

## **Socialisation of the Muvenda Girl from Infancy to Teenage Stage**

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### **Abstract**

Most Vhavenda girls behave in the same or similar way, suggesting that they are raised in the same way. When a Muvenda girl grows up, parents give her dolls made of maize cob after shelling, with no grains on. The girl puts on dresses to these maize cobs as clothes. Well –to- do families buy their children dolls to play with. Playing also includes learning to cook food using water and soil. When it is stiff they call it porridge. They can be seen feeding the maize cobs with soil food. These games help the girl child to learn future roles when they would be parents. It is because of this background that the paper seeks to investigate socialisation of the Muvenda girl from birth to teenage stage. This will be accomplished by analysing the socialisation process from childhood to teenage stage.

### **1. Introduction**

Before one starts with the discussion of this topic one is compelled to define what ‘socialisation’ means. According to Womack (1998:23) ‘socialization is the process of transmitting culture from one generation to the next’. He is supported by Strong et al (2008:16) when they say it is ‘the shaping of individual behaviour to conform to social or cultural norms’. In other words socialization refers to the process of imparting culture, behaviour and norms to an individual from infant stage to teenage stage. The paper will deal with how the Muvenda girl grows up until she reaches teenage stage. Several aspects are taken into consideration when girls are socialized until they grow up. These include clothes, physical appearance, duties and sports.

### **2. Clothes**

Girls and boys are recognized by the clothes that they wear .In addition; female children (girls) are raised differently from males (boys). There are things that will indicate that the person is a female or a male that person is socialised

#### **2.1 Colour of clothes**

The colour of the clothes for a female child is different from that of the male child. When a female child is born in the family, she is wrapped within clothes coloured yellow, pink and white. This is supported by Zastrow and Kirst-Ashmen (2007:328) when they say:

Girls are wrapped in pink blankets, and parents are bold that they now have ‘a beautiful little girl’

When a girl child is born in a Vhavenda family, they wrap the child in pink colours if it is a girl child. This differs from a boy child, which would be wrapped in a blue colour.Wharton (2005:37) also supports this when he says that

‘When expecting parents learn they are going to have girl, they may decorate the nursery in pink or yellow rather than blue, or in pastel colors rather than colours that are more bold.’

Girls’ clothes are expected to be soft and decorated with flowers. Wharton (2005:123) supports this idea by saying

‘---clothes for infant girls tend to be soft, pink and decorated with lace or bows’  
Girls’ rooms are decorated with light colours.

In the Tshivenda culture, toddlers put on *tshideka* ‘tiny apron hanging loosely worn by very young boys and girls. When they grow up girls wear *shedo*,’ cloth apron suspended from the girdle in front only/undergarment of females/narrow strip of cloth between legs and hanging over girdle in front and behind for girls. When boys grow up they wear *tsindi* ‘a loin dress of men and boys, a triangular piece of soft skin tied round the loins. Therefore any person meeting a girl child or a boy child he/she will be able to identify them accordingly.

Initially the Vhavenda did not take colour into consideration when identifying a girl or a boy child. However, lately the Vhavenda can identify the girl child by yellow, pink and white colours.

These days, the Vhavenda select things meant for girl children. In the rooms one would see teddy bears lying on the bed of a girl child. They also have duvets that are colored yellow, pink and white. This is supported by Halverson (2005:153) when he says

‘Girls’ rooms were more likely to contain yellow curtains ‘.

### 3. Physical Appearance

When girls grow up one will find them with soft skin and attractive, physical appearance. Girls are expected to be beautiful, having soft skins and long hair. This idea is supported by Halverson (2005:76) when he says:

‘...the baby has a long hair, so it must be a she’

Helgeson (2005:151) goes further and says:

‘This shows that parents stereotype newborn babies by perceiving girls as pretty, little and soft in comparison to boys. This is supported by Wharton (2005:124) when he says:

‘---daughters were rated a softer, finer featured, little and more in attentive than sons.’

In the Tshivenda culture girls are not supposed to be like boys. They are expected to have soft skins and a sweet voice. If a girl has a hoarse voice, she would be considered to be manlike. Girls are expected to have long thighs hence, the saying ‘*thaha dza mapango*’ long jawbone meaning a beautiful girl. She is expected to have ‘*milenzhe midzwororo*’ meaning one who has right-up physical structure.

### 4. Girls chores

Girls are taught how to do various duties by their mothers. In other instances, they learn by looking what their parents do. Most chores are given to girls by their mothers as they are the ones who have more responsibility than boys. This is indicated by Santrock (1992:282) when he says:

“Parents are only one of many sources through which individual learn genders roles.”

The Muvenda girl child is taught many things when it is still young.

#### 4.1 To learn house chores

The girl learns household chores she will perform when she grows up. In the first instance she would learn how to dress a child. This is done by dressing a mukope ‘maize cob’ after shelling, with no grains on. She wraps the ‘*mukope*’ with a cloth to resemble the dress. At the one end she would put a hat to resemble the doll with the hat. In addition, the girl child feeds the child with her finger to resemble a spoon. The doll is fed with mud to resemble soft porridge.

#### 4.2 To learn how to bath

The girl child then learns to bath the doll. This learning process prepares the girl child for what is expected of her when she grows up. In addition the girl child learns to wash dresses for the dolls. The girl child would then teach the doll to walk and talk.

The above scenario is supported by Santrock (1992:283) when he says that

‘Parents by action and example, influence their children’s gender development.’ This is also supported by Doyle and Paludi (1998:75) when they say

“Parents are one of the more important socializing agents”

Girls stay at home most of the time and spend more time with elderly people because the Vhavenda community considers the girl child as an asset or richness. The more girls the family has, the richer it is. This is because when the girl child grows older, she will get married and bring riches to the parents. This why Vhavenda community sees to it that the girl child is under strict parental care and supervision. This is to prepare the girl child for the future. The girl child should avoid the following:

- (a) Nakedness
- (b) Sweeping floors after sunset
- (c) Singing while cooking
- (c) Sitting in a prostrate position

#### 4.3 Care for the elderly

During childhood the girl child learns how to care for the young ones. When she is playing, the little one will be pretending to be an old woman who is nursing a baby. She would carry the doll on her back as if she is carrying a child. She also sings lullaby for the baby. This is supported by Hegel son (2005:164) when he says

---girls interacted more than boys with young children....they were more likely to assign child care and household chores to girls.”

Worrell (2001:286) added this by saying

‘Because infants seem to elicit nurturant behavior, girls who spent more time with infants demonstrate more nurturance than boys...’

Girls are raised to become nurturance and responsible with everything at home. This is because Vhavenda family would be disappointed if their girl child does not become a responsible woman in adulthood.

This is supported by Worrell (2005:285) who says

‘---girls are raised to be nurturant, responsible and obedient’. In addition Doyle and Paludi (1998:75) concluded by saying “basically, girls did "women’s work”: Cleaning the house, doing the dishes, cooking and babysitting for young siblings.’ This is true of the Vhavenda community, where girl children are, you would find then cooking mud, dishes made off fruit shells and acting as parents of the family.

#### 4.4 Preparation for other household chores.

The girl children cook porridge made of mud during childhood in order to prepare them to be cooks for their families. They also wash dolls in preparation for their roles as mothers in future. They also learn to clean their houses and fetch water, especially in rural areas. They also collect firewood and cultivate crops.

#### 4.5 Learning sports

From six years of age the girl-children engage in different sporting activities which are different from those of boys. Girls play with dolls. They learn how to carry them and try to feed them. They learn how to speak to those dolls.

This is supported by Santrock (1992:283) when he says

‘Girls are more likely to be given dolls to play with during childhood and when, old enough are more likely to be assigned babysitting duties as’

Helgeson (2005:153) adds the following:

Girls were more likely than boys to have dolls, kitchen appliances and child’s furniture...’

In Tshivenda culture the girl children play with dolls made of cob or rags. They play *ndode* ‘knuckle bones’ or five stones, which is a game for girls; *bune* ‘game of touch’ played by boys and girls. Another game is *tsetsetse* ‘a shuffle’ game, *mudzumbamo* ‘hide and seek game. They play *ndode* which teaches counting, concentrating in what they are doing, and patience.

To show that they are girl children, Doyle and Paludi (1998:75) support this by saying that girls are given dolls, doll houses and miniature household appliances' and Worrel (2001:287) adds the following:

---girls play with dolls and boys construct vehicles and weapons'

The above assists the girl child to prepare herself for womanhood /motherhood. The girl child is prepared to be able to handle the dolls as if they are real children

#### **4.6 Imitation of parents**

When girls are playing they imitate what parents do at home. The girl children would imitate the voices of their mothers which they are angry they will also imitate them when they are happy. Boys will imitate fathers' voices while girl children imitate their mothers. In so doing, the socialisation process is enhanced and eventually completed.

#### **5. Conclusion**

This paper has found that socialization of Muvenda girl starts from the clothes she puts on, physical appearance, learning house chores, care for the elderly, preparation for other household chores, learning of sports. In addition, imitation of the parents is found to be important in the socialization of the Muvenda girl from infancy to teenage stage.

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