 3   WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH 2026</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>DAY 4   THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2026</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>DAY 5   FRIDAY, 20 MARCH 2026</b>	<b>15</b>
Abstracts	16
Plenary Presentations	16
<b>DAY 1   MONDAY, 16 MARCH 2026</b>	<b>24</b>
Business and Management Section	24
Session 1   Leadership Dynamics and Organisational Performance	24
Session 2   Human Capital and Performance	27
Session 3   Finance, Development, and Socio-Economic Outcomes	31
Session 4   Governance, Risk Management, and Public Sector Performance	34
<b>DAY 2   TUESDAY, 17 MARCH 2026</b>	<b>37</b>
Business and Management Section	37
Session 5   Strategic Management, Innovation, and Enterprise Growth in Emerging Economies	37
Social Sciences and Education Section	43
Session 6   Strategic Innovations in Education and Infrastructure Development	43
Session 7   Inclusive Education and Special Needs	48
<b>DAY 3   WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH 2026</b>	<b>52</b>
Social Sciences and Education Section	52
Session 8   Sanitation and Public Health	52
Session 9   Student Achievement and Support	54
Session 10   Education and Digital Transformation	56
Session 11   Curriculum and Policy Innovation	59
<b>DAY 4   THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2026</b>	<b>63</b>
Social Sciences and Education Section	63
Session 12   Social Justice and Governance	63
Session 13   Psychology, Well-being, and Mental Health	66
Session 14   Leadership, Management, and School Environment	71
<b>DAY 5   FRIDAY, 20 MARCH 2026</b>	<b>74</b>
Business and Management Section (French)	74
Session 15 (French)   Responsabilité Sociale, Inclusion Financière et PME	74

## Welcome



Welcome to the Sixth Annual Online Unicaf University Graduate Conference (UGraC) 2026!

As the School of Doctoral Studies' flagship event, UGraC plays a vital role in strengthening our research culture, encouraging scholarly dialogue, and promoting the dissemination of doctoral research throughout our global academic community.

The conference will commence with a keynote speech from Dr Margarita Olympiou, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning and Dean of the School of Sciences, Health Sciences, Technology and Engineering, Unicaf Federal.

This year's conference brings together doctoral candidates, graduates, and academic staff from across our institutions for five days of rigorous intellectual engagement. The 2026 programme is organised across two principal sections: Business and Management, and Social Sciences and Education, reflecting both the breadth and depth of doctoral inquiry at Unicaf University.

The Business and Management sessions explore leadership dynamics, strategic management in emerging economies, finance and socio-economic development, governance, innovation, and enterprise resilience. A dedicated French-language Business and Management section is also included, reinforcing our commitment to inclusivity and international engagement.

The Social Sciences and Education section addresses public policy, curriculum innovation, digital transformation, public health, psychology, inclusive education, and institutional leadership. Collectively, these presentations demonstrate the relevance, applied value, and methodological diversity of doctoral research conducted across our partner institutions.

Distinguished plenary speakers are an honour to host, including Dr Nathan Musonda, Dr Mary Mandiringana, Dr Georgios Afxentiou, Dr Christine Phiri Mushibwe, Dr Argyrios Tasoulas, Dr Ali Elhami, Dr Reginald Dennis Gwisai and Dr Yasmine Bezzaz, who will address issues central to contemporary scholarship. Their contributions explore research integrity, doctoral rigour, ethics approval processes, innovation, leadership, and the evolving responsibilities of researchers in a complex global environment.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the organising committee, session chairs, plenary speakers, and doctoral researchers whose dedication has made this event possible. Your commitment exemplifies the collaborative academic spirit that underpins our doctoral community.

I wish you a stimulating and productive conference and look forward to the valuable discussions that will emerge over the coming days.

Best regards,

Dr Olga Novokhatskaya PhD, MSc

Dean, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

## The UGrC 2026 Committees

### **Chairing Committee**

Dr Olga Novokhatskaya  
Dr Elena Papadopoulou

### **Organising Committee**

Mrs Christiana Nicolaou  
Mrs Marina Agathocleous Soteriou  
Dr Athanasia-Eleni Kavadia

### **Scientific Committee**

Dr Ali Elhami  
Dr Argyrios Tasoulas  
Dr Attridge Mwelwa  
Dr Christine Akinyi Osae  
Dr Clement Ndifor Ndindah  
Dr Georgios Afxentiou  
Dr Leonorah Tendayi Nyaruwata  
Dr Martha Mondwa  
Dr Muyunda Leakey Liambela  
Dr Mwila Hilton Mwaba  
Dr Nachizya Edith Namukanga  
Dr Nathan Musonda  
Dr Olga Novokhatskaya  
Dr Pelekelo Kabundula  
Dr Reginald Dennis Gwisai  
Dr Sichali Cheyo  
Dr Wilfred Masebo  
Dr Yasmine Bezzaz

### **Editing Committee**

Dr Olga Novokhatskaya  
Mrs Christiana Nicolaou

## Information

### Access to the conference

In order to attend the conference sessions, please use the following Zoom registration link:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_pkFbu0o7OwOLBS7l0xm68Q](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_pkFbu0o7OwOLBS7l0xm68Q)

Please contact the UGrAC Committee at: [doctoral.studies-aa@unicaf.org](mailto:doctoral.studies-aa@unicaf.org) for further information.

Please note that the programme time zone is GMT +2. You may confirm your local time using the appropriate [time zone converter](#).

The sessions will open each day at 08:50 (GMT +2).

### Copyrights/Disclaimer Notice

The content in the current booklet is provided only for educational and informational purposes. Unicaf attempts to ensure that content is accurate and obtained from reliable sources, but does not represent it to be error-free.

All material appearing in the current booklet is protected and is the property either of Unicaf and/or the party credited as the provider and/or author of the content. You may not copy, reproduce, distribute, publish, display, perform, modify, create derivative works, transmit, or in any way exploit any such content, nor may you distribute any part of this content over any network, including a local area network, sell or offer it for sale, or use such content to construct any kind of database. Copying or storing any content except as provided above is expressly prohibited without prior written permission of Unicaf and/or of the copyright holder identified in the individual content's copyright notice, i.e. the author and/or the creator of the content.

## Programme

### Programme of the Sixth Annual Online Unicaf University

#### Graduate Conference (UGraC)

March 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Please note that the programme time zone is GMT +2. You may confirm your local time using the appropriate [time zone converter](#). The sessions will open each day at 08:50 (GMT +2).

#### DAY 1 | MONDAY, 16 MARCH 2026

09:00 – 09:30

##### Opening Ceremony

**Chair:** Dr Olga Novokhatskaya, Dean, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

**Keynote Speaker:** Dr Margarita Olympiou, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning and Dean of the School of Sciences, Health Sciences, Technology and Engineering, Unicaf Federal

#### Business and Management Section

09:30 – 10:30

##### Plenary Presentation 1

**Chair:** Dr Clement Ndifor Ndindah, Head, Department of Business, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **09:30 – 10:10** | *Business Ethics: Building Trust, Reputation, and Sustainable Success*  
**Plenary Speaker:** Dr Nathan Musonda, Associate Dean, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal
- **10:10 – 10:30** | Q&A

10:30 – 11:40

##### Session 1: Leadership Dynamics and Organisational Performance

**Chair:** Dr Attridge Mwelwa, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), Unicaf University in Zambia

- **10:30 – 10:50** | *Authentic Leadership and Organisational Performance in Uganda's Telecom Industry: The Mediating Role of Technological Innovation*  
**Presenter:** Stephen Rwabwogo – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **10:50 – 11:10** | *Investigating Leadership Styles That Enhance Insurance Penetration: A Case Study of Short-Term Insurance Companies in Zimbabwe*  
**Presenter:** Rebecca Moyo – Unicaf University in Malawi

- **11:10 – 11:30** | *Critical Evaluation of Transformational Leadership Effectiveness in Mitigating Employee Turnover: The Case of Zimbabwe Insurance Companies*  
**Presenter:** Fadzanai Edmore Mupandenyama – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **11:30 – 11:40** | Closing Remarks

**11:40 – 13:10**

### **Session 2: Human Capital and Performance**

**Chair:** Dr Cheyo Sichali, Doctoral Programme Coordinator, School of Business, Unicaf University in Zambia

- **11:40 – 12:00** | *Enhancing Postnatal Team Communication: Impact Study of Crew Resource Management Training within Hospitals in Seychelles*  
**Presenter:** Christopher Andrew Lespoir – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **12:00 – 12:20** | *The Effects of Employee Appraisal and Recognition on Organisational Performance in Zimbabwe*  
**Presenter:** Itayi Memory Miti – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **12:20 – 12:40** | *Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Actions in Rural Households of Rwanda to Graduate People out of Extreme Poverty*  
**Presenter:** Jean de Bonheur Munyandamutsa – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **12:40 – 13:00** | *Effect of Talent Management and Work Engagement on Employee Retention in Kenya's Petroleum Industry*  
**Presenter:** Florence Masai – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **13:00 – 13:10** | Closing Remarks

**13:10 – 14:10**

### **Plenary Presentation 2**

**Chair:** Dr Yasmine Bezzaz, Programme Leader, Department of Business, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **13:10 – 13:50** | *The Art of Public Speaking*  
**Plenary Speaker:** Dr Mary Mandiringana, Dean, School of Business, Unicaf University in Zambia
- **13:50 – 14:10** | Q&A

**14:10 – 15:20**

**Session 3: Finance, Development, and Socio-Economic Outcomes**

**Chair:** Dr Levison Zeleza Manda, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research), Dean, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf University in Malawi

- **14:10 – 14:30** | *Examining How Academic Achievement Improves Socio-Economic Status of Households in Rural Communities – The Case of Maala Community of Namwala District in Zambia*  
**Presenter:** Gibson Mweemba – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **14:30 – 14:50** | *Digital Vulnerabilities in Microfinance: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Social Media Risks and Performance Outcomes*  
**Presenter:** Shepherd Magombedze – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **14:50 – 15:10** | *Towards Enhancing the Performance of Pharmaceutical Drug Manufacturers in Zimbabwe*  
**Presenter:** Ruth Chapereka – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **15:10 – 15:20** | Closing Remarks

**15:20 – 16:30**

**Session 4: Governance, Risk Management, and Public Sector Performance**

**Chair:** Dr Chrine Hapompwe, Acting Director of QA, Unicaf University in Zambia

- **15:20 – 15:40** | *The Impact of Using Machine Learning on Supply Chain Agility in Retail Businesses*  
**Presenter:** Marwa Abdellateef – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **15:40 – 16:00** | *Managing Enterprise Risks for Sustainability: A Study on Commercial State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Namibia*  
**Presenter:** Ndahafa Frans – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **16:00 – 16:20** | *Investigating Critical Challenges Leveraging Big Data Analytics for Strategic Decisions in Jamaican Public Firms*  
**Presenter:** Karel Sophia Dawes – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **16:20 – 16:30** | Closing Remarks

DAY 2 | TUESDAY, 17 MARCH 2026

## **Business and Management Section**

**09:00 – 10:00**

### **Plenary Presentation 3**

**Chair:** Dr Abhishek Tripathi, Programme Leader, Department of Business, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **09:00 – 09:40** | *Innovative Thinking in Entrepreneurs' Narratives of Well-Being and Mental Health in Crises*

**Plenary Speaker:** Dr Georgios Afxentiou, Programme Leader, Department of Business, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **09:40 – 10:00** | **Q&A**

**10:00 – 12:10**

### **Session 5: Strategic Management, Innovation, and Enterprise Growth in Emerging Economies**

**Chair:** Dr Mary Mandiringana, Dean, School of Business, Unicaf University in Zambia

- **10:00 – 10:20** | *Assessing Fraud and the Use of Strategic Management Tools to Mitigate Same in State-Owned Enterprises in Ghana*  
**Presenter:** Diana Awinsum Yemdago – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **10:20 – 10:40** | *Strategic Planning by Small and Medium Enterprises in a Pandemic Context*  
**Presenter:** Chitamya Angela – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **10:40 – 11:00** | *Exploring Policy Implementation for Small and Medium Enterprises' Value Chain Integration in Industrialisation in Malawi*  
**Presenter:** Richard Chikalipo – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **11:00 – 11:20** | *The Effects of Financial Leverage on the Growth of SMEs in Kenya*  
**Presenter:** Isaiah Opanga Maisiba – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **11:20 – 11:40** | *The Effectiveness of SMEs' Microfinancing Programmes on SMEs' Access to Finance in a Small Island Developing State (SIDS): Seychelles*  
**Presenter:** Audrey Claude Francis – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **11:40 – 12:00** | *The Influence of Promotional Gifts on Consumer Behaviour in Banks and Pension Organisations in Lagos, Nigeria*  
**Presenter:** Olutoye Olutayo – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **12:00 – 12:10** | **Closing Remarks**

**12:10 – 12:20**

### **Closing Remarks: Business and Management Section**

**Dr Clement Ndifor Ndindah,** Head, Department of Business, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

## Social Sciences and Education Section

**12:20 – 13:20**

### **Plenary Presentation 4**

**Chair:** Dr Ali Elhami, Programme Leader, Department of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **12:20 – 13:00** | *When Doctoral Research Becomes Rhetoric: Reclaiming Rigour, Relevance, and Integrity*  
**Plenary Speaker:** Dr Christine Phiri Mushibwe, Vice-Chancellor, Unicaf University in Zambia
- **13:00 – 13:20** | **Q&A**

**13:20 – 15:10**

### **Session 6: Strategic Innovations in Education and Infrastructure Development**

**Chair:** Dr Christine Akinyi Osaе, Programme Leader, Department of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **13:20 – 13:40** | *Modelling the Inspection of Storey Buildings Under Construction Using a Knowledge-Based System Approach*  
**Presenter:** John Oloo Gwendo – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **13:40 – 14:00** | *Donor Partners' Provision of Endogenous Educational Inputs: Examining Opportunities and Challenges to the Enhancement and Sustainability of Quality Education in Rwandan Basic Education*  
**Presenter:** Habyarimana Heli – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **14:00 – 14:20** | *An Investigation on the Use of Visual Arts Strategies in the Learning Performance of Teacher Trainees in Kenya*  
**Presenter:** Thomas Chunguli Konya – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **14:20 – 14:40** | *Impact of Curriculum Implementation on Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition: An Evaluation of Graduates' Competency Development in South-South Nigeria Colleges of Education*  
**Presenter:** Florence Aniekana Abraham – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **14:40 – 15:00** | *The Influence of Headteachers' Transformational Leadership on Teacher Job Satisfaction in Public Secondary Schools in Rusizi District, Rwanda*  
**Presenter:** Jean Bosco Uwizeyimana – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **15:00 – 15:10** | **Closing Remarks**

**15:10 – 16:40**

**Session 7: Inclusive Education and Special Needs**

**Chair:** Dr Edward Mboyonga, Doctoral Programme Coordinator, School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Unicaf University in Zambia

- **15:10 – 15:30** | *Correlating Factors of Learning Performance of Exceptional Education Needs Students: Case of Six Selected Special Schools in Southwest Nigeria*  
**Presenter:** Morenike Iyinjesu Onaolapo – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **15:30 – 15:50** | *Investigation into Inclusive Pedagogy Teaching (Autism Spectrum) in a Science GCSE Classroom in the United Kingdom (England)*  
**Presenter:** Olubayo Olawale Oyewole – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **15:50 – 16:10** | *A Phenomenological Study of Mothers Who Care for Children with Autism in Trinidad and Tobago*  
**Presenter:** Silina Natasha Edward-Hinds – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **16:10 – 16:30** | *The Perception of Teachers Towards Inclusive Education in The Bahamas*  
**Presenter:** Carlotta Alexis Simms – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **16:30 – 16:40** | Closing Remarks

## DAY 3 | WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH 2026

**09:00 – 10:00**

### Plenary Presentation 5

**Chair:** Dr Kalliopi Kyriakopoulou, Programme Leader, School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, Unicaf Federal

- **09:00 – 09:40** | *“Fishing in Muddy Waters”: Russia’s Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean*  
**Plenary Speaker:** Dr Argyrios Tasoulas, Head, Department of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal
- **09:40 – 10:00** | **Q&A**

**10:00 – 10:50**

### Session 8: Sanitation and Public Health

**Chair:** Dr Nachizya Edith Namukanga, Acting Doctoral Coordinator, School of Health and Applied Sciences, Unicaf University in Zambia

- **10:00 – 10:20** | *Integrating Faecal Sludge Management into Urban Health Resilience: Addressing Sanitation Gaps in Small Municipalities of Bangladesh*  
**Presenter:** Am Tris Hardyanto – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **10:20 – 10:40** | *Bridging Knowledge–Practice Gaps in Preventing Childhood Parasitic Infection: Evidence from Rural Rwanda*  
**Presenter:** Laurette Mushimiyimana – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **10:40 – 10:50** | Closing Remarks

**10:50 – 11:40**

### Session 9: Student Achievement and Support

**Chair:** Dr Martha Mondwiwa, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning, Unicaf University in Malawi

- **10:50 – 11:10** | *Study of Factors That Influence Secondary School Students' Academic Achievement in Science Subjects: The Case of Lilongwe District, Malawi*  
**Presenter:** Gurusamy Pillai Kalyana Sundaram – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **11:10 – 11:30** | *The Hybrid Confluence: A Conceptual Model for Afro-Euro Advising Integration in Emerging African Universities*  
**Presenter:** Dora Dorothy Murasi – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **11:30 – 11:40** | Closing Remarks

**11:40 – 12:50**

**Session 10: Education and Digital Transformation**

**Chair:** Dr Awalu Rodgers, Programme Leader in Education, School of Education, Technology & Social Sciences, Unicaf University in Malawi

- **11:40 – 12:00** | *Comparing the Effectiveness of Traditional Classroom Teaching and Learning vs E-Learning*  
**Presenter:** Glory Ifiegbu – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **12:00 – 12:20** | *Beyond the Venn Diagram: Deconstructing the Contextual Knowledge (XK) Barriers to TPACK Integration in Ghanaian Primary Schools*  
**Presenter:** Bernice Yawa Tsitsia – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **12:20 – 12:40** | *Reskilling School Leaders with Fourth Industrial Revolution Competencies for Effective School Service Delivery in Namibia*  
**Presenter:** Ancia Katjiteo – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **12:40 – 12:50** | Closing Remarks

**12:50 – 13:00 Break**

**13:00 – 14:30**

**Session 11: Curriculum and Policy Innovation**

**Chair:** Dr Mickie Johnny Kumwamba, Dean of the School of Education, Technology & Social Sciences, Unicaf University in Malawi

- **13:00 – 13:20** | *Teacher Participation in the Education Policy Process: A Study of the Relationship between Curriculum Development and Teacher Ownership in Saint Lucia*  
**Presenter:** Augusta Emmanuel – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **13:20 – 13:40** | *Challenges and Strategies for Implementing the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications Program in Georgetown Secondary Schools, Guyana*  
**Presenter:** Amelia Natalie Persaud – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **13:40 – 14:00** | *Investigating the Relationship Between Non-Cognitive Assessment as a Prerequisite to Mathematics Pedagogy and Students' CSEC Mathematics Performance: The Case of Two Guyanese Schools*  
**Presenter:** Lydia Gowmatee Narain – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **14:00 – 14:20** | *Generative Artificial Intelligence and Its Application in Computer Science Education in Jamaica: Influences and Learning Theory*  
**Presenter:** Leo Lancelot Lewis – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **14:20 – 14:30** | Closing Remarks

## DAY 4 | THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2026

**09:00 – 10:00**

### Plenary Presentation 6

**Chair:** Dr Christine Akinyi Osaе, Programme Leader, Department of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **09:00 – 09:40** | *Linguistic Convergence in Education: A CAT-Based Approach to Enhancing Teacher-Student Rapport*

**Plenary Speaker:** Dr Ali Elhami, Programme Leader, Department of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **09:40 – 10:00** | **Q&A**

**10:00 – 11:10**

### Session 12: Social Justice and Governance

**Chair:** Dr Mark Marx Jamali Winter, Director of Academics and Quality Assurance, Unicaf University in Malawi

- **10:00 – 10:20** | *Determinants of Men’s Engagement in Gender-Based Violence Prevention Programmes: A Systematic Global Review*

**Presenter:** Lilian Okwuchukwu Iwu – Unicaf University in Zambia

- **10:20 – 10:40** | *Towards a New Model of the Transitional Justice Mechanism of Truth Commissions: An Assessment of the Role of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission of Zimbabwe*

**Presenter:** Bernard Ngwenya – Unicaf University in Zambia

- **10:40 – 11:00** | *Challenges and Strategies for Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Fragile States: A Case Study of South Sudan*

**Presenter:** William Tim Monybuny – Unicaf University in Malawi

- **11:00 – 11:10** | Closing Remarks

**11:10 – 13:00**

### Session 13: Psychology, Well-being, and Mental Health

**Chair:** Dr Pelekelo Kabundula, Dean, School of Education, Unicaf University in Zambia

- **11:10 – 11:30** | *From Stress to Strategies: Developing Digital Resilience Among Medical Students in Pakistan – A Qualitative Case Study*

**Presenter:** Noor-i-Kiran Naeem – Unicaf University in Zambia

- **11:30 – 11:50** | *Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Distress in Primary School Teachers*

**Presenter:** Manisha Ramjeet – Unicaf University in Zambia

- **11:50 – 12:10** | *Underlying Causes for Violence among Secondary School Students*  
**Presenter:** Yamanie Devi Jaiprashad – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **12:10 – 12:30** | *Prevalence and Factors Associated with Seeking Mental Health Information on Social Media among St. Lucian Young Adults*  
**Presenter:** Giselle Emmanuel – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **12:30 – 12:50** | *Exploring Institution-Related Factors that Affect the Student Dropout Rate in Bahamian High Schools*  
**Presenter:** Audra Norell Tynes – Unicaf University in Zambia
- **12:50 – 13:00** | Closing Remarks

**13:00 – 14:00**

**Plenary Presentation 7**

**Chair:** Dr Pelekelo Kabundula, Dean, School of Education, Unicaf University in Zambia

- **13:00 – 13:40** | *Navigating the Ethical and Research Landscape at Doctoral Level: Overview, Approval Challenges, and Case Studies*  
**Plenary Speaker:** Dr Reginald Dennis Gwisai, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Unicaf University
- **13:40 – 14:00** | Q&A

**14:00 – 14:50**

**Session 14: Leadership, Management, and School Environment**

**Chair:** Dr Ali Elhami, Programme Leader, Department of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **14:00 – 14:20** | *Investigating Internal Quality Assurance Practices in Botswana’s Private Higher Education: Challenges and Strategic Pathways for Improvement*  
**Presenter:** Dimpho Segwabe – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **14:20 – 14:40** | *The Learning-Support School Policy Framework and Its Impact on Student Learning in Liberian Secondary Schools*  
**Presenter:** Leon Loretho Banks – Unicaf University in Malawi
- **14:40 – 14:50** | Closing Remarks

**14:50 – 15:00**

**Closing Remarks: Department of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Doctoral Studies**

Dr Argyrios Tasoulas, Head, Department of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

## DAY 5 | FRIDAY, 20 MARCH 2026

### Business and Management Section (French)

**09:00 – 10:00**

#### **Plenary Presentation 8 (French)**

**Chair:** Dr Clement Ndifor Ndindah, Head, Department of Business, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **09:00 – 09:40** | *Le travail doctoral et ses enjeux de construction professionnelle : éclairages issus de la GRH*  
**Plenary Speaker:** Dr Yasmine Bezzaz, Programme Leader, Department of Business, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal
- **09:40 – 10:00** | **Q&A**

**10:00 – 11:50**

#### **Session 15 (French): Responsabilité Sociale, Inclusion Financière et PME**

**Chair:** Dr Yasmine Bezzaz, Programme Leader, Department of Business, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

- **10:00 – 10:20** | *Le rôle du crédit formel dans la performance économique des PME burundaises*  
**Presenter:** Inès Sonia Niyubahwe – Unicaf Université
- **10:20 – 10:40** | *Les effets de la responsabilité sociale de l'entreprise sur la performance sociale des entreprises : Cas des entreprises minières de Goma en République Démocratique du Congo*  
**Presenter:** Lucien Kishabaga Kirusa – Unicaf Université
- **10:40 – 11:00** | *Exploration de certains facteurs institutionnels et capacitaires pour propulser le barème de l'inclusion financière au Burkina Faso*  
**Presenter:** Nobila Jean Flaubert Ouoba – Unicaf Université
- **11:00 – 11:20** | *Profil managérial des dirigeants des établissements de soins de première ligne pour l'instauration du financement basé sur la performance : étude de la Côte d'Ivoire*  
**Presenter:** Konan N'Guessan Désiré – Unicaf Université
- **11:20 – 11:40** | *Exploration des facteurs qui déterminent la résilience de la chaîne logistique minière dans un environnement de crise sécuritaire : Cas du Burkina Faso*  
**Presenter:** Pakidumsamba David Belemnaba – Unicaf Université
- **11:40 – 11:50** | **Closing Remarks**

**11:50 – 12:20**

#### **Closing Ceremony**

**Chair:** Dr Nathan Musonda, Associate Dean, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

**Speaker:** Dr Olga Novokhatskaya, Dean, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal

## Abstracts

## Plenary Presentations

### **Business Ethics: Building Trust, Reputation, and Sustainable Success**

**Dr Nathan Musonda**

**Associate Dean, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal**

In an increasingly complex and competitive business environment, ethical conduct has emerged as a critical determinant of organisational credibility, sustainability, and long-term success. This presentation examines the role of business ethics as a strategic asset rather than a compliance obligation, highlighting its influence on trust-building, corporate reputation, and stakeholder relationships.

The session will provide participants with a practical understanding of business ethics by exploring its core principles, like honesty, integrity, fairness, and transparency and demonstrating how these values guide ethical decision-making in everyday business operations. Common ethical dilemmas faced by organisations, including conflicts of interest, bribery, and misleading practices, will be discussed using real-world examples.

Participants will be introduced to widely accepted ethical decision-making frameworks, including the utilitarian, rights-based, and justice approaches, to support informed and responsible business choices. The presentation will further illustrate how cultivating an ethical business culture contributes to employee engagement, customer loyalty, risk mitigation, and sustainable organisational growth.

This presentation aims to equip professionals, managers, and leaders with practical tools to integrate ethical considerations into strategic and operational decisions. The session concludes with a call to action encouraging participants to commit to ethical practices that strengthen organisational integrity and long-term performance.

**Keywords:** Business Ethics, Corporate Governance, Ethical Decision-Making, Corporate Reputation, Sustainable Business

## **The Art of Public Speaking**

**Dr Mary Mandiringana**

**Dean, School of Business, Unicaf University in Zambia**

Few people are immune to the anxiety of public speaking. The fear of public speaking can hold us back both academically and professionally. Some call it a phobia of speaking; this does not have to rule you. Public speaking is an important communication skill both in academic (Lecturing and Viva Voce) and professional environments (conference presentations), allowing individuals to lead, influence and advance their careers. Thus, the main objective will be to develop better communication skills and self-confidence. Whether one is delivering a presentation, making a pitch, leading a group discussion or defending a doctoral thesis, this can cause even the most confident leader to break a sweat and the heart to start pounding.

This workshop will take you out of the fear zone and into the art of public speaking, where you will deliver messages confidently in front of your live audience. The fear can be managed through preparation and practice, and shifting focus from oneself to the audience. The other important part will be mastering the skills, which require practice, controlling the nerves and structuring the content effectively. Key discussion areas on structuring, style, memory of the content and then finally the delivery. The focus is to give tips on helping to reduce anxiety and improve performance. This is ideal for anyone in a role that requires ceremonial speaking, persuasive speaking, or any other type of public speaking, regardless of industry or years of experience. The workshop will be interactive, with participants going into breakout rooms for oral presentations practice from randomly selected topics and chat messaging too. The focus of the workshop will be on Doctorate Viva and conference presentations.

## **Innovative Thinking in Entrepreneurs' Narratives of Well-Being and Mental Health in Crises**

**Dr Georgios Afxentiou**

**Programme Leader, Department of Business, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal**

This plenary session explores entrepreneurs' narratives of innovative thinking, well-being, and mental health in times of crisis. Entrepreneurs face multiple challenges in sustaining their businesses, often by developing systems and processes that support innovative thinking. During these distressing periods, they are expected not only to lead but also to innovate and to build resilience in rapidly changing markets.

A recent study has adopted a concurrent mixed-method design, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods, to examine how stress responses, anxiety, and depressive symptoms influence the development of innovative thinking among entrepreneurs in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) during crises. Descriptive analyses of the questionnaires and in-depth interviews demonstrated variability in the participants' stress levels. Despite this, entrepreneurs continued to innovate new products and services while implementing their investment strategies in an unstable economic environment.

During this session, the study's outcomes will be presented and discussed with participants. The main research concepts: innovative thinking, well-being and mental health are expected to foster a valuable and productive conversation. Insights from this conversation will benefit both academics and practitioners by informing the development of innovative thinking, guiding the design and implementation of innovation strategies, and supporting the allocation of resources to enhance business development, resilience, financial performance and market competitiveness.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, innovation thinking, well-being, mental health, crisis

## **When Doctoral Research Becomes Rhetoric: Reclaiming Rigour, Relevance, and Integrity**

**Dr Christine Phiri Mushibwe**

**Vice-Chancellor, Unicaf University in Zambia**

Contemporary doctoral education is under increasing pressure to produce research that is innovative, internationally visible, and theoretically sophisticated. Yet, amid these demands, a growing concern has emerged: the tendency for some doctoral research to drift from rigorous knowledge production into rhetorical performance. This occurs when scholarly language, complex theorisation, and methodological claims overshadow empirical substance, contextual relevance, and ethical responsibility. Such tendencies risk weakening the credibility of the PhD as the highest academic qualification and diminishing the social value of doctoral research, particularly in developing and transitional higher education systems. The value of a doctoral study is not in the title attained or the paper received; it is the ability of the research to contribute to current debates, to contribute a novel innovation, creation to the existing body of knowledge, and to the frontiers of knowledge. The supervisors and the body overseeing the research student have a huge role to play to guide the students towards the right direction. This presentation critically examines structural, institutional, and supervisory practices that inadvertently encourage performative research, work that prioritises academic display over analytical depth, originality, and societal impact. The paper will further explore how pressures related to completion timelines, publication metrics, funding expectations, and global ranking systems may shape doctoral outputs in problematic ways.

Anchored on the principles of rigour, relevance, and integrity, the presentation seeks to reclaim the core purpose of doctoral research: the generation of credible knowledge that advances theory, informs policy, and addresses real-world challenges. The elements of doctoral supervision, research design, methodology, ethics, epistemology, and the role of context in shaping meaningful doctoral inquiry remain crucial here. The aim, therefore, is to stimulate honest dialogue, reflective practice, and actionable strategies for strengthening doctoral research quality, restoring scholarly trust, and future-proofing the PhD in an increasingly complex academic landscape.

Keywords: Doctoral Research, Research Rigour, Scholarly Rhetoric, Research Integrity, Knowledge Production, Research Relevance, Doctoral Supervision

**“Fishing in Muddy Waters”:  
Russia’s Policy in the Eastern Mediterranean**

**Dr Argyrios Tasoulas**

**Head, Department of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal**

The war in Ukraine has redefined Russia’s objectives not only in Central and Eastern Europe but also in Southeastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean. To increase its presence in the geographic arc from the South Caucasus to North Africa, Russia is skilfully enhancing its relations with Türkiye. The upgrade of Russian-Turkish cooperation mainly in trade, energy, and tourism has entailed implications for the European Union, particularly for Greece and the Republic of Cyprus. This paper, based on Russian sources and personal interviews with seasoned diplomats and politicians in Cyprus and Greece, aims to provide, for the very first time, a coherent analysis of Russian foreign policy in the Eastern Mediterranean following the war in Ukraine. It is argued that Russia has a twofold objective: to maintain and possibly expand its influence, exploiting anti-Western sentiments; and to jeopardise Türkiye’s rapprochement with the West by supporting Ankara’s Cyprus policy.

Keywords: Russia, EU, Eastern Mediterranean, Türkiye, Cyprus, Greece

**Linguistic Convergence in Education:  
A CAT-Based Approach to Enhancing Teacher-Student Rapport**

**Dr Ali Elhami**

**Programme Leader, Department of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Doctoral Studies,  
Unicaf Federal**

Effective classroom dynamics rely heavily on the nuances of interpersonal communication between educators and learners. This presentation explores the application of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to examine how teachers utilise linguistic strategies—specifically convergence and divergence—to manage social distance and enhance rapport in multicultural educational settings. Drawing on recent qualitative research conducted in Spanish language classrooms, the study investigates the communicative practices used by teachers to accommodate students' diverse linguistic backgrounds and proficiency levels. The findings highlight how convergence strategies, such as simplifying syntax, adjusting speech rate, and utilising shared sociocultural references, serve as vital tools for fostering an inclusive learning environment and strengthening teacher-student rapport. Conversely, the presentation discusses how instances of divergence or over-accommodation can inadvertently create psychological distance or hinder student motivation. By framing the classroom as a site of intergroup communication, this session offers practical insights for educators and policymakers to develop more responsive and inclusive pedagogical approaches. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how intentional linguistic adaptation can optimise student engagement and facilitate more effective second language acquisition.

Keywords: Language learning, Communication accommodation theory, Convergence, Divergence, Multicultural education

## **Navigating the Ethical and Research Landscape at the Doctoral Level:**

### **Overview, Approval Challenges, and Case Studies**

**Dr Reginald Dennis Gwisai**

**Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Unicaf University**

Emerging researchers struggle to prepare their research proposals for operationalisation, which has led to delayed completion rates. Adhering to research ethical standards has been a challenge for most graduate and doctoral students, leading to delays in advancing from proposal development to data collection, analysis and writing up of the thesis and or dissertation. Navigating this landscape requires a clear understanding of the discipline instead of procedural compliance and quality assurance. Furthermore, there is a need to inculcate and embed the fundamental principles of compliance throughout the research process and its entire research life cycle. Research students are expected to balance academic rigour, ethical standards, and respect for participants, beneficence and justice, traversing Research Ethics Committees (RECs) /Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and managing emerging challenges in the research journey. A systematic review of the research ethics requirements and review of articles was conducted on the following databases: Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, African Journals Online, EBSCO – HOST and ProQuest journals. The paper intends to share experiences as a learning curve for all doctoral candidates and emerging researchers in the research landscape. It covers the three fundamental principles of research ethics; the main international regulations and protocols, national guidelines and regulations (i.e. the Declaration of Helsinki, the Belmont Report, the Council for International Organisations of Medical Science Guidelines, National Bioethics Advisory Committees, the Nuffield Council for Bioethics for healthcare related research in developing countries, HIV Prevention Trials Network), the essential elements of the informed consent and their development, the important research ethics documents and case studies where research ethics are applied at various levels of intensity. This attempt endeavours to scaffold and capacitate early career researchers within the ethics framework. On the other hand, it facilitates a strategic approach in handling types of research problems recommended for research work.

Keywords: Ethics Approval, Ethics Instruments, Ethics Requirements, Processes and Procedures, Ethics Regulations and Guidelines

**Navigating the Ethical and Research Landscape at Doctoral Level:  
Overview, Approval Challenges, and Case Studies**

**Dr Yasmine Bezzaz**

**Programme Leader, Department of Business, School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal**

Le doctorat constitue l'une des formes les plus exigeantes de travail intellectuel et de production de connaissances. Pourtant, les doctorants sont rarement outillés pour piloter leur trajectoire professionnelle au-delà des exigences strictement académiques comme les publications, les conférences et la soutenance. Cette intervention propose de mobiliser les apports de la gestion des ressources humaines et de la psychologie organisationnelle afin de reconsidérer le parcours doctoral comme un processus de construction et de valorisation du capital humain.

En s'appuyant sur les concepts de capital humain, d'employabilité, de travail de la connaissance et de signalisation sur le marché du travail, la session vise à éclairer les écarts fréquents entre la valeur réelle des compétences développées durant le doctorat et leur reconnaissance par les institutions académiques ou les organisations non académiques. L'intervention montrera notamment comment les compétences doctorales (analyse complexe, autonomie, gestion de l'incertitude, production de savoirs, coordination d'acteurs) sont souvent sous-formalisées et insuffisamment traduites dans les dispositifs d'évaluation et de recrutement.

L'intervention propose également une lecture organisationnelle des transitions identitaires vécues pendant le doctorat, en mettant en évidence le passage progressif au statut de professionnel de la connaissance, un statut encore incompris et sous-valorisé. Cette transition s'accompagne de tensions spécifiques (légitimité, syndrome de l'imposteur, gestion de la visibilité et des rapports de pouvoir) qui méritent d'être analysées.

Enfin, cette session plénière invitera les doctorants à adopter une posture réflexive et stratégique sur leur parcours, en identifiant leurs compétences clés, leurs angles morts et les logiques implicites de valorisation des carrières académiques et extra-académiques. L'objectif est de fournir des cadres d'analyse permettant aux doctorants de mieux comprendre, anticiper et piloter leur trajectoire professionnelle dans des environnements de travail complexes et incertains.

Abstracts are presented in the running order of the programme.

**DAY 1 | MONDAY, 16 MARCH 2026**

## **Business and Management Section**

**Session 1 | Leadership Dynamics and Organisational Performance**

### **Authentic Leadership and Organisational Performance in Uganda's Telecom Industry: The Mediating Role of Technological Innovation**

**Stephen Rwabwogo**  
**Unicaf University in Malawi**

Examining Uganda's telecom sector, this research will explore the influence of authentic leadership on organisational performance, with a special focus on technological innovation as a key mediating variable. The researcher will also consider how engaged employees are, as this factor is being monitored closely. Rooted in the ideas of Authentic Leadership Theory and the Balanced Scorecard Framework, the study aims to determine how leaders demonstrate self-awareness, transparency, moral integrity, and well-rounded decision-making, and how these qualities help boost innovation and improve results. Given its crucial position in the digital shift and reliance on innovation to stay competitive, Uganda's telecom scene —think MTN Uganda, Airtel Uganda, Uganda Telecom, and Lyca Mobile —makes a good place to study.

Using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, which aligns with a pragmatic research view, the study will combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data will come from questionnaires filled out by 384 employees across the four telecom companies, using a stratified method to ensure representativeness. For the qualitative/story side, the researcher will have about 15–20 interviews with managers and team leaders, picked purposively until saturation is reached.

Then, the quantitative data will be analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), a method to determine if the researcher's ideas about the relationships between authentic leadership, technological innovation, employee engagement, and organisational performance are correct. Meanwhile, the qualitative data will be analysed to find common threads in leadership styles and innovation methods (the depth).

The researcher expects the study to contribute to the understanding of leadership and management by demonstrating how authentic leadership encourages technological innovation and increases employee involvement, thereby improving the organisation. The results will provide leaders and decision-makers in Uganda's telecom sector with useful ideas on strengthening leadership and fostering growth driven by innovation.

**Keywords:** Authentic Leadership, Organisational Performance, Technological Innovation, Employee Engagement, Telecom Industry, Uganda

**Investigating Leadership Styles That Enhance Insurance Penetration:  
A Case Study of Short-Term Insurance Companies in Zimbabwe**

**Rebecca Moyo**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This study investigates whether transactional, transformational, and ethical leadership styles enhance insurance penetration and explores the role of work motivation in mediating the relationship between leadership styles and insurance penetration. Insurance penetration is a vital indicator of a country's development, and for it to increase, premiums written by short-term insurers should grow faster than the country's Gross Domestic Product. Companies need capable leaders to stay relevant and maintain a strong position in a competitive global market. A motivated workforce provides a significant competitive advantage and is a crucial strategic resource. Insurance penetration levels in Zimbabwe remain below 5%, and the influence of leadership in increasing this penetration by providing short-term insurance products to the uninsured and underinsured millions in Zimbabwe is still unknown. While studies have been conducted elsewhere, none have been undertaken within Zimbabwe's short-term insurance sector.

This study aims to develop practical leadership models and strategies to boost insurance penetration in Zimbabwe's short-term insurance sector. Increasing insurance penetration contributes to the country's economic growth.

The study employs an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, utilising quantitative methods through a self-administered Google Form questionnaire for data collection, followed by qualitative interviews. The sample size for the quantitative part will include 255 employees from short-term insurance companies, selected using stratified random sampling. Participants for the qualitative interviews will be chosen through purposive sampling, targeting decision-makers within the insurance companies and executives from the Insurance Council of Zimbabwe and the Insurance and Pensions Commission. Data saturation will be the benchmark for qualitative interviews. Data analysis will be conducted using digital tools like the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences and NVivo.

The results of this study will consolidate the quantitative and qualitative findings. The primary research is yet to be conducted, hence the results are outstanding.

**Critical Evaluation of Transformational Leadership Effectiveness in Mitigating Employee Turnover:  
The Case of Zimbabwe Insurance Companies**

**Fadzanai Edmore Mupandenyama**  
**Unicaf University in Malawi**

Employee turnover continues to undermine organisational stability in Zimbabwe's insurance industry, where persistent economic turbulence, regulatory uncertainty, and intensified competition challenge workforce retention. This study aims to critically evaluate the effectiveness of transformational leadership in mitigating employee turnover and enhancing organisational commitment. Specifically, it seeks to (1) analyse contextual factors influencing leadership effectiveness, (2) determine which dimensions of transformational leadership most significantly reduce turnover, (3) assess the mediating roles of organisational culture and employee characteristics, and (4) evaluate perceptual differences across hierarchical and functional levels. A mixed-methods design was adopted, integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to ensure both statistical robustness and contextual depth. Stratified random sampling ensured representation from multiple organisational tiers, while triangulation enhanced the validity and credibility of the findings. Quantitative analysis explored correlations between transformational leadership behaviours and turnover intentions, whereas qualitative insights illuminated employees' lived experiences and contextual interpretations of leadership influence. The study contributes original empirical evidence by situating transformational leadership within the underexplored African insurance sector, thereby expanding leadership theory in emerging-market contexts. Findings reveal that while transformational leadership fosters motivation, trust, and commitment, its effectiveness is moderated by structural and economic constraints unique to Zimbabwe. The research advances leadership and human resource management literature by demonstrating how context-sensitive leadership can serve as a strategic retention mechanism in volatile environments. Reflectively, this study underscores the importance of adaptive, ethically grounded leadership capable of sustaining employee engagement amidst uncertainty. It also highlights the researcher's learning that leadership effectiveness must be critically appraised through both behavioural and contextual lenses to develop resilient organisational systems in fragile economies.

The results imply that, particularly in light of ongoing regulatory and economic obstacles, insurance companies in Zimbabwe should give top priority to the development of transformational leadership skills to effectively handle employee turnover. Leadership development programs that emphasise flexibility, moral behaviour, and building trust should be customised to the particular organisational and national context. Companies are also urged to cultivate a culture of support and acknowledge the various needs and traits of workers at all levels of the hierarchy. Establishing enabling environments that promote workforce stability and leadership effectiveness should also be a priority for legislators and industry regulators.

To gain a more thorough understanding of retention tactics in fragile economies, future research is advised to investigate the interaction between leadership behaviours and contextual factors in other emerging-market sectors.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Employee Turnover, Leadership Effectiveness, Organisational Commitment, Zimbabwe, Insurance Industry

## Session 2 | Human Capital and Performance

### **Enhancing Postnatal Team Communication: Impact Study of Crew Resource Management Training within Hospitals in Seychelles**

**Christopher Andrew Lespoir**  
**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This dissertation investigates the effectiveness of Crew Resource Management (CRM) training in enhancing communication within the postnatal ward of Seychelles Hospital. Effective communication is essential for patient safety, yet gaps persist in interdisciplinary collaboration in healthcare. Drawing on literature from healthcare management and CRM implementation, this study explores how CRM principles can strengthen communication in postnatal care.

The research objective assesses the impact of CRM training on communication practices among healthcare professionals in the postnatal ward. A mixed-methods design was employed involving 62 postnatal healthcare professionals. Census sampling ensured full participation due to the unit's small workforce. Data were collected through surveys, interviews, and structured observations, using standardised tools and pre- and post-training assessments. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative insights were derived through thematic analysis.

Post-training results indicate measurable improvement in communication efficiency among staff. Qualitative feedback highlighted increased confidence in information sharing and conflict resolution. The findings further underscore the importance of sustained training and organisational commitment to maintaining positive behavioural change.

The study demonstrates that CRM training is an effective strategy for improving communication and collaboration within postnatal healthcare settings. By providing empirical evidence from a real-world hospital environment, it contributes to the limited literature on CRM applications in non-aviation domains. The research offers practical implications for healthcare policymakers, administrators, and practitioners seeking to enhance patient safety through structured communication programs. Future studies are encouraged to evaluate the long-term sustainability and scalability of CRM interventions across broader healthcare contexts.

**Keywords:** Crew Resource Management (CRM), Postnatal Care, Healthcare Communication, Patient Safety, Interdisciplinary Collaboration, Team Training, Seychelles Hospital

## **The Effects of Employee Appraisal and Recognition on Organisational Performance in Zimbabwe**

**Itayi Memory Miti**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

Employee performance appraisal and recognition systems have become a necessary component in human resource best practices seeking to increase productivity and skills retention. In Zimbabwe, organisations are increasingly demanding the use of performance appraisal and staff rewards in the quest for organisational success. The purpose of this research is to (1) examine the correlation between employee appraisal practices and organisational performance, and (2) evaluate the effect of employee recognition on employee motivation and productivity of Zimbabwean businesses.

A quantitative method was utilised with a standardised questionnaire being administered to 50 workers in different sectors in Harare. Descriptive statistics and regression analysis were conducted on the data with the aim of establishing the direction and strength of relationships. The research confirmed that there exists a strong correlation between frequent employee appraisal and recognition and organisational performance. Additionally, appraisal and recognition enhance employee retention by emphasising the company's commitment to addressing their needs and fostering development.

The research limitation is that it focused on organisations in Harare and is likely not generalisable to rural or informal sectors. The implications are that Zimbabwean organisations need to adopt and formalise transparent forms of appraisal. Policymakers and HR managers should opine about using recognition-based incentives as tools for increasing workforce engagement and performance. This research provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of employee recognition and appraisal systems in a less-examined setting. It provides a useful model for companies seeking to reconcile human capital strategies with performance objectives within developing economies.

**Keywords:** Employee Appraisal, Recognition, Organisational Performance, Human Resource Management

**Sustainable Development and Humanitarian Actions in Rural Households  
of Rwanda to Graduate People out of Extreme Poverty**

**Jean de Bonheur Munyandamutsa**  
**Unicaf University in Zambia**

The research explores the effectiveness of sustainable development and humanitarian interventions to improve the livelihoods of rural households in Rwanda, with the ultimate goal of lifting people out of extreme poverty. Despite significant national strengths to alleviate poverty, a considerable portion of Rwanda's rural population remains vulnerable, with limited access to basic services, economic opportunities, and long-term resilience strategies. The study digs deep and tracks how different approaches, namely, sector development programs and graduation programs, all contribute to poverty alleviation and social transformation in rural settings.

Using mixed methods, the research sized up selected rural districts in Rwanda where these two types of interventions have been implemented. Data were collected through household surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews with program participants, government officials, and development practitioners. The analysis was conducted on key indicators such as food security, income generation and access to social services.

Findings showed that while the poverty graduation approach is critical in responding positively to immediate crises and shocks, such as household food security, livelihood promotion and health emergencies, or natural disasters, they often lack long-term sustainability and integration with community development goals. On the other hand, sustainable development initiatives that prioritise skills development, agricultural productivity, access to microfinance, and social protection tend to yield more enduring outcomes, empowering households to become self-reliant and resilient.

The study concludes with the importance of aligning poverty graduation efforts with sustainable development frameworks to avoid dependency and encourage long-term impact. It also underscores the role of community engagement, government coordination, and context-specific solutions in promoting the effectiveness of both types of interventions. By comparing the outcomes of the two approaches through the implemented programs, the research provides critical insights into how Rwanda and similar low-income countries can design more holistic poverty reduction strategies that balance immediate relief with sustainable growth.

## **Effect of Talent Management and Work Engagement on Employee Retention in Kenya's Petroleum Industry**

**Florence Masai**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

Human capital is the backbone of an organisation, hence it should be handled diligently as an asset to the company. Through their unique skills, human capital creates a competitive edge for the organisation amongst other players in the industry. The petroleum industry in Kenya is a heavy investment sector requiring specialized skilled employees. This industry also drives other sectors in the country, such as manufacturing, transport and tourism, amongst others, hence has a wider range of impact. Due to globalisation of the job market, employees are able to change jobs to companies they perceive as offering better packages that suit their needs. Organisations are therefore using talent management and work engagement initiatives to ensure that the hired employees are retained for a longer period of time.

The study examined the effect of talent management on employee retention and work engagement. Additionally, the mediating role of work engagement on the association between talent management and employee retention is in line with the resource-based view, job embeddedness and social exchange theories. The study employs a mixed method approach and an explanatory sequential design, with the quantitative data being collected and analysed first, followed by qualitative data. The participants were selected using random sampling for the quantitative phase and purposive sampling for the qualitative phase. Data were collected using questionnaires from 269 respondents and 16 interviews. Statistical and content analysis were used to process the quantitative and qualitative data, respectively.

The results indicate a positive correlation between talent management and work engagement, while work engagement positively mediated the relation between talent management and employee retention. Talent management and employee retention had an insignificant relation. Conversely, qualitative data indicated that talent management supported employee retention through the enhancement of skills. Talent management improved work engagement through proper role assignment, while work engagement enhanced employee retention through a sense of belonging. These results are useful to the human resource practitioners in petroleum companies in employing strategies that retain employees. Future studies should explore the effect of talent management on employee retention in similar contexts to validate the results.

Keywords: Talent Management, Employee Retention, Work Engagement, Petroleum Industry

## Session 3 | Finance, Development, and Socio-Economic Outcomes

### **Examining How Academic Achievement Improves the Socio-Economic Status of Households in Rural Communities: The Case of Maala Community of Namwala District in Zambia**

**Gibson Mweemba**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

This study investigates the economic effects of education in the Maala community of Namwala District, Zambia, with a particular emphasis on ways in which formal education affects wealth accumulation, social mobility, and income production in an economy that depends on cattle. The goal of the study is to determine if educational attainment improves the socioeconomic standing of rural households. The specific goals are to: (1) evaluate educational attainment and its effect on household income and productivity; (2) investigate the connection between educational attainment and the ownership of cattle as a wealth indicator; and (3) investigate how the community views education as a means of achieving economic progress.

To combine descriptive and correlational methods, a mixed-methods design was employed. One hundred eighty-six (186) respondents participated in structured surveys to gather quantitative data, and one hundred (100) key informant interviews were used to gather qualitative data. The data analysis process included thematic analysis of the qualitative replies and statistical interpretation of the income and education factors.

According to findings, younger generations increasingly see education as crucial for innovation and diversification in the livestock industry, even if many financially successful cattle owners have no formal education. The broader community perception is that formal education does not necessarily guarantee financial returns in the Maala Community.

This study is innovative because it examines the economic value of education in a unique rural context where wealth is primarily defined by cattle ownership rather than formal employment. It also contributes to scholarly knowledge by providing empirical evidence from a rural Zambian setting that is rarely captured in education economics research. Data obtained will help policymakers to design a curriculum that responds to the needs of society and improves the socioeconomic status of people.

This study makes a theoretical contribution by integrating Human Capital Theory with Social Dominance Theory to explain socioeconomic outcomes in a culturally unique setting, demonstrating how Social Dominance Theory influences access to education in hierarchical pastoral communities, where wealth and social status have historically been derived from cattle rather than schooling.

Keywords: Rural Economy, Maala Community, Education, Socioeconomic Position, Zambia

**Digital Vulnerabilities in Microfinance:  
A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Social Media Risks and Performance Outcomes**

**Shepherd Magombedze  
Unicaf University in Zambia**

Social media platforms create client engagement opportunities while introducing vulnerabilities threatening institutional stability. Despite global social media penetration reaching 4.33 billion users, microfinance institutions in developing economies remain vulnerable due to limited digital literacy and inadequate risk management frameworks. This research specifically aims to determine the collective and individual effects of five distinct social media risk dimensions: financial, reputational, cybersecurity, legal, and misinformation risks, on the business performance of microfinance institutions in Zimbabwe's emerging digital economy.

The study employed a quantitative approach using validated questionnaires administered to 344 participants across 41 credit-only microfinance institutions. Advanced regression analysis established risk-performance relationships, providing robust empirical evidence for digital financial services vulnerabilities. Analysis revealed that social media risks collectively account for 24% of business performance variation, establishing significant empirical relationships between digital risk exposure and institutional outcomes. Reputational risk emerged as the most critical threat, followed by cybersecurity and misinformation risks, while financial and legal risks showed moderate negative effects. This risk hierarchy provides quantitative evidence for prioritising resources and developing targeted management strategies.

These findings contribute theoretically to digital risk management literature by establishing the first comprehensive risk classification and prioritisation for social media vulnerabilities in microfinance, while offering practical frameworks for evidence-based resource allocation. The research advances financial inclusion policy by demonstrating how systematic risk management enables safer digital transformation in developing economies. Results provide an empirically grounded roadmap for understanding and managing digital vulnerabilities in resource-constrained financial institutions. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies examining risk evolution patterns and developing predictive models for proactive risk management in emerging digital financial ecosystems.

**Keywords:** Social Media Risks, Microfinance Institutions, Digital Vulnerabilities, Risk Management, Financial Inclusion, Developing Economies, Empirical Risk Analysis

## **Towards Enhancing the Performance of Pharmaceutical Drug Manufacturers in Zimbabwe**

**Ruth Chapereka**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

This study aims to improve the performance of pharmaceutical drug manufacturers in Zimbabwe. Data was collected from twelve (12) pharmaceutical drug manufacturers, the Ministry of Health & Child Care, the Ministry of Industry & Commerce, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and the Medicines Control Authority of Zimbabwe. The study uses a positivist approach, employs a quantitative research method, and adopts a correlational research design.

The objectives are to identify the parameters that measure the performance of pharmaceutical drug manufacturers in Zimbabwe, the factors influencing their performance, and the challenges they face. COVID-19 revealed Zimbabwe's heavy reliance on imported medicines. Border closures caused serious shortages of essential drugs.

The results indicated a positive correlation between the performance of pharmaceutical manufacturers and their financial, intellectual, and technological capabilities. The results also showed a negative correlation between government support, all independent variables, and the performance of local pharmaceutical manufacturers. Internal capabilities were found to significantly impact the performance of local pharmaceutical manufacturers. The research offers insights into areas that should be prioritised to strengthen local pharmaceutical manufacturing. Improving manufacturer performance can increase the availability of domestically produced medicines and reduce dependence on imports. These findings support the goals of Zimbabwe's National Development Strategies 1 and 2, which aim to strengthen local pharmaceutical production and reduce reliance on imported medicines.

Keywords: Pharmaceutical Manufacturing, Drug Manufacturing, Pharmaceutical Industry

## Session 4 | Governance, Risk Management, and Public Sector Performance

### **Assessing Fraud and the Use of Strategic Management Tools to Mitigate Same in State-Owned Enterprises in Ghana**

**Diana Awinsum Yemdago**  
**Unicaf University in Zambia**

This study examines the strategic role of corporate governance as a proactive tool for mitigating fraud within State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in Ghana. While corporate governance in public institutions is often approached as a compliance obligation, this research repositions it as a dynamic control mechanism capable of detecting and deterring fraudulent activity. Drawing on international governance standards from the OECD and the British Institute of Corporate Governance, the study focuses on four critical dimensions of board functionality: effective processes, cognitive conflict, effort norms, and board competencies.

Using a convergent mixed-methods design, the research integrates survey data from 68 board members with in-depth interviews from senior executives across multiple SEs. Quantitative results, analysed through t-tests, ANOVA, and regression, demonstrate that robust governance practices, particularly high board independence, structured performance evaluation, and diversity of expertise, are associated with fewer instances of audit exceptions and financial irregularities. The qualitative data from 48 interviews complement these findings by highlighting how board culture, communication, and ethical leadership directly shape fraud control outcomes.

To ensure methodological rigour, the study applied Lincoln and Guba's trustworthiness criteria and performed confirmatory factor analyses to validate construct integrity. Triangulation of methods and sources further increases confidence in the study's conclusions.

The findings underscore the importance of rethinking corporate governance as an integrated, strategic pillar of public-sector accountability. Implications extend to policy makers, regulators, and board practitioners seeking to enhance fraud resilience, transparency, and institutional trust. Recommendations include investing in board capacity-building, refining evaluation systems, and embedding ethical leadership at all levels of governance.

This abstract contributes to ongoing conference dialogues on governance reform, public accountability, and anti-fraud strategies in emerging economies. It is well-suited for panels focused on public administration, finance, or ethics.

**Keywords:** Corporate Governance, Fraud, State-Owned Enterprises, Board Effectiveness, Board Process

## **Managing Enterprise Risks for Sustainability:**

### **A Study on Commercial State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Namibia**

**Ndahafa Frans**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

The global COVID-19 pandemic induced severe operational strain, which significantly compromised the performance of Namibia's Public Sector Corporations (cSOEs). This research provides the first empirical mixed-methods assessment of risk resilience among Namibian cSOEs and Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) viability, offering a novel case study in a resource-limited, post-pandemic context. The main aim was to determine the necessary pathways for strengthening risk practices to ensure the long-term sustainability and value of these vital national entities.

The investigation adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, first collecting quantitative data from a random sample of 384 respondents across eleven cSOEs via a structured survey. This was subsequently complemented by qualitative data from ten purposely selected managers and supervisors via semi-structured interviews. The investigation's findings established that cSOEs faced considerable challenges which substantially impaired their performance. While effective risk management necessitates balancing diverse stakeholder requirements, its full implementation is critically impeded by internal organisational deficiencies such as a significant shortage of risk-trained personnel, obsolete technology, and inadequate documentation.

Existing risk processes demonstrated inherent vulnerabilities, statistically highlighting the absolute necessity for structural flexibility, rigorous contingency planning, and advanced technology to safeguard cSOE stability. Organisational survival relies on contingency and the survival of the fittest principles, asserting that transformational leadership is essential for driving the cultural adaptation required to meet stakeholders' objectives and implement ERM. This offers a critical reflection on established organisational theory, providing empirical evidence that transformational leadership is necessary to operationalise ERM, thereby validating the contingency theory in the context of extreme external turbulence.

In conclusion, building resilience through a robust ERM framework is essential for maintaining cSOE stability in future economic uncertainty. Management boards are therefore urged to strategically allocate resources for comprehensive competency enhancement and modern technological architecture, concurrently establishing standardised protocols for risk communication and documentation to facilitate effective and sustainable ERM integration. Future studies could explore the financial implications of ERM implementation and sustainability, particularly within resource-limited nations.

**Keywords:** Commercial State-Owned Enterprises, Enterprise Risk Management, Risk Management, Sustainability

**Investigating Critical Challenges Leveraging Big Data Analytics for Strategic  
Decisions in Jamaican Public Firms**

**Karel Sophia Dawes**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

Caribbean governments struggle to exploit Big Data Analytics (BDA) as fuel for successful strategic business decisions. As Jamaica pushes to modernise its public sector to achieve Vision 2030 for sustainable developments via digital transformation, this study investigates the critical challenges preventing Jamaican public firms from leveraging BDA. Adapting the methodologies of quantitative research, the inquiry collected online survey data across 300 ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). The data collected was examined to discover how challenges such as ethics, privacy and security concerns (EPS), legacy systems (LS), poor data quality (PDQ), organisational culture (OC) and lack of awareness to BDA technologies (LOA) associates with public education on the use of data (PEdu), removal of bureaucracy in the decision making process (RB), investments in BDA technologies (IBDA), improvements in data regulations (IDR) and decision maker support (DMS) to leverage BDA technologies.

Results found PDQ to be the most crucial challenge for the Jamaican public sector at this time, reflecting significant and very strong associations between IBDA and PDQ, particularly among finance and planning firms. The study also identifies significant and perfect associations with DMS and OC among environmental firms. These results indicate key areas for the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) to deploy resources to attain its modernisation efforts of creating a more digitally powered, integrated and proactive administration by 2030.

Emphasising both limitations and opportunities for application and future research, the inquiry suggests viable recommendations for governments seeking to exploit disruptive technologies for strategic decisions in digital economies. Aligned with conference themes on socioeconomic impact and organisational growth, the study contributes to the ongoing debate on the exponential growth of big data, advanced BDA technologies, AI integration, and barriers to disruptive technologies in emerging economies.

Keywords: Big Data, Analytics, Strategic Decisions, Privacy, Legacy Systems, Data Quality, Culture, Awareness, Jamaica

DAY 2 | TUESDAY, 17 MARCH 2026

## Business and Management Section

Session 5 | Strategic Management, Innovation, and Enterprise Growth in Emerging Economies

### The Impact of Using Machine Learning on Supply Chain Agility in Retail Businesses

**Marwa Abdellateef**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

Recently, fulfilling customer demands, which keep changing dramatically, has necessitated supply chain agility, especially when working in a fast-growing market. This helps companies pursue competitiveness goals effectively. Hence, utilising technology, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI), enhances the performance of such companies and helps fulfil their goals more efficiently. Hence, the current study aims to investigate the impact of Machine Learning (ML) on boosting the supply chain agility in retail businesses via conducting three case studies on three businesses, i.e., Walmart, Amazon, and Zara.

The sampling technique used was the purposeful sampling one, since these are the three businesses applying ML to the highest degree in Africa. Descriptive research design was used using quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. Case study and observation were utilised as a qualitative data collection tool. Data collected was analysed using the T-test and descriptive statistics and regression.

Findings refer to the statistically significant impact of ML on enhancing inventory, sensitivity to pricing, and predicting demand in the three businesses. This has been attained via managing algorithms that improve supply chain agility. Furthermore, it has been discovered that mastering supply chain agility helps businesses promote their products more effectively. Additionally, they process goods delivery more professionally. Moreover, seasonal changes can be managed more efficiently when relying on ML. These findings lay the foundation for further implementation of ML in more businesses internationally. As well, it opens the door to more investigation in various fields to check the possibility of attaining the same findings. Based on the findings provided, it is highly recommended to conduct more studies on other businesses to investigate the possibility of improving them using ML.

Keywords: Machine Learning, Supply Chain, Agility, Retail Businesses, Artificial Intelligence, Technology

## **Strategic Planning by Small and Medium Enterprises in a Pandemic Context**

**Chitamya Angela**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This study explores the strategic planning approaches adopted by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) during the COVID-19 pandemic. As important players in the global economy, SMEs faced unprecedented disruptions, rendering rigid and dynamic traditional long-term strategic models inadequate amidst extreme uncertainty. This study addresses the limited research on SME strategic planning in crisis contexts by examining resilience strategies in Zambia's hospitality sector.

This research addresses the critical challenge of understanding how SMEs can build resilience and ensure business continuity through effective strategic adaptation during and after a global health crisis. Adopting a qualitative, case study approach to enable an in-depth understanding of strategic adaptation in a real-world crisis, the study conducted semi-structured interviews with 30 SME owners and managers in the hospitality industry in Lusaka, Zambia. Data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify key fundamental shifts, challenges, and success factors. Thematic analysis was most appropriate for identifying emergent patterns across participant experiences.

Findings reveal that flexible and adaptive strategic planning, characterised by rapid digitalisation, diversification of supply chains, and a focus on employee safety and health, was important for survival and business sustainability. Conversely, businesses that adhered to rigid, pre-pandemic strategies faced significant operational and financial difficulties. These findings imply that SMEs must prioritise flexibility as a strategic competency to enhance long-term resilience.

In conclusion, this study contributes new insights into SME resilience in the Zambian hospitality sector, an underexplored context in strategic planning research. The study recommends a new paradigm in SME strategic planning that emphasises flexibility, adaptability, and foresight, enabling businesses to withstand future systemic shocks and thrive. Future research could examine SME strategic adaptation across different industries and regions, or in post-pandemic recovery contexts, to generalise these findings.

**Keywords:** Strategic Planning, Small and Medium Enterprises, Adaptability, Flexibility, Survival, Resilience, Crisis Management

**Exploring Policy Implementation for Small and Medium Enterprises' Value Chain Integration  
in Industrialisation in Malawi**

**Richard Chikalipo**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This study aims to explore the implementation practices of the SME and National Industry policies in Malawi to determine key factors that influence SMEs' participation in industrialisation. Globally, SMEs are recognised as drivers of industrialisation and economic development, prompting governments to formulate and implement collaborative policies and strategies. Despite the existence of SME and industrialisation policies in Malawi, unclear and weak implementation strategies are a hindrance to SMEs' integration in industrialisation, creating a gap in understanding policy implementation practices, as limited studies have been conducted on policy implementation. With an interpretivist underpinning, this qualitative grounded theory study employed semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in collecting data from 33 participants from MDAs, SME affiliates, industrial firms and SMEs. Data were transcribed, coded and analysed thematically. Topic themes included familiarity with policies and implementation, perceptions about implementation practices and improvement strategies.

Findings reveal that policy distinctiveness, environmental and administrative factors interrelate in influencing policy implementation. Hence, gaps emerged between policy existence and stakeholders' awareness and knowledge, signalling weak implementation, besides recognising donor dependency, language and bureaucratic tendencies as hindering implementation. Furthermore, coordination, role clarity, and implementation structures were inconsistent. Opportunities for improvement include the establishment of an SME policy implementation unit, government-private sector investment partnerships and an SME development bank. The study's innovation lies in demystifying SME policy implementation practices and uncovering moderating factors to policy outcomes on SMEs' participation in industrialization, shifting focus from policy formulation to its implementation, since few studies have explored this area.

Implications are that the weak implementation of formulated policies stifles participation of SMEs in industrialisation and economic growth. Hence, the government should focus more on implementation. Further, the study provides a rich contextual case study from Malawi, which can contribute to policy or strategy implementation theories. The limitation is that findings may not be generalised due to the use of a small sample for this qualitative study. In the future, it is recommended that a longitudinal study be conducted to track progress if the recommendations are adopted. Upon reflection, the SME policy implementation practice challenges the belief that policies, once formulated, automatically yield the intended outcomes, underscoring the need for more research on industry-specific policy implementation. Recommendations include creating an SME ministry or task force, promoting decentralisation, enhancing policy dissemination and vigorous monitoring and evaluation, and conducting feasibility studies for an SME development bank and private/public joint shareholding ventures.

Keywords: Implementation, SMEs, Value Chain, Strategy, Policy, Formulation

## **The Effects of Financial Leverage on the Growth of SMEs in Kenya**

**Isaiah Opanga Maisiba**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are critical drivers of Kenya's economy through job creation and innovation. However, many fail before their third anniversary, following limited access to finance. Financial leverage provides essential liquidity and capital for expansion, but excessive debt often undermines growth. This study considers how financial leverage affects the growth of SMEs through capital, sales turnover, assets, and overall firm growth, while integrating Critical Success Factors (CSFs) as mediating variables. Further, the research draws on four established theories: the Structure Theory, the Pecking Order Theory, the Trade-Off Theory, and the Theory of Financial Intermediation and is anchored on the Lifecycle Approach, a framework which highlights the evolving financing needs of SMEs across start-up, growth, maturity, and decline stages.

Using a qualitative research design, surveys and interviews with 384 SME owners, managers and practitioners across five Kenyan cities were conducted. Data collection focused on financing decisions, capital structures, and growth outcomes across the lifecycle. Results indicate that financing decisions vary significantly across the SME lifecycle, with start-ups relying more on internal funds while declining firms face limited refinancing options. Sectoral analysis shows that highly leveraged SMEs in trade, manufacturing and auto maintenance underperform, especially without collateral. Firms with optimal capital mixes and stronger CSFs achieve better growth outcomes.

In conclusion, SME growth in Kenya is best explained through an integrated framework combining financing theories, lifecycle considerations and CSFs. The study recommends SME owners maintain dashboards to monitor leverage and collateral, ensuring an optimal capital structure for sustainable growth. Future research could explore cultural and institutional contexts, specific sector analyses, longitudinal studies and digital finance innovations within SMEs.

**Keywords:** Financial Leverage, SMEs, Growth, Capital Structure, Survey, Focus Group Discussions, Sustainability

**The Effectiveness of SMEs' Microfinancing Programmes on SMEs' Access to Finance  
in a Small Island Developing State (SIDS): Seychelles**

**Audrey Claude Francis  
Unicaf University in Zambia**

In 2014, the Seychelles Government introduced a Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) microfinancing programme to assist these SMEs in accessing finance. This research aims to establish if this programme, currently adopted by all banks in Seychelles, is effective and fulfilling the Government's objective of improving SMEs' access to financing so that they can help in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015. To fulfil this aim, the objectives of this study are to examine and investigate the obstructing variables for SMEs to access funds, measure how effective is this microfinancing programme, as well as provide possible suggestions on how to develop a new programme that will improve SMEs' access to financing and help in fulfilling the SDGs, as perceived by SMEs owners/managers and SMEs' microfinance providers/enablers.

A triangulation/mixed research approach with an explanatory sequential design methodology was used as a research framework to empirically investigate the correlation of six independent variables. The quantitative approach used online closed-ended self-administered questionnaires issued to SME owners/managers, by utilising sample size Raosoft calculators (Raosoft, 2004). To allow for triangulation and give more weight towards confirming the quantitative findings, a few in-depth face-to-face interviews guided by an interview schedule, using a purposive sampling method, were conducted with selected SMEs' microfinance providers/enablers (banks and policymakers in the government).

A deductive reasoning was adopted to test and validate the credit rationing theory. Out of the six independent variables from the conceptual framework, only three were found to have a statistically significant influence on SMEs' access to funds: awareness level of the different SMEs microfinancing programmes available, collateral requirement, and education level of the owner/manager. These findings have a significant implication in practice for SMEs, financial institutions and government as they can tap on gathered data to understand the sector deeper, and create more suitable programmes, schemes and policies aimed at creating an enabling environment for SMEs to achieve their designated SDG goals. This study is among the first studies done in Seychelles, hence the substantial data collected makes a significant contribution to the academic knowledge base, as the scarce Seychelles literature/research that exists currently. Given this topic's originality, it makes one wonder if the Government has not been policing and investing blindly in SMEs with this 2014 microfinancing programme, as there has been no prior real base for its effectiveness measurement. In conclusion, various recommendations such as establishing mitigating mechanisms to circumvent the lack of collateral, increasing programmes' awareness, effectively communicating with customers and focus group discussions, should be considered by the Government, policymakers and microfinance providers/enablers to create a better enabling environment for SMEs.

Keywords: SMEs, SDGs, Policing, SMEs' Microfinancing Programme, Finance, SIDS, Seychelles

**The Influence of Promotional Gifts on Consumer Behaviour in Banks and  
Pension Organisations in Lagos, Nigeria**

**Olutoye Olutayo**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

The competitive financial landscape in Nigeria has led banks and pension organisations to deploy promotional gifts (PGs) as marketing tools without exploring the psychological and behavioural effects of these gifts on their customers' decision-making processes. In investigating how PG can incentivise customer acquisition and retention in Lagos' commercial banks and pension organisations, this study draws on theories of reasoned action, the mere exposure effect, social exchange, and reciprocity.

Using a multistage random sampling technique, 395 bank and pension firm customers from Ifako-Ijaiye and Ibeju-Lekki local government areas were selected for an electronically administered cross-sectional, quantitative survey. Employing a correlational design, we tested seven hypotheses using multiple linear regression, ANOVA, Pearson's correlation, and t-tests to analyse associations between consumer perception of PG, personal characteristics, service procurement, and retention.

Findings reveal that PG are perceived as relational tools with a significant correlation between PG and customer retention, mediated by gift perception, offering actionable implications for financial organisations serious about standing out from the competition. The study recommends integrating customer segmentation profiles and culturally relevant gifting strategies into customer relationship management. Adopting a deductive lens in exploring the socio-cultural underpinnings of gifting, this study extends established consumer behaviour theories, contributing new generalisable insights to relationship marketing and consumer behaviour scholarship by contextualising the practical value and role of PG within the underexplored financial service sector in Nigeria and emerging economies. The research generates new perspectives into the mechanisms through which PG, as a marketing incentive, fosters trust and long-term loyalty, contributing to both academic theory and industry practice in emerging markets.

Keywords: Consumer Loyalty, Customer Retention, Emerging Markets, Financial Services, Promotional Gifts

## Social Sciences and Education Section

### Session 6 | Strategic Innovations in Education and Infrastructure Development

#### **Modelling the Inspection of Storey Buildings Under Construction Using a Knowledge-Based System Approach**

**John Oloo Gwendo**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

Kenya's rapid urban growth has accelerated the rise of multi-storey buildings, bringing attention to the shortcomings of conventional inspection approaches that remain manual, subjective, and susceptible to inefficiency and knowledge erosion. This study set out to address these issues by creating and validating a knowledge-based system (KBS) tailored for construction inspection, with the aim of strengthening compliance, safeguarding structural integrity, and capturing expert know-how for reuse.

The research followed the Design Science Research framework and pursued three core goals: first, to examine prevailing inspection practices and identify stakeholder requirements; second, to design and implement a practical, user-oriented KBS; and third, to evaluate the prototype's usability and performance. Data were obtained from a multi-case study conducted in Nakuru City involving 47 professionals across the construction and regulatory spectrum. Their inputs shaped the development of a modular, rule-driven system that delivers step-by-step guidance, clear decision support, and standardised documentation integrated with regulatory workflows.

Testing outcomes demonstrated that the system improved the consistency of inspections, reduced reliance on subjective judgment, and encouraged organisational learning by preserving and reapplying tacit expertise. Stakeholders further recognised its value in reinforcing safety oversight and accountability while supporting ongoing governance and sustainability reforms.

This work contributes to research, practice, and policy by highlighting how intelligent, knowledge-driven systems can transform inspection processes in resource-constrained contexts, while also offering direction for embedding digital tools into regulatory frameworks and advancing future research on sustainable construction oversight.

**Keywords:** Knowledge-Based System, Building Inspection, Multi-Storey Buildings, Design Science Research, Rule-Based Reasoning, Construction Regulation, Knowledge Management, Digital Transformation

## **Donor Partners' Provision of Endogenous Educational Inputs:**

### **Examining Opportunities and Challenges to the Enhancement and Sustainability of Quality Education in Rwandan Basic Education**

**Habyarimana Heli**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

The study identifies types of endogenous educational inputs provided by donor partners in basic education schools, examines the extent to which the provided inputs contribute to producing quality outputs, points out shortfalls that deviate the inputs from achieving outputs, and examines how educational stakeholders take advantage of the provided inputs for the enhancement and sustainability of quality outputs.

Through the constructivism paradigm and correlational design, the study adopted the mixed methods approach and was conducted in Kamonyi and Nyarugenge Districts. Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used to select 140 teachers, 14 headteachers, 2 district directors of education, 10 representatives of donor partners, and 1 government official in charge of teacher management. Data was collected with the questionnaire, focus group discussion, and individual interviews. Quantitative data were analysed via descriptive statistics using SPSS Software, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data through NVivo Software.

Donor organisations and projects were identified as providers of capacity development to teachers and headteachers, and facilities and instructional materials to schools and students in need. The inputs contributed to increasing school internal efficiency, access to education (91.9%), improving equity in education (84.7%), increasing learners' enrolment (79%), decreasing drop-out (67%), and enhancing learners' success in national examinations (88.7%). Coordination weaknesses, mismatching with the curriculum and beneficiaries' needs, temporality and low coverage, lack of continuity, poor or lack of use, and pursuit of divergent interests were pointed out as impediments to the expected quality outputs. The study suggested contextualisation of the inputs, their planning and coordination, long-term vision, and expansion for the maximisation of outputs.

The study contributes to quality education through better utilisation and taking advantage of endogenous educational inputs provided by donor partners.

Keywords: Endogenous Educational Inputs, Quality Education, Rwanda, Basic Education

**An Investigation into the Use of Visual Arts Strategies in Learning Performance  
of Teacher Trainees in Kenya**

**Thomas Chunguli Konya  
Unicaf University in Malawi**

As Kenya transitions to a competency-based curriculum, this study examined the perspectives of teacher educators within Primary Teacher Training Colleges on the integration of visual arts strategies into teacher education, highlighting the growing importance of creative and multimodal teaching approaches in preparing future educators.

The findings established a connection between visual arts and several key learning outcomes, including creativity, aesthetic production, collaboration, self-efficacy, and digital practice. This underscores its potential to promote holistic development and adequately prepare future educators for dynamic, multimodal instruction. Data were gathered through structured interviews with four teacher educators from selected PTTCs. Ethical approval was obtained from the UNICAF Ethics Committee, National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation in Kenya, and the participating institutions, with informed consent secured from all participants. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed using Otter, and coded with Taguette to identify recurring themes. Thematic analysis was facilitated by Microsoft Excel and framed within three theoretical perspectives: Discipline-Based Arts Education, Visual Culture Theory, and Connectivity Theory.

The findings indicated that teacher educators demonstrated extensive expertise in Visual Arts Studies and employed a variety of instructional methods, such as studio-based learning and project work, to promote creativity and critical thinking. Despite systemic challenges such as over-enrolment, understaffing, and limited resources that hindered effective curriculum delivery, educators demonstrated resilience and innovation by advocating for policy reforms and institutional support underscoring the urgent need for systemic investment in visual arts education and prompting future research into scalable strategies for resource optimisation, professional development, and the long-term impact of visual arts integration on teacher preparedness and student outcomes

Keywords: Visual Arts Strategies, Integration, Teacher Educator Perspectives, Learning Outcomes, Competency-Based Curriculum

**Impact of Curriculum Implementation on Entrepreneurial Skills Acquisition:  
An Evaluation of Graduates' Competency Development in South-South Nigeria Colleges of Education**

**Florence Aniekan Abraham  
Unicaf University in Zambia**

Graduate unemployment in Nigeria remains persistently high despite the introduction of entrepreneurship education. In South-South Nigeria, Colleges of Education (CoEs) face particular scrutiny as their graduates report limited readiness for self-employment, business venturing, or job creation. This study investigates the extent to which entrepreneurship curricula in CoEs enable graduates to acquire entrepreneurial skills, with a focus on skill acquisition for enhanced business ventures.

A mixed-methods design with concurrent triangulation was applied. Data were collected from 102 final-year Business Education students (stratified random sampling across three CoEs) and 6 lecturers (purposive sampling). Instruments included a 4-point Likert-scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analysed using chi-square tests, while thematic analysis was applied to qualitative interviews.

The findings reveal weak entrepreneurial preparedness. Quantitatively, 42.1% of students disagreed that their programmes facilitated skill acquisition, while 44.1% reported inadequate business-start-up skills. Chi-square results ( $\chi^2=106.93$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) confirmed significant differences in outcomes across institutions. Qualitative data highlighted insufficient practical exposure, under-qualified instructors, and infrastructural deficits, with lecturers rating students' practical competence as "3 out of 10." To close this gap, CoEs must treat entrepreneurship education as a capital investment, ensuring alignment between objectives, pedagogy, resources, and competence-based assessments. Practical interventions such as innovation labs, business incubation, and industry-linked mentorship are essential.

The study concludes that weak curriculum implementation, rather than the concept of entrepreneurship education itself, explains the limited skills acquisition. When aligned with Human Capital Theory, Curriculum Theory, and Constructivist principles, entrepreneurship education can equip graduates with the competencies required for self-reliance and sustainable economic development.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurial Skills, Curriculum Implementation, Skills Acquisition, Business Venturing, Colleges of Education, South-South Nigeria

**The Influence of Headteachers' Transformational Leadership on Teacher Job Satisfaction  
in Public Secondary Schools in Rusizi District, Rwanda**

**Jean Bosco Uwizeyimana  
Unicaf University in Zambia**

Teacher job satisfaction is a critical factor influencing instructional quality, student achievement, and teacher retention. In Rwanda, public secondary schools, particularly in rural districts such as Rusizi, continue to experience persistent challenges related to teacher morale, high turnover, and inadequate professional support, all of which negatively affect educational outcomes. Leadership practices have been identified as a central determinant of these issues. International research demonstrates that transformational leadership, characterised by charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration, enhances teacher engagement, commitment, and satisfaction. However, empirical research on how these leadership behaviours influence teacher job satisfaction in the Rwandan context remains limited.

This study investigates the influence of headteachers' transformational leadership on teacher job satisfaction in Rusizi District's public secondary schools and examines how contextual factors moderate this relationship. A convergent parallel mixed-methods design will be employed. Quantitatively, 145 teachers will be selected using proportional stratified random sampling across 17 schools, with all headteachers included. Qualitatively, 12 to 20 teachers and all headteachers will be purposively sampled for in-depth interviews until data saturation. Research instruments will include a structured questionnaire and a semi-structured interview guide.

The study is expected to demonstrate a positive relationship between transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction, moderated by contextual variables such as school resources and community expectations. Findings will inform leadership training, teacher motivation, and retention strategies, contributing to improved educational quality in Rwanda's public schools.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Teacher Job Satisfaction, Rwanda, Mixed Methods, Educational Leadership

## Session 7 | Inclusive Education and Special Needs

### **Correlating Factors of Learning Performance of Exceptional Education Needs Students: Case of Six Selected Special Schools in Southwest Nigeria**

**Morenike Iyinjesu Onaolapo**  
**Unicaf University in Zambia**

This study investigates the correlating factors of learning performance among exceptional education needs students (EENS) in special schools, with a specific focus on six selected schools in the Southwest region of Nigeria.

The main objective of this descriptive and experimental study is to examine the correlating factors influencing the learning performance of EENS within a special school (SS) scenery considering school-related, students-related, and social-related conditions/factors, and develop a framework for teaching and learning based on the correlating factors of learning performance identified that could be adapted to integrated learning conditions for enhanced inclusive educational practice.

To achieve the purpose of this study, four research questions are formulated, and hypotheses are developed to establish whether there are significant relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable considered for this study. Through the employment of a mixed-methods research approach and the use of a multistage sampling procedure, 222 participants were drawn from six special schools in three States of Southwest Nigeria, directly involving 6 special school administrators and 96 special educators, and indirectly involving 120 EENS through a retrospective-causal comparative analysis of students' performance using their dossiers.

The findings established a strong relationship between the study's dependent and independent variables. By critically examining the correlating factors of the performance of EENS in special schools, the study generates hands-on and valuable insights that will help in ascertaining and identifying EENS learning performance determinants, understanding their effects, and help in developing a framework that could be applied in segregated and integrated classrooms for enhanced EENS learning management, improved overall performance at school, abridged point-of-enrolment rejection and withdrawal in integrated schools, and ultimately promote a more effective and result-oriented inclusive education operation.

Keywords: Exceptional Education Needs Students (EENS), Exceptional Education Need Children (EENC), Learning Performance (LP), Correlating Factors, Special Schools (SS), Segregated Practice (SP), and Integrated Classroom (IC), Inclusive Education (IE), Dependent Variable and Independent Variables

**Investigation into Inclusive Pedagogy Teaching (Autism Spectrum)  
in a Science GCSE Classroom in the United Kingdom (England)**

**Olubayo Olawale Oyewole**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This research addresses the critical question of which pedagogical approaches can enhance comprehension, participation, and engagement of autistic students in science lessons in England. This study adopts a qualitative research approach using semi-structured interviews and classroom observations with 10 science teachers, 4 teaching assistants and 1 medical paediatrician to help contextualise interview data by illustrating how strategies are implemented in practice.

Interview transcripts and observation notes were analysed using thematic analysis, a systematic process of coding data to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes. The study revealed several key themes, teachers consistently emphasised that the use of visual aids significantly enhanced autistic students' understanding of scientific concepts. Both interviews and observations highlighted that autistic students thrived in classrooms with clear routines, structured lesson plans, and explicit instructions. Many teachers reported adapting the classroom environment to minimise sensory overload. Participants noted that tailoring instruction to each student's unique strengths and challenges was crucial for engagement and comprehension. Teachers identified difficulties in facilitating group work or peer collaboration due to social communication differences in autistic students, suggesting a need for explicit social skills support alongside academic instruction.

The findings from this study underscore the critical need for science teachers in England to adopt flexible, student-centered pedagogies that accommodate the unique learning profiles of autistic students. These investigation insights contribute to ongoing efforts to create more inclusive science classrooms that not only follow national education policies but also foster equitable learning opportunities. The study highlights that inclusion is not merely about physical placement but requires thoughtful pedagogical adjustments tailored to autistic students' needs.

While this study provides valuable qualitative insights, further research could explore the long-term impact of these pedagogical approaches on autistic students' academic achievement and self-confidence in science. Additionally, investigating the perspectives of autistic students themselves, and their peers, could deepen understanding of social dynamics and collaborative learning in inclusive settings. Expanding the research to include diverse school contexts across England would also help identify systemic barriers and best practices for wider application. Ultimately, this research lays the groundwork for developing evidence-based, autism-friendly teaching frameworks that empower educators and improve educational outcomes in science education.

## **A Phenomenological Study of Mothers Who Care for Children with Autism in Trinidad and Tobago**

**Silina Natasha Edward-Hinds**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

Statistical data worldwide continue to show an increase in the number of people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This study is a phenomenological study of twenty (20) mothers between the ages of thirty (35) and seventy-three (73) caring for children diagnosed with ASD in Trinidad and Tobago. A registry for persons diagnosed with ASD in Trinidad and Tobago is still forthcoming. The frustrations and lived experiences of these mothers are unknown to the public and other relevant authorities. The challenges include acceptance of their children's condition, rejection by families and the wider community, inadequate support services, which in turn lead to stress, anxiety, isolation, and other discomfort for mothers. These mothers privately fund all their children's therapies, education, and all other needs, as the grant available is minuscule in relation to their spending. Services in the public sector are inadequate to accommodate their needs. The difficulties faced by these mothers have impacted their social, economic, emotional, and psychological well-being, reducing many to experience only the first tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

For this qualitative study, data were collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews and audio recordings. The data will be analysed using an interpretive phenomenological approach, and themes will emerge to reveal significant findings.

This study aims to raise awareness about the challenges faced by mothers who care for children with ASD and contribute valuable data to inform policy decisions by government and non-governmental organisations in Trinidad and Tobago.

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Challenges, Mothers, Phenomenology, Awareness, Policy Decisions

## **The Perception of Teachers Towards Inclusive Education in The Bahamas**

**Carlotta Alexis Simms**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This qualitative phenomenological study examines the perceptions of teachers in The Bahamas regarding inclusive education, focusing on their attitudes, experiences, and willingness to adopt inclusive practices. As education systems around the world adopt inclusive practices to provide fair learning opportunities for all students, understanding teachers' perspectives becomes essential, since they are the primary agents in their implementation.

The study further focused on the theory of reasoned action (TRA) as its theoretical framework. The study was conducted with sixteen public school teachers and administrators who participated in focus groups and semi-structured interviews to collect the data. The participants were purposely selected for the study as they were experienced teachers in the classroom.

The results obtained indicated varying levels of perceptions and acceptance towards inclusion, with positive attitudes often influenced by concerns about limited resources, lack of training, and challenges in meeting diverse learning needs in large classrooms. The findings suggest that teachers are generally supportive of inclusion if they receive adequate professional development, administrative backing, and infrastructural resources. The implications extend to teacher preparation programs, policymakers, and stakeholders aiming to promote inclusive practices throughout the archipelago.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

DAY 3 | WEDNESDAY, 18 MARCH 2026

**Social Sciences and Education Section**

Session 8 | Sanitation and Public Health

**Integrating Faecal Sludge Management into Urban Health Resilience:  
Addressing Sanitation Gaps in Small Municipalities of Bangladesh****Am Tris Hardyanto****Unicaf University in Zambia**

Sanitation failures in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) frequently intensify public health crises. Hidden weaknesses in faecal sludge management (FSM) systems, which silently magnify epidemic risks, have received limited research attention and remain poorly integrated into health resilience planning.

The present study investigates sanitation-related “fault lines” that increase outbreak vulnerability in small municipalities of Bangladesh. This study develops a framework that links FSM performance with public health systems to reinforce urban resilience. Establishing this connection is essential because systemic sanitation gaps often coincide with weaknesses in epidemic preparedness.

A convergent qualitative synthesis combined insights from WHO After Action Reviews on Ebola, Lassa fever, and cholera with field data from five Pourashavas: Shibganj, Basurhat, Monirampur, Syaistaganj, and Birganj. Evidence from infrastructure assessments, municipal records, and stakeholder interviews highlighted the operational and governance challenges facing FSM systems. This multi-source approach ensured that both global lessons and local realities informed the analysis. The investigation identified ten vulnerabilities, including weak infection prevention and control in healthcare sanitation zones, chronic underfunding of operation and maintenance budgets, delayed desludging, reliance on informal dumping, and gender inequities in sanitation access.

To address these risks, the proposed framework aligns FSM performance indicators such as desludging frequency and treatment efficiency with existing public health surveillance systems. Such integration facilitates early outbreak detection and enables timely, targeted interventions that reduce the spread of disease. Embedding FSM into health preparedness provides a pathway to strengthen epidemic resilience, advance equity-sensitive sanitation planning, and accelerate progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 6.2. The findings contribute practical guidance for policymakers, municipal authorities, and WASH practitioners engaged in urban health and sanitation planning across LMIC contexts.

**Keywords:** Faecal Sludge Management, Urban Sanitation, Public Health, Outbreak Preparedness, Infection Prevention, Epidemic Resilience, Bangladesh, Sustainable Development Goals

## **Bridging Knowledge–Practice Gaps in Preventing Childhood Parasitic Infection:**

### **Evidence from Rural Rwanda**

**Laurette Mushimiyimana**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

Parasitic infections remain a major public health concern among children under five in Rwanda, particularly in rural communities where socioeconomic and environmental risk factors are prevalent. Despite ongoing national deworming campaigns, disparities in coverage and persistent morbidity highlight the need to better understand caregivers' knowledge, perceptions, and practices (KAP). This study seeks to investigate female caregivers' KAP regarding parasitic infection prevention and to examine socioeconomic and environmental determinants of deworming uptake and child health outcomes in the Southern Province of Rwanda

A cross sectional survey is being conducted among female caregivers of under-five children across four rural districts. Caregivers include caregivers' demographics, KAP, socioeconomic status (Ubudehe category), household environment, and child health indicators. Descriptive statistics will summarise KAP and health outcomes. Chi-square tests will be used to examine associations between deworming uptake, socioeconomic status, and district of residence. Logistic and Poisson regression models will identify predictors of deworming programs, preventive practices and childhood diarrhoea.

As data collection is still in progress, findings are not yet available. It is anticipated, however, that the study will provide evidence on existing knowledge-practice gaps, socioeconomic inequities, and district level disparities in deworming coverage. The results are expected to inform targeted interventions that strengthen community health worker outreach, ensure equitable campaign coverage across Ubudehe categories, and integrate deworming with WASH initiatives to improve child health outcomes in rural Rwanda.

Keywords: Parasitic Infections, Caregivers, Deworming, Ubudehe, Equity, Rwanda, WASH, Under-Five Children

## Session 9 | Student Achievement and Support

### **Study of Factors That Influence Secondary School Students' Academic Achievement in Science Subjects: The Case of Lilongwe District, Malawi**

**Gurusamy Pillai Kalyana Sundaram**  
**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This study investigates the influence of study habits, school organisational climate, and socio-economic background on students' academic achievement in science subjects in secondary schools.

Poverty and slow economic growth are common in Sub-Saharan Africa. Learners who have basic science knowledge at the level required become a good source of man power for development. Achieving academic performance in science subjects at the desired level enhances reasoning abilities and problem-solving skills which are essential for addressing real-life challenges. Understanding the factors that affect performance in science subjects is therefore crucial for building a productive society that applies scientific knowledge for development.

A comprehensive literature review guided the investigator for the use of a quantitative, non-experimental design, incorporating descriptive, comparative, and correlational analyses for this study. Multiple-choice questionnaires (MCQ) developed by the researcher and approved by the supervisor were used as research tools. In this design, assessment tests with MCQs in science subjects and MCQs addressing the identified factors are used as dependent variables and independent variables respectively.

Students (participants of the study, about 400) will be chosen using simple random sampling from the schools chosen through stratified sampling from government, community day and private institutions located in both urban and rural areas. It ensures the sample population to represent the total population targeted by the study. Ethical procedures outlined by UNICAF University and local educational authorities are strictly followed.

Data will be analysed by using established statistical procedures and research methodologies. Conclusions will be drawn from the results of these analyses. The study also aims to create pathways for future research in related fields and share the strategies needed to the stakeholders in education for fostering the effort to improve the academic achievement in science subjects.

**The Hybrid Confluence:  
A Conceptual Model for Afro-Euro Advising Integration in Emerging African Universities**

**Dora Dorothy Murasi  
Unicaf University in Zambia**

African universities stand at a crossroads. The old Eurocentric systems they inherited no longer fit the realities or aspirations of their students. As these institutions turn to Afrocentric ways of thinking, academic advising becomes a powerful space for real change. This paper introduces a hybrid advising framework—a model that blends Afrocentric relational ethics, especially the Tete/Sekuru neMuzukuru (Aunt/Uncle–Niece/Nephew) approach grounded in unhu/Ubuntu, with established Eurocentric advising theories. The goal is to support students as whole people, not just in academics but in personal growth too. A simple but ambitious goal.

To build this framework, a convergent parallel mixed-methods study was done at Bindura University of Science Education in Zimbabwe. The study intended to find out how well current advising practices actually serve students' needs. Data was collected from 452 students and 24 advisors using surveys complemented by in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with students, advisors, and community members (Murasi,2025). The results told an interesting story. Students were satisfied with the academic support they were getting from advisors but when it came to understanding departmental policies and finding help to juggle academic and social life they were frustrated. Some patterns stood out: male and older students reported higher satisfaction ( $Z=3.7$ ,  $p=0.0002$ ;  $Z=2.1$ ,  $p=0.0166$ ), Commerce students topped the satisfaction charts, while Education and Social Sciences lagged behind. Results also showed that students lacked advice and support on personal needs. The chi-square test ( $\chi^2=189.95$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) made it clear—advising overwhelmingly focused on academics, with 80% of sessions ignoring the rest of students' lives.

The interviews and focus groups showed students and advisors alike calling out the side-lining of key Afrocentric values, intergenerational mentorship, and genuine community engagement in their advising experiences. To create a balanced advising programme, the study used a hybrid advising framework, offering a practical, contextually rooted blueprint for transforming advising into something richer: a space for identity, relevance, and true student engagement. The paper closes with concrete implications for policy, advising practice, and future research in African higher education.

**Keywords:** Academic Advising, Hybrid Framework, Unhu/Ubuntu, Decolonial Education, Intergenerational Mentorship, African Higher Education

## Session 10 | Education and Digital Transformation

### Comparing the Effectiveness of Traditional Classroom Teaching and Learning vs E-Learning

**Glory Ifiegbu**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

The current study examines the effectiveness of e-learning as compared to traditional classroom instruction considering factors such as students' engagement, accessibility, performance, and cost efficiency. Through the adoption of a mixed method approach involving 120 students and 12 lecturers, the research evaluates the rate at which information and communication technology (ICT) is increasing has transformed the education sector by influencing the methods at which institutions engage with the learners.

The objectives of this research is to:

Examine the benefits and limitations of traditional classroom learning

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of e-learning methods

Identify the differences between e-learning and traditional teaching methods

Recommend the best teaching approach including the potential blended learning

From the research findings and analysis, it shows that e-learning provides better flexibility, accessibility. Both still encounter challenges such as unreliable internet while traditional classroom provides better experience with immediate feedback, students engagement and practical experience however it is constrained by high cost and rigid schedule.

In conclusion, depending on the context, subject matter and learners' attributes, the effectiveness of teaching and learning can be derived. For a diverse range of learners, blended learning provides more efficient modal as it leverages on e-learning flexibility and traditional in classroom physical presence and interaction to ensure a more inclusive, engaging and effective teaching and learning experience.

Keywords: Traditional Classroom Teaching, E-Learning, Blended Learning, Students' Engagement, Digital Transformation, Effectiveness, Teaching Modalities

## **Beyond the Venn Diagram:**

### **Deconstructing the Contextual Knowledge (XK) Barriers to TPACK Integration in Ghanaian Primary Schools**

**Bernice Yawa Tsitsia**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

The imperative to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into primary education is globally recognised as fundamental for pedagogical enhancement and the cultivation of digital citizenship. In Ghana, significant policy commitments, including the ICT for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) framework and the “One Teacher One Laptop” initiative, underscore this recognition. Notwithstanding these national efforts, a demonstrable policy–practice divide persists, with ICT utilisation in Ghanaian primary schools frequently constrained to routine administrative or rudimentary instructional support functions. This gap is impaired by systemic Contextual Knowledge (XK) barriers, such as pervasive infrastructural inadequacy, which prevent teachers from achieving the robust integration required by the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework.

This article undertakes a critical mixed-methods examination of this crevasse, drawing on empirical findings and theoretical models (TPACK, Technology Acceptance Model [TAM], and Diffusion of Innovations [DOI]). It posits the adoption of teacher-centred digital self-assessment as a strategic mechanism to reconcile this discrepancy. Self-assessment empowers educators to reflect on their ICT competency, identify professional development needs, and align their instructional strategies with policy goals.

The study generated a prototype Digital Self-Assessment Tool (DSAT), rigorously informed by teacher preferences, emphasising features like offline functionality, personalised feedback, and progress tracking. The paper concludes that embedding this context-specific DSAT within Ghana's existing professional development infrastructure offers a practical, scalable, and evidence-informed pathway toward achieving meaningful ICT integration in the primary sector. Recommendations are provided for policymakers and school leadership to leverage this mechanism, ensuring that ICT moves decisively beyond policy rhetoric to become a driver of substantive classroom practice.

Keywords: TPACK, DSAT, Contextual Knowledge (XK), Barriers, ICT Integration, Low-Resource Settings, Policy-Practice Gap

## **Reskilling School Leaders with Fourth Industrial Revolution Competencies for Effective School Service Delivery in Namibia**

**Ancia Katjiteo**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

The COVID-19 epidemic served as a defining event that brought to light the critical need to accelerate the adoption of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) in the field of education, both internationally and in Namibia. This global health crisis caused traditional schooling systems to be disrupted and accelerated the adoption of digital platforms, artificial intelligence, data-driven systems, and smart technologies in the areas of teaching, learning, and school administration. It is thus anticipated by school leaders that they will be able to manage more complex educational settings that combine hybrid classroom spaces, digital learning environments, and physical learning environments.

The objective of this research is to investigate the ways in which school leaders in Namibia's basic education system may be successfully reskilled with 4IR competencies to improve the quality of service delivery at schools. The research philosophy used was positivism. This research used a quantitative technique to evaluate the impact of reskilling school leaders on the effective delivery of educational services in a precise and standardised manner. Quantitative approaches allowed for the evaluation of improvements in leaders' skills via statistical analysis, by discovering patterns and relationships. Data analysis was done using SPSS, which included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis.

The results show that school leaders are most proficient in using social media (Mean = 3.82) and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (Mean = 3.35), followed by automation (Mean = 3.31) and the Internet of Things (IoT) (Mean = 3.18). However, low proficiency was reported in Smart Board use (Mean = 2.70), Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Mean = 1.82), and especially 3D printing, which recorded the lowest mean score (Mean = 1.03). A weighted average score of 3.267 was employed to determine how well leaders use 4IR skills and it helped detect where there are urgent problems. It is clear which areas Namibian school leaders must be reskilled in to address the needs of 4IR. The findings indicate that Namibia's school service delivery is moderately effective, shaped by a combination of strong leadership, teacher qualifications, assessment practices, and inclusive school environments. However, several systemic challenges—particularly regarding infrastructure, special needs support, pedagogical practices, and community engagement—continue to hinder the realisation of fully equitable and high-quality education across the country.

Implications provide a roadmap for transforming moderate school service delivery into a robust, equitable, and high-quality education system such as enhancing teacher motivation and professional development; promoting learner-centred and inclusive pedagogy; strengthening special education and inclusive support; expanding infrastructure and digital resource access; improving school leadership and governance and monitoring and evaluation of service delivery.

Future research will seek to achieve the aim of advancing the body of knowledge and addressing policy and practice through conducting research on the following areas: leadership development studies in the longitudinal; rural-urban comparisons; stakeholder-centric research; training programs evaluation

## Session 11 | Curriculum and Policy Innovation

### **Teacher Participation in the Education Policy Process:**

#### **A Study of the Relationship between Curriculum Development and Teacher Ownership in Saint Lucia**

**Augusta Emmanuel**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

This research explores teacher participation in the education policy process. It focuses on the relationship between curriculum development and teacher ownership in Saint Lucia. In so doing, it describes the perspective and experience of teachers in the process of curriculum development. The study also examines factors which contribute to their differing degrees of participation, and analyses the operation of said factors within the system.

Using survey and interview data from 150 educators across five education districts, this study investigates the dynamics of teacher participation in the process of curriculum development and how this influences teacher motivation and ownership of the curriculum. For this study, teacher ownership is defined by teacher outcomes, student outcomes, implementation fidelity, commitment and professional identity. More specifically, it speaks of participation in curriculum development, teacher independence, decision making, commitment, responsibility, and belief in relevance of the curriculum. It also encompasses teacher professional identity and belief in self.

Findings illustrate a positive correlation between teacher participation in curriculum development and their ownership of the curriculum as the core element in the teaching learning process. The study also identified low motivation, low recognition, systemic restrictions, lack of time, lack of training, limited autonomy, and poor support structures as challenges to teacher participation in the curriculum development process. It further suggests that to improve teacher ownership of the curriculum an environment where teachers feel valued, supported and empowered should be cultivated. These findings contribute to system wide improvement by developing an improved, more collaborative and longer-term policy environment in Saint Lucia's national education system. The findings also add to the discourse on the role that teachers play in the education policy processes in Saint Lucia and present a participatory approach to policy making that values and leverages teacher professionalism.

Keywords: Curriculum Development, Teacher Ownership

## **Challenges and Strategies for Implementing the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications Program in Georgetown Secondary Schools, Guyana**

**Amelia Natalie Persaud**  
**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This qualitative research investigates the challenges of implementing the Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ) program in secondary schools in Georgetown, Guyana. The CVQ program, a vital part of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), faces several challenges, including a lack of human and material resources, curriculum misalignment, safety issues, and untrained assessors in the assessment processes. An exploratory multiple case study methodology was employed, involving thirty key stakeholders, including Ministry of Education TVET units, CTNET officials, school administrators, instructors, and students, who participated in semi-structured interviews and focus groups to collect data.

Additionally, the study focuses on theoretical frameworks such as Constructivism, Social Cognitive Theory, and Competency-Based Education and Training, which provide a complete view of how stakeholder perceptions and institutional support impact CVQ implementation. The findings highlight several key issues, including unfavourable opinions of TVET, unclear responsibilities among implementers, students' inability to complete CVQ for full certification, and insufficient teacher training aligned with competency-based approaches. The study also assesses the efficacy of the Ministry of Education and CTNET's support measures in supporting seamless program execution.

Moreover, the findings are intended to enlighten policymakers and educators by providing concrete recommendations for policy development, capacity building, and improved engagement with industry partners. These findings are consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4, which stresses the quality of technical vocational education and lifetime learning opportunities. This study enhances the CVQ program's sustainability and effectiveness in workforce preparedness in Guyana by identifying impediments and effective measures, ultimately boosting economic growth.

**Keywords:** Caribbean Vocational Qualifications (CVQ), CVQ Implementation, Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Competency-Based Education, Qualitative Research, Stakeholder Perceptions, TVET Policy, Guyana

**Investigating the Relationship between Non-Cognitive Assessment as a Prerequisite to Mathematics Pedagogy and Students' CSEC Mathematics Performance: The Case of Two Guyanese Schools**

**Lydia Gowmatee Narain**  
**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This study investigates the relationship between non-cognitive assessment as a prerequisite to mathematics pedagogy and students' mathematics performance at two Guyanese schools. Students have been underperforming in Mathematics at the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) Examination for over three decades. This study aims to foster improved mathematics performance and to provide a conceptual framework that would guide pedagogical practices to address the issue of mathematics underperformance. Data was obtained from 127 Grade 10 students from two secondary schools in Guyana.

This study employed a Mixed-methods approach in which a Descriptive Survey, a Quasi-Experimental Pretest Posttest Control Group design and a Case Study design were utilised. Students in the treatment group who participated in the survey indicated their pedagogical preferences which were catered for in the teaching of mathematics. All students participated in pretests and posttests while the students in the treatment group participated in the interview. Findings revealed a positive correlation between non-cognitive assessment and students' performance in mathematics at both schools. Students indicated that when their preferred mathematics pedagogical strategies are catered for, they are motivated to learn mathematics.

The study highlights the interconnection between non-cognitive and cognitive assessments which ultimately contributes to improved mathematics performance. This study offers policy makers, curriculum planners, teachers and other global and regional education stakeholders' insights that would guide the implementation of policies, modification of curriculum and tailored pedagogical practices to address the issue of underperformance in Mathematics. This study will add to the existing literature and attempts to bridge the gap which exists in the implementation of non-cognitive assessment as a prerequisite to mathematics pedagogy in the context of Guyana.

Keywords: Academic Performance, Non-Cognitive Assessment, Pedagogical Practices

**Generative Artificial Intelligence and Its Application in Computer Science Education in Jamaica:  
Influences and Learning Theory**

**Leo Lancelot Lewis**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

The teaching and learning structures, regimen, tenets, content, etc. associated with Computer Science Education (CSED) have been sources of contention for educators and students alike: teachers juxta positioning among theories, frameworks, and models to satisfactorily meet learners' educational needs, and the educational demands of an ever-changing, ever-improving, innovation-filled, innovation-fuelled field of study, which is ontologically and philosophically diverse; and learners, haphazardly and unknowingly, navigating personal learning styles and challenges to appropriate and assimilate relevant knowledge afforded by CS curricula. With the insurgence and employment of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) tools within the space, CSED will experience new and novel educational challenges and triumphs of varying degrees and natures.

This research intends, therefore, to explore the CSED phenomenon in the context of the Jamaican education culture with the intent of uncovering a model(s), framework(s), or theory(ies) for teaching and learning, focusing on both teacher and learner practice(s), philosophy and personality, as they apply GAI tools. This includes examining the methods used in teaching and learning across a wide demographic, examining pedagogical, andragogical and heutagogical practices.

The research will make use of mixed methods and grounded theory approaches, thus applying both quantitative and qualitative methodology, that is, descriptive and thematic analyses, respectively. The data collected will be gleaned from questionnaires for learners and semi-structured interviews for teachers, lecturers and learner focus groups. Convenient, purposive and theoretical sampling techniques will be applied to the qualitative efforts and quota sampling for the quantitative effort. The key demographic in this research will be educators, that is, teachers, tutors and lecturers, and learners at the grades twelve (12) and thirteen (13) level in high school, and lecturers, teaching aids and students in tertiary institutions studying both first and second degrees in Computer Science.

**Keywords:** Computer Science Education, Generative Artificial Intelligence, Education Philosophy, Education Theory

DAY 4 | THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2026

## Social Sciences and Education Section

Session 12 | Social Justice and Governance

### **Determinants of Men's Engagement in Gender-Based Violence Prevention Programs:**

#### **A Systematic Global Review**

**Lilian Okwuchukwu Iwu**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

**Background:** Gender-based violence remains a significant global issue, influenced by gender stereotypes and power dynamics. To combat it, involving men in GBV prevention initiatives is crucial. However, men's involvement varies, and understanding factors like sociocultural norms, perceived benefits, program design, policy environment, and structural barriers is essential.

**Objective:** The study aims to analyse global evidence on individual, socio-cultural, and programmatic factors influencing men's participation in GBV prevention initiatives, identifying facilitators and barriers for more effective policy and practice.

**Methods:** A systematic search of peer-reviewed and grey literature was conducted across the following databases: PubMed (Medline); Scopus; Web of Science; Google Scholar and Global Health for studies published between 2010 – 2025 by examining determinants of men's engagement in GBV prevention programs worldwide. Two reviewers independently screened titles, abstracts, and full texts, extracted data using a standardised form, and a quality assessment of the included studies will be undertaken using a modified GRADE system. Data were synthesised narratively and, where feasible, pooled quantitatively.

**Results:** From the initial 350 records, 26 studies met the inclusion criteria, studies found that addressing gender norms through critical reflection, role modelling, and social action increases men's engagement. Program design elements like group education, peer leadership, and gender-transformative intervention strategies promote active bystander behaviour and community mobilisation. Barriers include traditional masculinity ideologies, stigma, fear of social sanctions and lack of incentives. Additionally, studies noted limitations in program design framework, cross-regional applicability, and empirical robustness.

**Conclusion:** The study reveals that men's participation in GBV prevention programs is influenced by individual, social, and structural factors, and that culturally tailored and strategically designed approaches are crucial.

**Keywords:** Men engagement, Active Bystander Initiative, Gender-Transformative Approach, Masculinity, Culturally Tailored Models

**Towards a New Model of the Transitional Justice Mechanism of Truth Commissions:  
An Assessment of the Role of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission of Zimbabwe**

**Bernard Ngwenya**  
**Unicaf University in Zambia**

The research evaluated the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) of using a mixed-methods approach to propose a reconceptualised model for truth commissions. A concurrent embedded design was adopted, triangulating qualitative data from in-depth interviews (n=15) with national peacebuilding stakeholders against a quantitative survey (n=322) administered in two provinces. Data were analysed using NVivo for qualitative content and SPSS for statistical examination.

Findings confirmed strong public support for the NPRC (78.72%) and a high prevalence of human rights violations (63.11%), underscoring its theoretical and empirical necessity. However, critical operational flaws were identified, including political interference undermining autonomy, ethnic bias alienating communities, an unclear mandate, and limited public awareness. The NPRC's effectiveness was further doomed by a rigid 10-year sunset clause, which curtailed essential long-term justice efforts, entrenching the very cycles of unresolved conflicts the NPRC was meant to break.

To address these critical flaws, this study proposes a National Commission for Post-conflict Justice (NCPJ) as a transformative successor to the NPRC. The proposed model, predicated on a victim-centred approach, is theoretically grounded in a Narrative Co-creation Framework. This mechanism actuates its mandate through three integrated strategic avenues: truth-telling, limited judicial accountability, and structural transformation. To counter the identified issues of alienation and low awareness, the NCPJ employs an adapted Communication with Communities (CwC) strategy. This approach leverages local languages and decentralised feedback mechanisms to centre grassroots narratives, prevent political capture of the conflict narrative, and ensure institutional responsiveness to community priorities. The NCPJ thereby establishes a sustainable framework for redressing historical grievances and disrupting cycles of violence, presenting a transferable model for other nations navigating post-conflict transitions.

**Keywords:** National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC), Truth Commissions, Transitional Justice, Zimbabwe, Narrative Co-creation, Communicating with Communities (CwC), Post-conflict Justice

**Challenges and Strategies for Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Fragile States:  
A Case Study of South Sudan**

**William Tim Monybuny  
Unicaf University in Malawi**

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems are critical for enhancing accountability, fostering learning, and enabling adaptive management in development and humanitarian interventions. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts such as South Sudan, the implementation of effective M&E systems is impeded by a range of persistent and complex challenges. This study investigates the structural and operational barriers to establishing robust M&E frameworks in South Sudan, drawing on field-based observations, stakeholder consultations, and programmatic data. Key constraints identified include limited institutional capacity, ongoing insecurity, unreliable and fragmented data sources, and donor-driven reporting mechanisms that emphasise compliance over contextual learning. These issues are further exacerbated by political volatility and logistical difficulties in remote and underserved regions. The paper argues that conventional M&E approaches are insufficiently responsive to the realities of fragile environments and require significant adaptation.

To address these challenges, the study proposes a suite of context-sensitive strategies. These include the integration of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Minimum Standards, the promotion of community-based monitoring models, and the adoption of flexible, adaptive frameworks capable of responding to dynamic field conditions.

These approaches aim to enhance the relevance, inclusivity, and sustainability of M&E practices in conflict-affected settings. The findings offer actionable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and donors engaged in fragile contexts, emphasising the need for locally grounded, conflict-sensitive M&E systems. By prioritising learning and responsiveness over rigid compliance, the proposed strategies seek to strengthen program effectiveness and contribute to more resilient development outcomes in South Sudan and similar environments

**Keywords:** Monitoring and Evaluation, Fragile States, South Sudan, INEE Minimum Standards, Adaptive Management, Humanitarian Interventions

## Session 13 | Psychology, Well-being, and Mental Health

### **From Stress to Strategies: Developing Digital Resilience Among Medical Students in Pakistan – A Qualitative Case Study**

**Noor-i-Kiran Naeem**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

The rapid integration of social media in medical education has transformed how students access, share, and engage with knowledge. While platforms such as YouTube and Google provide visual support and collaborative opportunities, they also expose students to challenges of information overload, distraction, and digital fatigue. Developing digital resilience—the ability to adapt effectively to such challenges—has therefore become an essential skill for medical students, particularly in low- and middle-income contexts where resources and support may be limited.

This qualitative case study explored the strategies undergraduate medical students in Pakistan employ to build resilience while using social media for learning. Twenty-five MBBS students (five from each year) were purposely selected from a private medical college. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted between September 2024 and February 2025, transcribed verbatim, and member-checked for accuracy. Thematic analysis was carried out in ATLAS.ti by two independent researchers, with strategies to ensure trustworthiness including triangulation, audit trails, and reflexive notes.

Findings revealed a clear year-wise progression. First-year students coped with overload by focusing on high-yield content and peer group sharing. In the second year, students integrated specialised applications and time-management tools such as the Pomodoro technique. By the third year, they reported selective curation of YouTube channels and purposeful device management to reduce distraction. Fourth-year students emphasised collaborative use of social media for case-based learning, while final-year students highlighted balance and well-being through offline note-taking and device segregation.

The study proposes the Digital Resilience (DR) Compass, a framework mapping this progression from basic adaptation in early years to strategy refinement in senior years. The Compass illustrates that digital resilience is not a fixed trait but a learnable process. Embedding digital resilience training into medical curricula can support both academic success and student well-being, contributing to a more holistic approach to medical education in digital environments.

**Keywords:** Digital Resilience, Social Media, Medical Education, Pakistan, Qualitative Research

## **Emotional Intelligence and Psychological Distress in Primary School Teachers**

**Manisha Ramjeet**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is found to be an essential tool to deal with many difficult situations in life. Since teaching is hectic and teachers are prone to psychological issues, EI has proved to be beneficial in coping with psychological distress.

This paper examines the effect of emotional intelligence components on teachers' experience of psychological distress in primary public schools in Mauritius.

A quantitative research method was adopted to collect numerical data through online surveys among 360 primary school teachers in Mauritius. The Kessler k-10 for psychological distress and Emotional Intelligence self-assessment tools were used to collect data.

The Pearson correlation analysis showed that there is a significant negative association between emotional intelligence and psychological distress among primary school teachers. A moderate predictive power of emotional intelligence components on psychological distress and a significant influence of years of experience on psychological distress is also observed. EI components decrease the experience of psychological distress. Unexpectedly, it was also observed that self-awareness is positively associated with psychological distress unlike other EI dimensions.

When teachers are aware of their emotions, they tend to experience psychological distress; they identify the roots of stress which can cause feeling stressed. With age, experienced teachers have adapted to the roots of stress and have been able to cope and manage with the stressors present at work. Hence, to reduce the workforce occupational stress, stakeholders can encourage employees to develop EI through the EI competencies. Government and concerned authorities can take initiative to provide training to teachers to develop their EI skills. By learning EI competencies, teachers will also enhance their job performance and academic performance of their students.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Distress, Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Relationship Management

## **Underlying Causes for Violence among Secondary School Students**

**Yamanie Devi Jaiprashad**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

Secondary school student violence has become a major issue in Guyana, reflecting worldwide patterns that have a detrimental impact on students' academic performance, mental health, and general school climate. To investigate the complex causes of student violence and highlight their applicability to the Guyanese context, this literature-based study synthesises regional and worldwide research.

Results show that stress and conflict in schools are increased by socioeconomic differences between coastal, rural, and hinterland areas. Students are also more likely to act aggressively if they grow up in dysfunctional families and are exposed to domestic or social violence. Guyanese schools have also been found to have weak institutional frameworks, uneven disciplinary procedures, and a persistent tolerance for corporal punishment. Peer pressure, bullying, and cultural norms around masculinity augment aggressive conduct, while psychological vulnerabilities including trauma, impulsivity, and untreated mental health disorders increase the likelihood of aggression. Notably, the Mahdia dormitory disaster in 2023 serves as a reminder of how systemic shortcomings and untreated emotional pain can lead to devastating bloodshed.

The study calls for comprehensive, multi-level treatments that involve educators, parents, mental health experts, and legislators, highlighting the interconnectedness of socioeconomic, familial, psychological, and institutional variables. Fostering secure, encouraging, and fair learning environments throughout Guyana requires a concerted national effort.

Keywords: Student Violence, Secondary Schools, Guyana, Family Environment, Bullying, Mental Health

**Prevalence and Factors Associated with Seeking Mental Health Information on Social Media  
Among St. Lucian Young Adults**

**Giselle Emmanuel**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

This is a public health study with an emphasis on mental health information-seeking behaviour. The purpose of the study is to explore the prevalence of using social media platforms to obtain mental health information among young adult St Lucians, determine the factors influencing the practice, and understand the perspectives of health officials about the issue. It focuses on young adult St. Lucians because that age group is more likely to use social media to obtain health information. The problem is that there is a stigma associated with mental health, and there are challenges with access to healthcare services and resource constraints.

There has been an increase in the use of social media to obtain health information worldwide. This study explores the practice amongst young adults St. Lucians to determine whether it is a possible solution to providing people with credible mental health information. The research study will be conducted using a mixed method to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data will be obtained using a semi-structured questionnaire to interview a convenience sample of experts about their perspectives on the use of social media to obtain mental health information and the factors they perceive would influence the practice.

The participants for the quantitative data will be young adults 18-35 years old from all districts of St. Lucia who have access to social media and can read and write. These individuals will be randomly selected from each stratum to represent the population and will be issued an electronic questionnaire within their youth groups to provide their responses about the use of social media for mental health information. The data will be analysed using regression analysis for quantifiable data and thematic analysis for qualitative data. The results will also be triangulated to observe similarities from the different sources to increase the validity and credibility of the study. The findings can be useful to health officials in their efforts to introduce new methods of sharing mental health information with the public.

**Exploring Institution-Related Factors That Affect the Student Dropout Rate  
in Bahamian High Schools**

**Audra Norell Tynes**

**Unicaf University in Zambia**

Increases in high school graduation rates have been noted over the years; nevertheless, high school dropout still remains a concern, particularly in Caribbean contexts where empirical research is limited.

The purpose of this mixed methods study is to investigate the school-based factors that influence student dropout decisions in Bahamian high schools and to identify the most dominant among these push factors. The qualitative component involved in-depth interviews with a small sample of school administrators, guidance counsellors and high school dropouts. Interview data was utilised to modify questionnaires which were employed in the quantitative component of the study which surveyed school administrators, guidance counsellors, teachers and high school dropouts to quantify the prevalence and perceived impact of various push factors. Common themes emerged through the thematic analysis of interview data which identified factors such as academic challenges, unwillingness to follow rules, and facing suspensions as being contributory to student dropout decisions. The role of teachers in student dropout decisions has been limited.

Interview data further revealed that, according to school personnel, discipline rules and consequences, suspensions in particular, are most dominant in student dropout decisions, whereas dropouts note that not earning a high school diploma is the most pivotal factor in their decisions to quit attending school. Responses to the Likert-type questions of the questionnaires reveal that there are differences in perspectives among the groups of participants, especially between the school personnel and the dropouts. However, an overall sentiment analysis of the combined responses indicates that there are positive sentiments towards the contributory role of several push factors. Finally, an evaluation of the ranking responses further highlights the differences between the perspectives shared by the groups of participants. Kendall's W was employed to assess the degree of consensus among participant groups' responses.

The data emphasises the complexity of the school dropout phenomenon, revealing multiple contributory push factors. The study, which addresses a research gap, provides valuable insights for educational stakeholders to develop interventions to remedy the issue.

Keywords: Push Factors, Student Dropout, Dominant Factors

## Session 14 | Leadership, Management, and School Environment

### **Continuing Professional Development for Teachers' Job Performance in State Secondary Schools in Zone 1, Mauritius**

**Pryanka Devi Ramgolam-Rampersand**  
**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This study investigates Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for state secondary school teachers in Zone 1, Mauritius. Many factors are responsible for the recent decline in students' performances in internal and external examinations in Mauritius. Teachers' quality and development are also pinpointed for their crucial roles in influencing students' performances. The study therefore set out to investigate CPD for teachers' pedagogical and classroom management skills and the presumption that the quality of CPD may have contributed to the situation and therefore needs to be reviewed to improve teachers' quality and by extension, students' performances.

The objectives are designed to investigate the various forms of CPD that teachers are exposed to and their impact on teachers' pedagogical and classroom management skills. The mixed method approach was used where qualitative method was included in the predominant quantitative method. 400 state secondary school teachers participated in the questionnaire survey, while 20 teachers participated in interviews.

Findings revealed that teachers are exposed to limited types, forms and methods of CPD, but are positively impactful on teachers' pedagogical skills. However, findings also showed that the limited exposure of CPD helps teachers to improve their classroom management skills to a very little extent only. Further investigation through the qualitative analysis revealed that CPD exposed to teachers is focused only in syllabus and subject related matters and not enough consideration is given to enhance teachers' classroom management skills.

The results of this study highlight the deficiencies in the exposure of CPD for the enhancement of teachers' classroom management skills and which need to be reviewed. Additionally, the study also calls for a general re-evaluation of CPD policies for state secondary school teachers in Mauritius. Further studies could extend the sample population to include private secondary school teachers as they also contribute to the general performance of students in major examinations.

Keywords: Continuing Professional Development, Teacher Quality, Classroom Management Skills, Pedagogical Skills

**Investigating Internal Quality Assurance Practices in Botswana’s Private Higher Education:  
Challenges and Strategic Pathways for Improvement**

**Dimpho Segwabe**

**Unicaf University in Malawi**

The increasing demand for private higher education in Botswana has heightened the need for robust Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) systems within Private Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs). As these institutions expand, their ability to deliver quality education in alignment with national expectations becomes a critical concern. This study, underpinned by Total Quality Management (TQM) theory, investigates how PHEIs are institutionalising quality assurance practices and the extent to which these efforts align with the national quality framework.

The research explores the internal mechanisms currently employed by PHEIs to ensure academic and administrative quality. Findings indicate significant variability in the effectiveness and implementation of IQA systems across institutions. Key challenges identified include limited institutional capacity, resource constraints, inadequate staff training, and inconsistencies between institutional policies and national regulatory standards.

Despite these obstacles, the study highlights emerging efforts and innovative practices aimed at enhancing internal quality management. Strategic pathways are proposed to strengthen alignment with the revised national quality assurance framework, including capacity-building initiatives, policy harmonisation, and a stronger culture of continuous improvement.

By offering a critical analysis of current IQA practices, this research contributes to the broader discourse on quality enhancement in higher education. It provides practical recommendations for policymakers, institutional leaders, and quality assurance bodies seeking to improve accountability and performance in Botswana’s private higher education sector.

**Keywords:** Internal Quality Assurance (IQA), Total Quality Management (TQM), Private Higher Education, Quality Assurance Framework, Strategic Improvement, Capacity Constraints

## **Learning-Support School Policy Framework and Its Impact on Student Learning in Liberian Secondary Schools**

**Leon Lorestho Banks**  
**Unicaf University in Malawi**

This study examines how learning-support school policies are implemented in Liberian secondary schools.

Schools are creating policies to support student learning and success. It's important to develop a comprehensive framework for these policies to have a positive impact on student learning.

This mixed-methods study used a quantitative research design to examine the implementation of thirteen learning-support school policies in 134 secondary schools across Liberia. It focused on implementation fidelity, how these policies contributed to learning outcomes, and the challenges and barriers faced during policy implementation. These policies included the assessment policy, discipline policy, attendance policy, textbook policy, class size policy, curriculum policy, library policy, laboratory policy, parent involvement policy, teacher quality policy, promotion and retention policy, and the policy on the use of technology. The study also employed a qualitative approach to gather perceptions from key stakeholders, such as teachers, students, parents, and education policymakers.

The findings show that the implementation of learning-support policies varies across different policy areas and institutions. Some policies have high implementation rates and positively impact learning outcomes, while other policy areas have low implementation rates and limited effects on learning outcomes. The study also points out challenges and obstacles to implementation. Overall, it finds a positive link between learning-related school policies and student learning outcomes.

To examine how implementation rates vary and how policies that support learning affect student outcomes, the study introduces a learning-support school policy implementation framework (LERSPIF). This framework includes key elements such as policy classification, implementation, reporting, monitoring, regular assessments, and an ongoing cycle of improvement and feedback. Future research should thoroughly explore, from a contextual and institutional perspective, why some policy areas perform better than others in implementation and how they influence learning.

**Keywords:** Implementation, Learning-related, Policy, Learning outcomes, Framework, Reporting, Categorisation, Monitoring, Evaluation

DAY 5 | FRIDAY, 20 MARCH 2026

**Business and Management Section (French)**

Session 15 (French) | Responsabilité Sociale, Inclusion Financière et PME

**Le rôle du crédit formel dans la performance économique des PME burundaises****Inès Sonia Niyubahwe****Unicaf Université**

Dans le contexte d'un développement économique dominé par la prédominance des petites et moyennes entreprises (PME), l'accès au crédit apparaît comme un enjeu déterminant pour la performance industrielle au Burundi. Alors que de nombreuses études ont analysé le rôle du financement dans la croissance des PME en Afrique de l'Est, peu de travaux empiriques se sont spécifiquement concentrés sur le cas burundais, en particulier durant la période post-conflit 2007–2015. Ce déficit de recherche constitue un vide empirique qui limite la formulation de politiques adaptées.

La présente étude examine l'impact du crédit formel sur la performance économique des PME au Burundi au cours de cette période, en mobilisant trois bases de données et huit rapports institutionnels. L'approche quantitative adoptée, fondée sur l'exploitation de données secondaires à travers des modèles de régression, intègre également une comparaison par moyenne ainsi que par écart absolu et relatif avec les autres pays membres de la Communauté d'Afrique de l'Est (EAC). Les résultats révèlent que les PME ayant accès au crédit enregistrent en moyenne une croissance du chiffre d'affaires de 15 % supérieure à celles non financées, et que l'accès au financement formel est corrélé à une productivité accrue. Le rationnement du crédit étant associé à une stagnation des activités. Toutefois, le Burundi accuse un retard structurel marqué : seules 15 % des PME y accèdent au crédit formel, contre près de la moitié dans la région. De plus, même lorsqu'elles sont financées, les PME burundaises n'atteignent qu'une croissance moyenne de 15 %, soit environ la moitié de la performance régionale. Ces écarts confirment que le Burundi se situe nettement en dessous des standards de la Communauté d'Afrique de l'Est, en raison d'une faible pénétration bancaire, d'une digitalisation limitée et d'un rationnement persistant du crédit.

L'étude souligne ainsi la nécessité de réformer les mécanismes de financement afin de réduire les taux de rejet et d'améliorer la compétitivité industrielle, en renforçant la structuration des politiques publiques pour garantir un accès équitable au crédit. Ces constats ouvrent la voie à de futures recherches sur la résilience financière des PME et sur l'efficacité des instruments de politique publique. Des travaux ultérieurs pourraient notamment s'intéresser à l'impact du microcrédit et des innovations financières numériques sur la performance des entreprises.

Mots clés: PME, Performance Industrielle, Accès au Crédit, Financement, Productivité, Compétitivité Régionale

## **Les effets de la responsabilité sociale de l'entreprise sur la performance sociale des entreprises:**

### **Cas des entreprises minières de Goma en République Démocratique du Congo**

**Lucien Kishabaga Kirusha**

**Unicaf Université**

Cette recherche explore l'impact de la Responsabilité Sociale de l'Entreprise (RSE) sur la Performance Sociale (PSE) des sociétés minières opérant à Goma, en République Démocratique du Congo. Ce contexte est marqué par une pression sociale croissante due à des conditions de travail précaires et à un engagement communautaire insuffisant, menaçant la légitimité des opérations minières.

L'étude vise à évaluer la contribution de la RSE à l'engagement social, à diagnostiquer les problématiques sociales, notamment l'emploi local, et à vérifier l'application effective du Code minier congolais. Une approche quantitative, basée sur une étude de cas, a été adoptée. La RSE a été rigoureusement mesurée à l'aide de référentiels internationaux, dont la norme ISO 26000. Les données primaires ont été collectées auprès de 900 employés et de leaders communautaires locaux, via les outils KoboCollect et SPSS.

Les analyses mettent en évidence une corrélation significative confirmant une relation directe : l'amélioration des conditions de travail (ergonomie, bien-être) et l'optimisation des facteurs de motivation des employés sont intrinsèquement liées à la performance sociale interne de l'entreprise.

En conclusion, la PSE des entreprises minières à Goma est tributaire du bien-être au travail et d'une participation communautaire structurée. Sur la base de ces résultats, l'étude préconise l'établissement d'un cadre réglementaire minier rigoureux et uniforme, impliquant une amélioration accélérée des mécanismes de contrôle par les autorités publiques (nationales et provinciales) pour assurer l'application intégrale du Code. Il est de même impératif que les entreprises formalisent et hiérarchisent leurs initiatives en matière de RSE, allant au-delà de la conformité légale. En perspective, une étude qualitative est recommandée pour évaluer l'influence des acteurs externes (société civile, ONG internationales) sur l'efficacité et l'intégration locale des pratiques de RSE dans ce contexte sociopolitique complexe.

Mots clés: RSE, PSE, Code Minier, Participation Communautaire

## **Exploration de certains facteurs institutionnels et capacitaires pour propulser le barème de l'inclusion financière au Burkina Faso**

**Nobila Jean Flaubert Ouoba**

**Unicaf Université**

L'exclusion financière reste un frein majeur au développement inclusif dans de nombreux pays du Sud. Au Burkina Faso, malgré des progrès notables portés par les services financiers numériques et des réformes réglementaires, une grande partie de la population demeure en marge du système financier formel.

Cette recherche analyse les déterminants institutionnels et capacitaires qui influencent l'inclusion financière au Burkina Faso. Elle vise à identifier les obstacles rencontrés par les usagers et à proposer des pistes concrètes pour renforcer l'accès et l'usage effectif des services financiers.

Une approche mixte a été mobilisée. Des entretiens semi-directifs ont été menés auprès de 52 acteurs institutionnels (prestataires, régulateurs, experts), complétés par un questionnaire administré à 351 utilisateurs. L'analyse qualitative s'est appuyée sur un codage thématique, tandis que les données quantitatives ont été traitées par des méthodes descriptives et multivariées, permettant un croisement des perspectives.

Les résultats mettent en évidence une dynamique positive grâce à la digitalisation et à l'adaptation du cadre réglementaire. Toutefois, des limites persistent : inadéquation des produits aux réalités des usagers, manque de coordination institutionnelle et faible littératie financière des populations. Les besoins exprimés convergent vers des offres plus accessibles et des dispositifs d'accompagnement renforcés.

L'étude démontre qu'une inclusion financière durable exige un double renforcement : celui des institutions et celui des capacités des usagers. Elle recommande la création d'un observatoire national, le développement de produits financiers contextualisés et un investissement soutenu dans l'éducation financière. En filigrane, elle ouvre la voie à une réflexion plus large sur le rôle des innovations technologiques dans la transformation des pratiques financières en Afrique de l'Ouest.

Mots clés: Inclusion Financière, Service Financiers Numériques, Contraintes Institutionnelles et Capacitaires, Produits Financiers

**Profil managérial des dirigeants des établissements de soins de première ligne pour l'instauration du financement basé sur la performance:  
étude de la Côte d'Ivoire**

**Konan N'Guessan Désiré  
Unicaf Université**

Le financement basé sur la performance (FBP) est une approche de plus en plus utilisée par les pays à revenu faible et intermédiaire pour améliorer les systèmes de santé. Cette étude analyse l'impact des méthodes de management sur la performance quantitative des établissements sanitaire de premier contact (ESPC) sous FBP. La méthodologie est mixte avec un devis plan séquentiel explicatif, impliquant 228 participants pour la méthode quantitative et 17 personnes pour l'approche qualitative dans 114 ESPC sélectionnés au hasard. La variable dépendante est le nombre d'accouchements ou le nombre de consultations effectuées par du personnel qualifié, et la variable indépendante est la note de gestion obtenue par les ESPC.

Les résultats montrent une amélioration des déclarations quantitatives depuis la mise sur pied du FBP passant de 1400 en 2016 à 2600 en 2023 pour les consultations. Un score de gestion élevé dans un ESPC sous PBF est significativement associé à la performance quantitative. Un ESPC classé comme ayant un « rendement élevé » en gestion reçoit plus de consultations et d'accouchements qu'un ESPC classé comme « faible rendement » ( $p < 0,000$ ). Plus précisément, des domaines tels que la gestion stratégique, la gestion de la performance et les interactions avec les parties prenantes ont un impact significatif sur la performance quantitative des PHF avec des valeurs  $p$  respectives de  $p < 0,021$ ,  $p < 0,000$  et  $p < 0,032$ .

Les résultats de cette étude pourraient aider à mettre en place une session de formation des responsables des ESPC en gestion. Des études pourraient explorer les actes de management qui impactent la performance dans les hôpitaux de référence.

En somme connaître avec précision les actes de gestion qui influencent l'utilisation, pourrait accélérer la mise en œuvre du FBP.

Mots clés: Performance, Financement, Établissement Sanitaire, Utilisation

**Exploration des facteurs qui déterminent la résilience de la chaîne logistique minière  
dans un environnement de crise sécuritaire: Cas du Burkina Faso**

**Pakidumsamba David Belemnaba**

**Unicaf Université**

Cette recherche s'intéresse aux déterminants de la résilience des chaînes logistiques minières au Burkina Faso dans un contexte marqué par l'insécurité. L'étude met en lumière les liens entre différentes dimensions de la gestion logistique: les dispositifs de sécurité déployés par les entreprises, l'usage des technologies de suivi, la mise en œuvre de stratégies de gestion des risques et la capacité à assurer la continuité des opérations. Elle s'attache également à comprendre comment les acteurs du secteur minier adaptent leurs pratiques face aux perturbations récurrentes et cherche à modéliser les facteurs qui influencent le plus fortement la robustesse et la flexibilité de la chaîne logistique.

L'étude adopte une approche mixte combinant analyses quantitatives et qualitatives. Elle repose sur un échantillon de 405 participants représentatifs des parties prenantes de la logistique minière. Cette démarche méthodologique permet de croiser données chiffrées et retours d'expérience, offrant ainsi une vision plus complète des dynamiques à l'œuvre.

Les résultats révèlent que la résilience des chaînes logistiques minières repose avant tout sur la mise en place de mesures de sécurité adaptées au contexte local, sur l'existence de plans de continuité bien structurés et sur l'intégration d'outils technologiques permettant de renforcer la visibilité et la réactivité. Ces leviers contribuent à accroître la capacité d'adaptation des entreprises face aux imprévus. De plus, la formation et la spécialisation des acteurs apparaissent comme des conditions essentielles pour maintenir un fonctionnement optimal dans un environnement instable et menacé. Cette étude souligne que la résilience logistique ne dépend pas seulement de la solidité des infrastructures ou des investissements technologiques, mais aussi de la capacité humaine et organisationnelle à anticiper, apprendre et s'ajuster. Elle met ainsi en évidence l'urgence d'une approche intégrée, où innovation, sécurité et capital humain se conjuguent pour assurer la durabilité des opérations minières dans un contexte fragile.

Mots clés: Résilience, Chaîne Logistique, Minière, Insécurité, Continuité, Burkina Faso

Unicaf Federal  
Old International Airport, 7130  
Larnaca, Cyprus, P.O.Box 42572, 6500  
Phone: +357 24747500  
Fax: +357 24652213  
Email: [info@unicaf.org](mailto:info@unicaf.org)  
Website: [www.unicaf.org](http://www.unicaf.org)

Unicaf University in Zambia  
Roma Park, Kasangula Road,  
plot 193, Lusaka Zambia  
Phone: +260 211250522  
Email: [info@unicafuniversity.com](mailto:info@unicafuniversity.com)  
Website: <https://unicafuniversity.ac.zm/>

Unicaf University in Malawi  
Unit 1 Shoppers Mall (Opposite Game & Shoprite),  
Area 4, Plot 67, Lilongwe, Malawi  
Phone: +265 111 755 333  
Email: [info@unicafuniversity.com](mailto:info@unicafuniversity.com)  
Website: <https://unicafuniversity.ac.mw/>

© Unicaf