

UNICAF<sup>®</sup>

RESEARCH

NEWSLETTER

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## Editor's Note

Dear students and colleagues,

Greetings and welcome to the latest edition of the Unicaf Research Newsletter. We're thrilled to have you on board as we embark on another exciting journey through the realms of groundbreaking research and innovation.

This issue features a comprehensive coverage of fourth Unicaf University Graduate Conference (UGraC) which attracted more than 5000 delegates and featured 53 presentations and 7 plenary presentations from colleagues from our UK partners, Liverpool John Moores and University of East London. This year we also had the pleasure to have our CEO and Founder Dr Nicos Nicolaou as our keynote speaker. Further to this, this issue showcases events/conferences attended by our colleagues from Unicaf University in Malawi and Unicaf University in Zambia as well as an interview with our Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research & Innovation, Dr Marirajan Thiruppathi.

In this edition, we include two new sections namely the 'Students' Hub' and the 'Eyes to the Future'. The Students' Hub presents topics, academic tips and resources that focus on study strategies, exam preparation advice, and resources for academic success. The 'Eyes to the Future' section introduces our doctoral graduates and their research to the wider audience of Unicaf and Unicaf University. During this issue, we've curated a diverse selection of articles that delve into the frontiers of knowledge, spanning disciplines from education and public health to business. Our aim is to keep you informed about the latest trends, discoveries, and debates shaping the landscape of current research.

As we navigate the vast sea of research, we're committed to bringing you content that is not only informative but also thought-provoking. Whether you're an avid researcher, a curious student, or a professional seeking to stay ahead in your field, we believe there's something for everyone within the pages of the Unicaf Research Newsletter.

We also encourage you to actively engage with us. Your insights are invaluable, and we're always eager to foster a community where ideas can be exchanged and conversations can flourish.

Thank you for being a part of the Unicaf Research community. Together, let's explore the frontiers of knowledge and ignite the spark of intellectual curiosity.

Kind regards,

Dr Elena Papadopoulou  
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Doctoral Studies and Research  
Principal Editor, Unicaf Online Journal  
Principal Editor, Unicaf Research Newsletter





## The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Unicaf University Graduate Conference (UGraC2024)



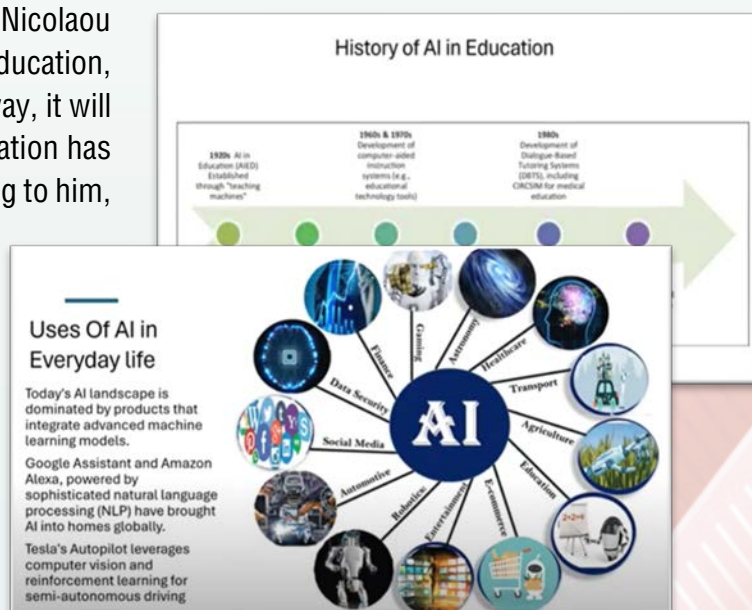
We are thrilled to share the remarkable success of the Unicaf University Graduate Conference (UGraC) 2024, which stands out as the largest academic conference organised by Unicaf University to date. Across five days the attendance was impressive and we welcomed a total of 5,020 delegates, comprising 4,929 attendees and 91 esteemed panelists from 137 countries, creating an enriching and diverse academic environment.

Overall, the conference featured a total of 57 oral presentations by doctoral students of the School of Doctoral Studies from the two campuses of Unicaf University in Malawi and Unicaf University in Zambia. Attendees were treated to a rich program with days of parallel sessions, including 1 keynote speaker, 7 plenary presentations, 1 workshop, and 1 presentation by the research award winner doctoral graduate. A vibrant atmosphere of academic inquiry prevailed, with a staggering 471 questions posed during the conference, reflecting the active engagement and curiosity of our global academic community. All these key numbers underscore the enthusiasm and engagement of our global academic community.



We were honored to have with us Dr Nicos Nicolaou, the CEO and founder of Unicaf, who delivered an inspiring keynote speech at the conference's opening on the topic of "AI in Education." He emphasised the significance of AI globally by stating that, "As we stand at the brink of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution, we are witnessing a transformation that promises to redefine the fabric of our daily lives. At the heart of this revolution is Artificial Intelligence."

In his speech, Dr Nicolaou specifically highlighted the revolution of AI in education, stating that, "If we use AI in education the right way, it will be the most significant transformation that education has ever seen." The best way to achieve this, according to him, would be "to provide every student with a personal AI tutor and every teacher with an amazing AI personal assistant," outlining a path towards harnessing AI's potential to revolutionise the educational landscape.







The conference highlighted Unicaf's international collaboration, with 4 plenary speakers from Liverpool John Moores University, 2 from the University of East London, and 1 from



Unicaf who further enriched the conference with topics at the front line of research.

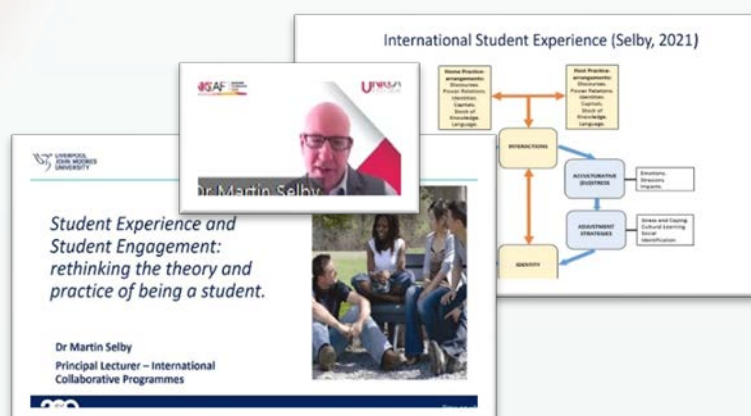
Dr Hoshang Kolivand, Professor in AI and Mixed Reality, from Liverpool John Moores University, focused on 'Breaking boundaries with AI: Current and future of Mixed Reality'.

Dr Selby Martin, Principal Lecturer, International Collaborative Programmes, Business School, Liverpool John Moores University, shared insights on 'Student experience and student engagement: Rethinking the theory



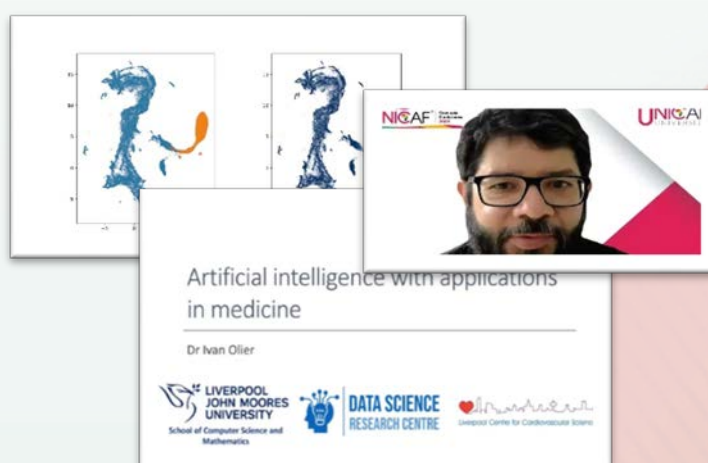
and practice of being a student'.

Dr Slawomir Raszewski, Senior Lecturer in Oil and Gas Management, Royal Docks School of Business and Law, University of East London explored the 'Resilience and cybersecurity in the changing energy sector'.



Dr Entissar Elgadi, Lecturer in Accounting and Finance, Royal Docks School of Business and Law, University of East London delved into 'Corporate governance and bank risk: The case of Sudanese Islamic banks'.

Dr Ivan Olier-Caparosso, the Head of the Data Science Research Centre at Liverpool John Moores University, delivered a speech, focusing on 'Artificial Intelligence in Medicine.'

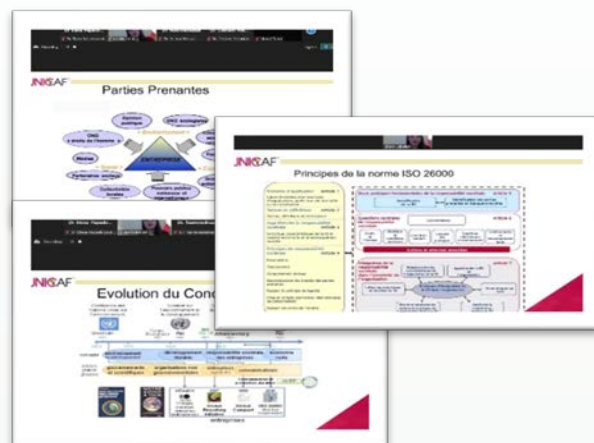
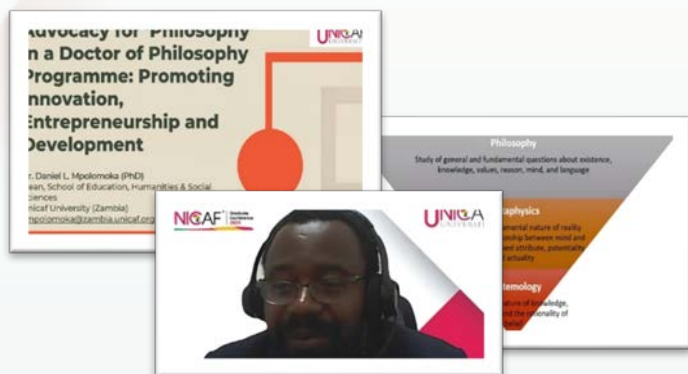




Professor Tony Wall, Faculty Associate Dean, Business School, Liverpool John Moores University shared insights on 'ChatGPT and research practice: Emergences across the ASEAN network'.

Dr Siham Rizkallah, Faculty, Unicaf University shared with us a french speech about 'l'importance de la responsabilité sociale des entreprises dans le monde des affaires / The Importance of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development goals in business'

Dr Daniel Mpolomoka, Dean of the School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences, Unicaf University in Zambia, delivered a thought-provoking workshop, on Advocacy for 'Philosophy' in a Doctor of Philosophy programme: Promoting innovation, entrepreneurship and development'.

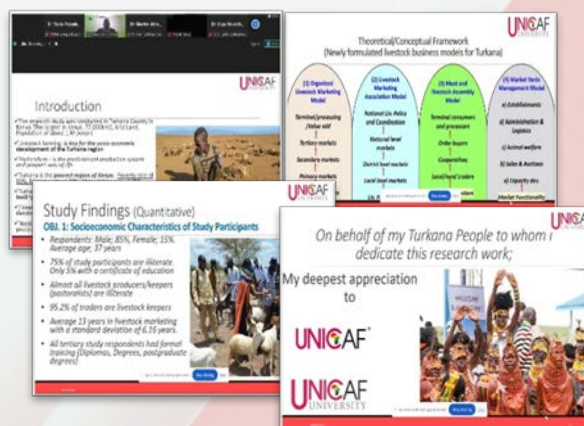


This year's conference featured one impactful presentation by our esteemed Unicaf University in Malawi doctoral graduate, namely Dr Francis Ekiro Anno. His presentation was on 'The effects of traders' competitive rivalry on livestock market access in pastoral areas:

A case of Turkana County in Kenya'. Dr Ekiro was invited to our conference as he is the first graduate student to win the Unicaf Doctoral Research Award, which is awarded to the most likely impactful doctoral research presented at a Viva Voce. This award aims to celebrate the importance of research impact, dissemination, outreach and contribution to knowledge.



Following the conference, the committee organised a ceremony awarding the two best doctoral students' presentations. Winners received a \$200 voucher for any professional development course offered by Unicaf University. The ceremony, held online on May 15th, witnessed high participation.







The winning presentations came from Mrs. Tinah Tusiime Mukunda, a PhD student in Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) programme at Unicaf University in Zambia. She shared her research titled “Assessing the Effects of International Donor Aid Shifts on Non-Profit Sustainability Strategies in Uganda,” shedding light on critical aspects of nonprofit sustainability amidst changes in international donor aid.

Additionally, Mrs. Akinyi Christine Osae, a PHD student in education at Unicaf University in Zambia, showcased her work titled “Differentiated Learner-Centred Strategies in Second Language Teaching Contexts: Exploring Perspectives and Practices of Teacher Trainers and Trainees in Rwanda.” Her presentation provided valuable insights into innovative teaching strategies, offering a comprehensive examination of perspectives and practices among educators and trainees in Rwanda.



The awards were presented by the Pro Vice-Chancellor of Doctoral Studies and Research, Dr Elena Papadopoulou and the Dean of the School of Doctoral Studies, Dr Olga Novokhatskaya

We extend our sincere appreciation to each speaker for their valuable contributions, making the Unicaf University Graduate Conference 2024 an intellectually stimulating and enriching experience.

The Unicaf University Graduate Conference 2024 has truly set a new benchmark, fostering collaboration, knowledge exchange, and intellectual growth on a global scale.

Stay tuned for more insights and updates on upcoming academic endeavors.

## Abstract Booklet & Programme 2024



For more information on UGrac2024 please visit the following link:  
<https://www.unicaf.org/ugrac-2024/>



## Exploring Scientific Research at Unicaf University in Zambia



Embark on a journey through the insights of Dr Marirajan Thiruppathi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation of Unicaf University in Zambia, as he unravels the essence of Scientific Research at Unicaf University in Zambia. Delve into his unique viewpoints as he sheds light on the intricacies of scientific inquiry within our vibrant academic community. His illuminating responses await your exploration, offering invaluable glimpses into the ethos and aspirations driving research excellence at Unicaf.

**Q: Could you provide insights into the ongoing research activities being conducted within Unicaf University in Zambia? Specifically, what are some of the notable projects or initiatives currently underway, and how do they contribute to the university's academic goals and broader societal impact?**

**MT:** At Unicaf University in Zambia, our Research and Innovation Centre (UUZM RIC) is driving impactful research across various academic schools, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration within and outside the University. One notable project focuses on bioethanol production from Nshima waste, which is one of the growing urban public health issues in Lusaka town. This shows our commitment to sustainability by exploring renewable energy sources and also finding solutions for existing problems. This initiative also aligns with global efforts to reduce waste and promotes environmentally-friendly practices. Another significant ongoing project is our dementia training and research program, conducted in collaboration with esteemed partners like the University of Huddersfield, UK and Kanyama General Hospital, Lusaka. This project addresses critical healthcare challenges in Zambia, enhancing healthcare services through the evaluation of dementia care programs and the training of Dementia Care Coaches (DCCs). By improving the quality of life for affected individuals, this initiative contributes to societal well-being and aligns with our University's goal of research excellence and societal impact. Through these projects and partnerships with local and international stakeholders, we strengthen our research capacity and contribute to knowledge-driven economies, locally and globally.



**Q: How significant is academic research in Africa, and what role does it play in driving socio-economic development, fostering innovation, and addressing the continent's unique challenges and opportunities?**

**MT:** Academic research in Africa is crucial for driving socio-economic development, fostering innovation, and addressing unique challenges. Through impactful research at HEIs, we are generating essential

knowledge to tackle pressing issues like healthcare, agriculture, and education access, informing policy and promoting sustainable development. Additionally, research fuels innovation and entrepreneurship by translating findings into practical solutions that stimulate economic growth and job creation.

At Unicaf University in Zambia, as the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, I prioritise fostering a vibrant research ecosystem by supporting faculty research initiatives and dissemination efforts. Our tailored research initiatives address Africa's distinct challenges, such as renewable energy and inclusive healthcare, leading to transformative outcomes for communities. By adopting an engaged university model, we bridge the gap between research and policy-making, stimulate innovation through partnerships with businesses and industries, and optimise research relevance and uptake for beneficiaries.

**Q: In your opinion, what are the main challenges that researchers in Africa face, and how is Unicaf University in Zambia addressing these challenges to support its faculty and students in conducting impactful research?**

**MT:** Researchers in Africa, including those at Unicaf University in Zambia, encounter challenges like limited funding, inadequate infrastructure, and restricted access to resources at national and regional level. To address these hurdles, Unicaf University provides faculty research support grants, invests in research-focused laboratory facilities, and forms partnerships with local and international institutions. Moreover, the University offers training and mentorship programs to boost research skills and foster collaboration among faculty and students. By prioritising research excellence and cultivating an environment conducive to innovation, Unicaf University empowers its researchers to overcome these obstacles and conduct impactful research.



**Q: How do you see the role of Unicaf University in Zambia in shaping the landscape of academic research in Africa in the next decade, particularly in terms of fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation?**

**MT:** Unicaf University in Zambia is poised to play a transformative role in shaping the landscape of academic research in Africa over the next decade. By prioritising interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation,

Unicaf will establish itself as a leading hub for research excellence and societal impact. Through strategic partnerships with national and regional university networks like AAU, ACDE, and SARUA, Unicaf will leverage collective expertise and resources to address pressing challenges outlined in Zambia Vision 2030, AU's Agenda 2063; The Africa We Want (2015).

Currently, UUZM Research and Innovation Centre is playing proactive role along with Southern Africa Regional University Association (SARUA) in exploring the incentives for and barriers to conducting societally impactful research in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) through IDRC supported research project.

The university's commitment to fostering interdisciplinary research hubs focused on key issues such as healthcare, environmental sustainability, and economic development will drive meaningful change across the continent. By investing in research infrastructure, funding opportunities, and capacity-building initiatives, Unicaf University will empower faculty and students to pursue cutting-edge projects that transcend disciplinary boundaries and generate innovative solutions.

Furthermore, Unicaf University's emphasis on translating research findings into tangible outcomes, such as policy recommendations and technology innovations, will ensure that research contributes directly to positive change and improved quality of life for communities across Africa. Through collaboration, creativity, and impact-driven research, Unicaf University will position Africa as a global leader in academic research and innovation, driving inclusive development and shaping a brighter future for the continent.



## Research Activities at Unicaf University in Zambia

### Unlocking the Power of Mathematical and Statistical Tools in the Era of AI and Big Data



The research seminar titled "Navigating the Analytic Landscape" commenced on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at the newly build Unicaf University in Zambia campus under the guidance of Dr Victor Katoma from the Namibia University of Science and Technology. The seminar aimed at enhancing faculty understanding of data analysis in the AI and Big Data era, the seminar attracted sixteen participants from three Unicaf University in Zambia faculties.

The seminar's first day delved into foundational theories, including the big bang theory, and explored critical research questions concerning

technological advancements. Dr Katoma, an expert in mathematical modelling and computational mathematics, led sessions reviewing past and upcoming technological developments, integrating quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques, and examining trends in mathematical modelling and statistical tools. Discussions also focused on preparing universities and businesses for future technological changes and their impact on research capabilities.

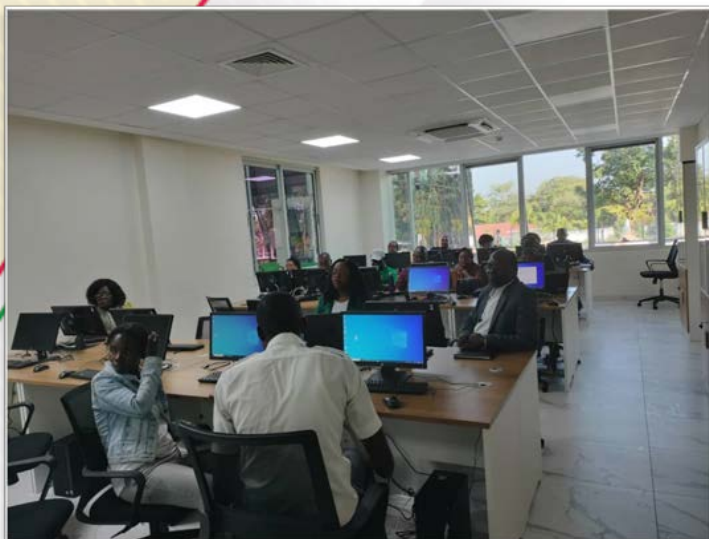
The discussion on technological developments emphasised phases such as Eruption, Frenzy, Crash, Synergy, and Maturity, highlighting the importance of strategic planning to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

The second part reviewed quantitative and qualitative techniques in data analysis, highlighting modelling's significance in representing complex systems and driving data-driven decision-making.

The third part explored the latest developments in mathematical modelling and statistical tools, with a spotlight on Probabilistic Multilevel Structural Equation Modelling (PMSEM) as a promising approach. Challenges included non-linear interactive classes and inelastic problems, requiring efficient estimates and a better understanding of dynamical systems.

The final part stressed how universities and businesses should prepare for the next technological leap, utilising theoretical frameworks across various fields and assessing risks and challenges in research approaches.





On the second day, practical applications of the discussed theories and methodologies took centre stage, with hands-on sessions enhancing participants' skills in research design, data collection tool development, and data preparation using software like SPSS and Atlas Ti.

Live demonstrations showcased advanced analytical tools such as nested data analysis and structural equation modelling, providing insights into their practical implications in addressing contemporary challenges.

In conclusion, the research seminar on “Navigating the Analytic Landscape” provided a

comprehensive platform for scholars and practitioners to explore the transformative potential of mathematical and statistical tools in the age of AI and Big Data. By combining theoretical insights with practical applications, the seminar equipped participants with the necessary skills and perspectives to effectively harness the power of analytics, set to drive innovative research endeavours and strategic business initiatives.

### 3rd East Africa Regional Early Childhood Conference, 2024



Dr Mpolomoka, the Dean of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences of Unicaf University in Zambia, joined the 3<sup>rd</sup> East Africa Regional Early Childhood Conference.

The conference, which was organised by the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) in collaboration with the AU CESA ECED Cluster and the Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network, took place at the Mwalimu Julius Nyerere International Conference Centre (MJNICC) in

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, from March 11th to 14th, 2024 and it focused on the theme of how investing in early childhood nurtures human capital throughout life. The conference provided a platform for an open discussion to diverse stakeholders including policymakers, civil society organisations (CSOs), Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs), grassroots organisations, and academia.







Dr Mpolomoka represented Unicaf University in Zambia, contributing to a round table discussion on empowering parents, caregivers, and communities. The team comprised representatives from nine institutions and countries, including the Ministry of Education Science and Technology in Tanzania, Children on the Edge Africa in Uganda, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Kenya, BRAC Maendeleo Tanzania, UNICEF Kenya, Aga Khan University Institute for Human Development in Kenya, Université Gaston Berger in Senegal, and Unicaf University in Zambia.

### ILERA 10<sup>th</sup> Africa Congress: Examining Zambia's Emoluments Commission Act and ILO Convention Compatibility

The ILERA 10<sup>th</sup> Africa Congress, held from April 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024, brought together experts to discuss labour issues under the theme “Challenges in the World of Work in the Wake of the Global Polycrisis: African Perspectives”. A significant presentation was delivered by Mr Kasonde, Law Lecturer and Program Leader at Unicaf University in Zambia, titled “A Critical Reflection on the Compatibility of the Emoluments Commission Act No. 1 of 2022 of the Republic of Zambia with ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98 on Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining Norms.”



His paper critically analysed the Emoluments Commission Act (ECA) of 2022, highlighting its misalignment with ILO Conventions Nos. 87 and 98, which are fundamental for ensuring Freedom of Association (FoA) and Collective Bargaining (CB). The paper pointed out that the ECA's exclusion of salaries, allowances, and pension rights from collective bargaining undermines these conventions and conflicts with both the Zambian Constitution and the Industrial and Labour Relations Act.



Mr Kasonde used a multidisciplinary approach to make recommendations for aligning the ECA with international labour standards and domestic laws. This analysis is especially important as the global labour sector deals with complex challenges, providing valuable insights for ensuring fair employment practices from an African perspective.



## Research activities at Unicaf University in Malawi

### Fourth Monthly Research Dissemination Seminar



Unicaf University in Malawi recently convened its fourth monthly research dissemination webinar on Tuesday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Dr Cromwell Byson, a seasoned expert in business management and owner of Namonde Investments and Business Management Consulting, led the session. Dr Byson's presentation, titled "An Evaluation of the Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Financial Performance: The Case for Tobacco Companies in Malawi", showcased the culmination of his doctoral study at Unicaf University in Malawi. For those interested in delving deeper, the full thesis is accessible through the [Unicaf University Thesis Repository](#)

Dr Byson's research findings illuminated a positive correlation between a firm's corporate social responsibility endeavours and its financial performance, emphasising the necessity of strategic planning and budget allocation for such initiatives. However, he cautioned against sweeping generalisations based on qualitative findings and advocated for further systematic and quantitative studies to solidify the link between corporate social responsibility and financial outcomes.

The webinar attracted a keen audience of 95 participants eager to explore the intricate connection between corporate social responsibility and financial success.

These monthly research dissemination seminars serve as a dynamic platform for recent and current postgraduate students, particularly those at the doctoral level, to showcase their completed or ongoing research endeavours. Held every last Tuesday of the month, the sessions are expertly managed on the zoom platform by Sebastian Heller from Unicaf headquarters, with guidance from Dr Levi Manda, Pro Vice Chancellor at UUMw, who ensures seamless proceedings and offers invaluable support to presenters.

Since January 2024, these research dissemination webinars have featured presentations by distinguished individuals such as Dr Martha Mondwa, Dr Emily Mwale, Dr Wellington Binali, and Dr Cromwell Mpinganjira, enriching the academic discourse at Unicaf University in Malawi.



## Students' Hub



We are excited to introduce 'Students' Hub', a new section in our newsletter designed specifically with our students in mind. This space will be dedicated to topics and content that we believe will greatly benefit our student community.

In the 'Students' Hub', students and scholars can expect to find a variety of articles, tips, and resources tailored to help them navigate their academic journey and beyond. From study strategies and career advice to wellness tips and profiles of inspiring peers, our goal is to provide valuable information and support that will enhance the student experience.

We encourage you to engage with this section and share your feedback or suggestions for future topics. 'Students' Corner' is a student's space, and we are committed to making it as relevant and useful as possible.

Stay tuned for our upcoming editions, and let 'Students' Hub' be your go-to source for insight and inspiration.

In our first 'Students' Hub' section we present an article about the 'Challenges associated with predatory journals and publishers' written by our esteemed academics from the Department of Business of the School of Doctoral Studies, Unicaf Federal, Dr Nathan Musonda, Dr Clement Ndindah and Dr Yasmine Bezzaz.

### Challenges Associated with Predatory Journals and Publishers

In the academic sphere, scholars and students often encounter a wide array of journals and publications, often coming face to face with a significant concern: predatory publishers. These entities, which appear legitimate at first sight, present considerable challenges for researchers, both new and experienced. Predatory journals are publications that lack the strict guidelines and moral principles maintained by respectable publishers, instead taking advantage of the academic publishing process for personal benefit. These journals frequently use dishonest tactics such as content theft, inflated fees, and misleading claims of peer review. As a result, the credibility of academic information dissemination is threatened and the integrity of scholarly communication is undermined.

The rise of predatory journals has introduced a divisive conflict between credibility and deception. Marydee Ojala, Editor-in-Chief of Online Searcher, compares this dilemma to distinguishing between genuine and counterfeit goods. Predatory sites display diverse characteristics, ranging from overt fraud to pseudo-scholarly outlets. According to Ojala et al., (2020), here are a few warning signs to be mindful of:

- **Totally False Journals:** Fabricated and lacking legitimacy.
- **Pseudo-Scholarly Publications:** Claim peer review and impact factor but fail to deliver.



- **Hijacked Journals:** Imitate reputable titles to deceive authors.
- **Scam Journals:** Charge fees but publish nothing.

Detecting predatory publishers amidst legitimate ones proves challenging. While initiatives like Beall's List once provided guidance, other platforms such as Stop Predatory Journals and Cabell's Blacklist now endeavor to fill this void. These serve as valuable resources in helping researchers steer clear from predatory publishers.

Scholars are also encouraged to consider journal credentials, analyse editing methods, and ask mentors and colleagues they can trust for recommendations. Some other cues to keep an eye out for would be:

- Exorbitant article processing costs (APCs) that appear out of proportion to the services rendered: Researchers should be cautious of publications that demand large processing fees without providing clear reasons or justifications, as these may be predatory journals that put profit before quality.
- The journal's website and submission procedure can offer warning signs as well and should be closely examined: The most obvious ones are unprofessional layouts and design, grammatical errors, promises of excessively rapid publication turnaround times etc.,

Students and faculty are not immune to the allure of predatory journals. Pressures to publish quickly and meet academic standards can inadvertently lead scholars into this trap. However, tools like the CRAAP Test and "Think. Check. Submit." offer assistance in discerning credible sources. Here's a breakdown of how these resources can help:

- The CRAAP Test—Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose—provides a structured approach to assessing sources. By assessing the information's currency, relevance to the research topic, author or publisher authority, content accuracy, purpose or bias, and other factors, scholars are able to develop well-informed conclusions on the reliability of sources.
- Think. Check. Submit is an international initiative that aims to educate researchers, promote integrity, and build trust in credible research and publications.

Promoting a culture of critical analysis and transparency becomes crucial as we navigate the complex landscape of predatory publishing. Through adopting best practices and raising awareness, we may be able to protect academic integrity and avoid dishonesty.

### References:

Ojala, M., Reynolds, R., & Johnson, K. G. (2020). Predatory journal challenges and responses. *The serials librarian*, 78(1-4), 98-103.

### Additional resources:

"Blacklist," (subscription database), Cabell's International, <https://cabells.com/>

"Stop Predatory Journals," <https://predatoryjournals.com>

"Beall's List of potential predatory journals and publishers", <https://beallslist.net/>

CRAAP Test: <https://library.csuchico.edu/help/source-or-information-good>

"Think. Check. Submit." Identify trusted publishers for your research. ([thinkchecksubmit.org](http://thinkchecksubmit.org))



## Eyes to the Future



Welcome to 'Eyes to the Future,' a new section in our newsletter dedicated to celebrating the innovative and impactful research of our graduate students. In this space, we will showcase the diverse and groundbreaking thesis projects that are shaping the future across various disciplines.

Each month, we will feature responses to three key questions about their thesis research from selected graduate students:

- **What was your research about?**
- **What led you to choose this topic for your doctoral research?**
- **How do you think the findings of your research could be useful in Africa's context?**

'Eyes to the Future' is designed to provide a platform for our students to share their insights, discoveries, and aspirations with our entire community. We aim to highlight the essence of their work, its significance, and its potential impact on their field and beyond, with a particular focus on its relevance to Africa.

Join us in celebrating the brilliant minds that are driving the future of research and innovation. Let 'Eyes to the Future' be your stage to inform, inspire, and connect with fellow scholars and the broader community.

In our first 'Eyes to the Future' section, we welcome Dr Oluwayemisi Owa who obtained her Doctorate in Business Administration from the Unicaf University in Zambia.

With a focus on strategic leadership, Dr Oluwayemisi specialises in guiding organisations through transformative journeys toward enhanced productivity. Backed by a solid track record in human resources management, she thrives on spearheading change and restructuring initiatives that drive organisational success through strategic human resource(HR) leadership.

Dr Oluwayemisi's career has been dedicated to crafting and implementing HR strategies, particularly within organisations undergoing substantial change and restructuring. She approaches each challenge by deeply understanding the unique landscape of the organisation, enabling her to devise and execute tailored strategies that yield sustainable results.

Her expertise spans various HR functions, including change management, restructuring, training and development, cost reduction strategies, and the integration of cutting-edge technologies like GenAI.



Additionally, she is committed to fostering inclusive, diverse, and equitable work environments, leveraging her extensive knowledge of employment laws on both local and international scales.

A key strength of Dr Oluwayemisi lies in leveraging emotional intelligence to navigate complex organisational dynamics and foster consensus among diverse stakeholders. By nurturing a culture of trust, collaboration, and innovation, she consistently drives positive outcomes and facilitates organisational growth.

Her thesis Title is “Managing Change, Ethical Principles and their Effect on Employees Performance: A Survey of Abuja Electricity Distribution Company”

**Abstract:** Many organisations are challenged with different issues arising from both the internal and external environments of the business. Despite these challenges, businesses need to remain competitive by identifying and managing such challenges effectively. Various works in the literature emphasize the importance of organisations successfully managing such changes. However, there exist some knowledge gaps as a result of many challenges that come with the process of change in an organisation, leading to many organisations' failure in successfully implementing change. The objective of the research is to evaluate the effects of integrating ethical principles in organisational change on employees' performance through a survey of the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC) in Nigeria. AEDC has approximately 3,378 employed staff. Using a mixed-method exploratory sequential approach, a qualitative research phase was conducted to explore participants' views. Ten participants were randomly selected to provide a complex textual description of employees' experience. Data were collected using focus group interviews and were analysed using thematic analysis. Through the use of themes and coding, data were converted, transformed, and processed. Data generated from the first phase were used to develop an instrument that best fits the subject. The quantitative data were collected through an online survey questionnaire using Google Forms and were further analysed using SPSS package. 345 participants' responses were gathered for the quantitative sample using Krejcie and Morgan's formula. The independent variables are the change processes identified by Lewin Kurt and John Kotter, and ethical principles while the dependent variables are the employees' performance identified. The study concluded that integrating the principles of ethics is a potential solution for managing change effectively and reducing employees' resistance. Important factors, including increased communication, stakeholder engagement that can impact customer satisfaction, and an enhanced relationship with customers, have been identified. Electricity utilities can improve their performance through ethical principles integration. The improvements can contribute to general employee performance and economic growth within a nation.

### Q: What was your research about?

OO: The purpose of my exploratory sequential design work was to first qualitatively explore with a small sample to design a feature on how to evaluate the effect of organisational change and the integration of ethical principles during a change on Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC) employees' performance and then to test this feature out with a large sample. Considering the high rate of failure in the implementation of change



management processes in many organisations, a closer investigation of the change management process implemented in the AEDC was conducted to provide insight into how the change process has affected

employees' performance in either a positive or a negative way. The study was expected to determine if the change process was conducted with appropriate ethical or unethical standards and principles.

The evaluation conducted by the research study will be useful to business managers in making decisions that can ensure that employees' resistance to change has been reduced, thereby resulting in improved employee performance. The findings can also be useful to scholars who are interested in the study of the effect of organisational change on employees' performance and how the change process can successfully integrate the principles of ethics during its implementation. In the case of the AEDC, the findings can help management review the implementation of the change process from time to time and allow proper ethical principles to be operationalised and incorporated into the company's policy. The first strand of this exploratory sequential design study is a qualitative exploration of the subject matter where focus group data were gathered from the research participants. From this initial exploration, the qualitative findings were used to develop a quantitative feature that was tested with a large sample. For the subsequent quantitative strand, an online questionnaire was collected from AEDC employees to identify an ethical approach that could potentially contribute to poor employee performance.

#### **Q: What led you to choose this topic for your doctoral research?**

OO: My choice of research topic was driven by several compelling reasons:

**Addressing a common issue:** The high rate of failure in implementing change management processes in many organisations is a significant concern. By focusing on this issue, my research aims to contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding organisational change and its impact on employee performance.

**Specific context:** By concentrating on the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC), I provided a specific context for my study. This specificity allows for a deeper analysis of the change management process within a particular organisation, offering insights that can be valuable not only to AEDC but also to similar organisations facing similar challenges.

**Ethical considerations:** Integrating ethical principles into the change management process is crucial for ensuring that changes are implemented in a fair and responsible manner. My research evaluated whether ethical standards were upheld during the change process at AEDC, providing valuable insights for both practitioners and scholars interested in the ethical dimensions of organisational change.

**Practical implications:** The findings of my research are expected to have practical implications for business managers. By identifying factors that contribute to employee resistance to change and assessing the impact of ethical considerations on employee performance, my study can inform decision-making processes within organisations, potentially leading to improved employee performance and smoother change implementations.





**Methodological rigor:** My use of an exploratory sequential design, starting with qualitative exploration and moving to quantitative testing, demonstrates a methodologically rigorous approach to addressing my research questions. This ensures that my findings were based on a thorough understanding of the subject matter and supported by robust data analysis.

Overall, my research topic is well-grounded in both theoretical considerations and practical relevance, making it a valuable contribution to the field of organisational change management and ethics.

**Q: How do you think the findings of your research could be useful in Africa's context?**

**OO:** The findings of this research hold significant potential for the African context, particularly in the realm of organisational development and change management within the continent's diverse business landscape.

**Informing organisational practices:** Africa's business environment is characterised by rapid economic growth, dynamic market conditions, and diverse cultural contexts. By examining the impact of organisational change and the integration of ethical principles within a specific African company like AEDC, the findings provide practical insights that can be adapted and applied across various industries and sectors in the region. Understanding how change processes affect employee performance in an African setting can help organisations tailor their strategies to navigate cultural nuances and societal expectations effectively.

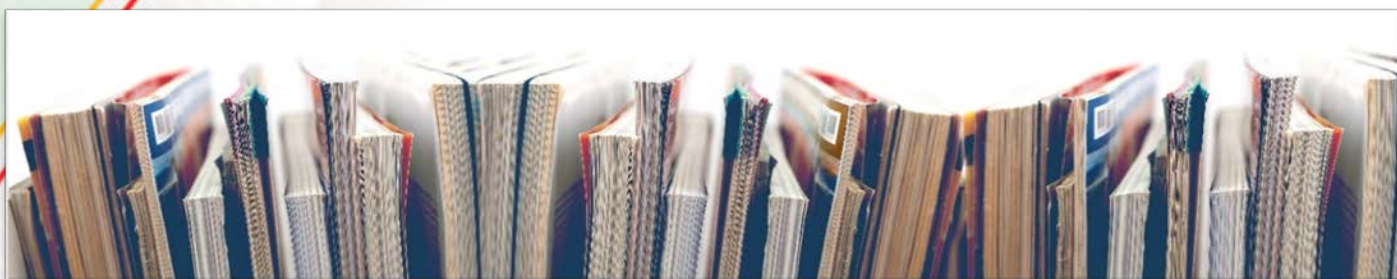
**Enhancing employee engagement:** Employee resistance to change is a common challenge faced by organisations worldwide, including those in Africa. By identifying factors contributing to resistance and assessing the role of ethical principles in change management, the research offers actionable strategies for enhancing employee engagement during periods of transition. This is particularly relevant in African contexts where workforce dynamics, including cultural values and social structures, play a significant role in shaping employee attitudes towards change. Implementing ethical practices can foster trust, transparency, and collaboration, ultimately improving employee buy-in and performance.

**Promoting sustainable development:** As Africa continues to strive for sustainable development and economic prosperity, the ability of organisations to adapt and innovate becomes increasingly crucial. By evaluating the effectiveness of change management processes and their alignment with ethical standards, the research contributes to building resilient and socially responsible businesses. This is essential for promoting long-term sustainability and contributing to the continent's socio-economic development agenda.

In summary, the findings of this research have the potential to inform organisational practices, enhance employee engagement, and promote sustainable development within the unique context of Africa's evolving business landscape. By addressing the specific challenges and opportunities present in the region, the research contributes to building capacity and driving positive change across diverse sectors and industries.

## RECENT UNICAF PUBLICATIONS

New peer-reviewed publications by our students and faculty



### STUDENTS

Abimbilla, B. S., & Mwelwa, A. (2024). Examining the effects of artisanal and small-scale mining on women and children in Kono and Bo Districts of Sierra Leone. *International Journal of Educational Research and Studies*, 6(2), 17-25. <https://www.multidisciplinaryarticle.org>

Yele, W. B., & Specioza, A. (2024). Examining the Access, Quality, and Relevance Gaps in Liberia's Educational Policy Environment. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(3), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i03.20482>

### FACULTY

Hamanjila, K., Thiruppathi, M., and Phiri, H. (2024). Navigating Silence: A Comprehensive Review of Parental Roles in the Rehabilitation of Children with Hearing Loss. *Open Journal of Pediatrics*, 14, 364–378. <https://doi:10.4236/ojped.2024.142036>.

Mushibwe, C. P. (2024). Building a Solid Foundation to Transform Africa Through the Lenses of Organization Development Principles. *Organization Development Journal*, 42(1), [36 - 43].

Sharra, A. and Silver, R. (2023). History of Primary and Secondary Education in Malawi. *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia*. Oxford. Oxford University Press. <https://doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.1448>

Sultan, F., Lodhi, M. W., Fatima, R., Ishaq, M. S., Chambashi, G. (2024). Computing the solution trajectories, steady state approximation, and sensitivity analysis in complex chemical reaction mechanism. *AIP Advances* 14, 045027 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0203877>

Sultan, F., Fatima, R., Ishaq, M. S., Chambashi, G. (2024). Physical interpretation on development and validation of the reaction routes of complex chemical kinetic model. *AIP Advances* 14, 045225 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0203875>

Yaseen, M., Sultan, F., Ishaq, M. S., Shahzad, M., Chambashi, G. (2024). Analyzing multi-step reaction mechanisms: Unveiling non-linear dynamics with advanced reduction techniques. *AIP Advances* 14, 045338 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0197019>

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

If you have the idea; We can help you with funding opportunities



### [InDiCo-Global First Open Call](#)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: relevant policy/strategy/vision for ICT/digital adopted in the EU

Deadline: 5 August 2024

### [Research and Innovation and other actions to support the implementation of Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' \(HORIZON-MISS-2024-SOIL-01\)](#)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: Soil Health

Deadline: 8 October 2024

### [International Research Scientist Development Award \(IRSDA\) \(K01\) Independent Clinical Trial Not Allowed](#)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: postdoctoral research scientists and junior faculty from any health-related discipline who propose career development activities and a research project that is relevant to the health priorities of the LMIC under the mentorship of LMIC and U.S. mentors

Deadline: 10 March 2025

### [Mobile Health: Technology and Outcomes in Low and Middle Income Countries \(R21/R33 – Clinical Trial Optional\)](#)

Area/Disciplines/Themes: mHealth is defined as the use of mobile and wireless devices (cell phones, tablets, etc.) to improve health outcomes, health care services, and health research

Deadline: 21 March 2025



## FELLOWSHIPS / AWARDS / COURSES

List of fellowships, awards and courses



[Mental Health Award: applying neuroscience to understand symptoms in anxiety, depression and psychosis](#)

(for researchers)

Deadline: 23 July 2024

Area/Disciplines/Themes: any relevant discipline to mental health science

[Wellcome Career Development Awards](#) (for mid-career researchers)

Deadline: 25 July 2024

Area/Disciplines/Themes: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), experimental medicine, humanities and social science, clinical/allied health sciences, and public health – as long as it has the potential to improve human life, health and wellbeing, and aligns with our funding remit

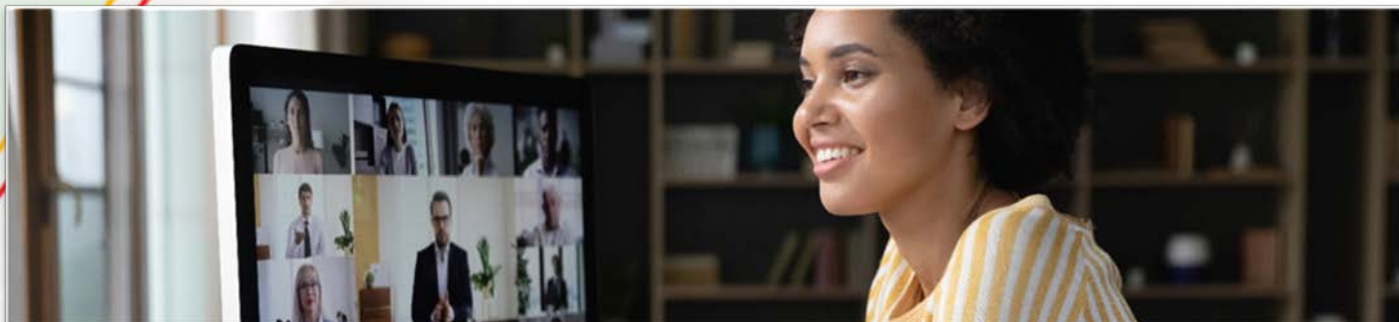
[Wellcome Discovery Awards](#) (for established Researchers)

Deadline: 30 July 2024

Area/Disciplines/Themes: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), experimental medicine, humanities and social science, clinical/allied health sciences, and public health – as long as it has the potential to improve human life, health and wellbeing, and aligns with our funding remit

## CALLS FOR CONFERENCES AND EVENTS (WORKSHOP / WEBINARS)

Upcoming conferences and events



### **Statistics' Camp - Unlock the Power of Data: Statistics Series Camp**

Get informed of the topic and the dates of our upcoming webinars on statistics.

Name of seminar	Presenter/s	Date
Confirmatory Factor Analysis, SEM Analysis, and Path Analysis using IBM-AMOS - Introduction and Explanation of Output	Dr Costas Photiou	June 4 <sup>th</sup> 2024
Introduction to Qualitative data analysis	Dr Marirajan Thiruppathi & Dr Lupiya Daniel Mpolomoka	June 12 <sup>th</sup> 2024
Defining variables and entering data into R	Dr Theocharis Gimatsidis	Mid July

All the recordings of the webinars will be uploaded to the Unicaf website and will be accessed by all students. Updates regarding the recordings will be available on future research newsletters.

### **Unicaf University Doctoral Research Groups** (for Doctoral Students)

The Doctoral Research Groups (DRGs)' s aim is to foster collaboration, knowledge exchange and feedback provision between doctoral researchers and faculty, with a view of advancing original and rigorous research. The initiative is aimed at Unicaf University doctoral researchers and faculty, during which doctoral researchers present ideas and share expertise that can enhance their research. The open dialogue between doctoral researchers working on similar subjects will facilitate information exchange and will be a vibrant forum in which students can receive feedback on their work.

The next Doctoral Research Groups are held on:

Dates: **13 June 2024**

Area/Disciplines/Themes: Education

Dates: **27 June 2024**

Area/Disciplines/Themes: Business

More information regarding the Doctoral Research Groups can be found at our [webpage](#).

## OTHER NEWS - What we think might interest you



We would like to take this opportunity to kindly remind everyone that we welcome doctoral and Master's students (or graduates) who have already published, or are in the process of publishing their work to share their peer-reviewed publications with us by utilising the following link: <https://forms.gle/u6jyfopDaCyUfvyY8>. Additionally, please mention whether the publication is affiliated with Unicaf / Unicaf University.

Moreover, we extend the same invitation to faculty members who have publications to share. If you are a faculty member, please send us your publications (with correct reference or DOI) to [research.office@unicaf.org](mailto:research.office@unicaf.org). Kindly indicate whether the publication is affiliated with Unicaf / Unicaf University, as this information will assist us in accurately registering your publications in our database.

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