

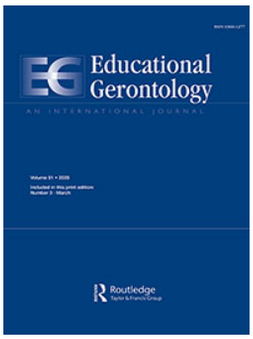
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Exploring gerontology in Tuku's selected songs: the case of '*Wasakara*' (2000) and '*Ndakuvara*' (2002)

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically discusses two (2) songs of Oliver Mtukudzi (Tuku) to decipher his perceptions and imaginings of the process and experience of aging in Zimbabwe. These songs are *Wasakara* (2000) and *Ndakuvara* (2002). Mtukudzi's music popularly known as Tuku music is hailed for entertaining and admonishing the public through powerful moral messages of personhood and self-discipline. It is important to appreciate his teachings regarding aging, especially seeing how population aging is fast becoming a reality in southern Africa and Zimbabwe. While the entertainment and pedagogical value of Tuku music has been widely acknowledged, the gerontological meaning deriving from it may not always be apparent. Gerontologists appreciate how music, as a cultural medium, communicates messages of aging to society, especially messages from famous musicians such as Oliver Mtukudzi. Among the important themes pursued by Mtukudzi are the intergenerational reciprocity of care and the physiological, psychological and social markers of aging.

Introduction

There is a growing body of literature acknowledging how Oliver Mtukudzi emphasized *Ubuntu/Unhu*/personhood in the diverse subjects that he sang about, from death, HIV/AIDS, to marriage and inheritance, friendships, and peace and conflict resolution (Chasi & Tagwirei, 2020; Chitando, 2002; Kyker, 2012, 2016; Machingura, 2022; Maguraushe, 2020; Mangeya & Jakaza, 2022). This growing body of literature on Mtukudzi is based on diverse interpretations of Tuku music which is mainly expressed in metaphors, idiomatic expressions and innuendoes. Nembaware (2017, p. 123) highlights this stating:

> Because of the multiple layers of meaning interwoven in the fabric of his music, Mtukudzi's songs generate endless metaphorical possibilities embedded in the fluidity of language. Such is the mark of the artist's mastery that his collage of mental images configures and projects the mysteries of human existence and aspirations.

However, the growing body of knowledge about Mtukudzi's music and his philosophy has so far not fully grappled with his representation of aging in Zimbabwe. His engagement with this theme remains understudied. This is the gap that this current study addresses, interpreting Mtukudzi's message on the important subject of aging.

While representations of aging in works of literary art and media have been well documented, not much research has been done so far to understand how aging is depicted through Zimbabwean

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popular music. This reflects a yawning and unfortunate gap considering how popular music shapes and is shaped by societal values, norms and beliefs. In view of the privileged status that Tuku has achieved in the Zimbabwean society, and taking into account the urgent need to seriously think about and prepare for a demographic shift and population aging in the country, this study focuses on a number of questions regarding Tuku. The main questions that this study answers are; what messages were communicated and continue to be communicated by Tuku Music regarding aging? Is the Zimbabwean popular culture (through Tuku music) adequately preparing the society for population aging? How is the process and experience of aging represented in the Zimbabwean icon Oliver Mtukudzi's music? What lessons about aging can be learnt from the selected songs by Tuku? These questions are answered through an in-depth analysis of two songs purposively selected from Tuku's rich oeuvre of 67 albums.

Background

Representation of aging identities through popular music

Music is an important aspect of life accompanying an individual throughout the life-course from birth to death. It is therefore no surprise that looking at old age as a specific stage of the life course, music is held as very important. Popular music is a potent mass medium that has both positive and negative effects on people's emotional and mental wellbeing. It continues to offer huge potential for improving health and well-being in old age. This is supported by a compelling body of research (Bennet & Taylor, 2012; Cohen, 2009; Creech et al., 2013; DeNora, 2000; Diaz Abrahan et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2016). Popular music's active engagement in the creation of people's social and personal life (DeNora, 2000) and its successful mapping of social and personal identity (Crozier, 1997; Hargreaves & North, 1999) are some of the factors that have made it possible for it to assume this influence.

Studies by Hays and Minichiello (2005) and Kelly et al. (2016) on older people and their interactions with music show that popular music plays a significant role in their lives because it helps them get to know and think about who they are as individuals. Here, popular music is used as a metaphor for 'who' the older adults are and how they want to be viewed by others. As a result, while aging is understood as 'a process whereby people accumulate years and progressively experience changes to biological, social, and psychological functioning as they move through different phases of the life course' (Phillips et al., 2010, p. 12), it should be viewed as a social construct that reflects the social norms of the time. Because of this, popular music is crucial for the (re)construction of aging identities as they are represented in lifestyles and related cultural practices (Bennet & Taylor, 2012, p. 231). As a result, music becomes a significant tool for self-mapping in the older adults, allowing individuals to define their identities in specific ways (DeNora, 2000). Through listening to or performing music:

> [Ageing] individuals effectively produce and position themselves as ageing subjects in a context of everyday experience that extends within and across, for example, relationships, careers, [and] families." In each of these and other everyday contexts, the presence of particular musical texts in the memoryscape resonates with their ongoing presence in the everyday soundscapes of the here and now (Bennet & Taylor, 2012, p. 233).

By focusing on selected Tuku songs, this study suggests that the musical experience of Tuku is closely related to the broader phenomenological, sensory, and aesthetic aspects of aging in Zimbabwe. Sociological research reveals that society can help shape the meanings and experiences, (either positively or negatively) of aging, what Bennet and Taylor (2012) refer to as 'social aging.' Popular music serves as a medium for challenging or reinforcing the formation of social aging, presenting new ideas and assisting older people in identifying themselves and being recognized across locations in a particular way (Kelly et al., 2016, p. 3). In their study of the involvement of popular music styles namely punk and queer dance with the aged, for example, Bennet and Taylor (2012) show how these forms of music were able to produce feelings of 'youthful' selfhood for the old aged subjects in a certain context.

Because music can convey different, often contradictory and ambiguous meanings and experiences, researchers should be wary of how music can also carry ageist messages (Kelly et al., 2016). Negative stereotypes in music can affect the health of older adults. Ageism causes ill-health; it can get under the skin (Dionigi, 2015; Levy et al., 2016). Gerontologists have concerned themselves with how cultural artifacts such as school textbooks, novels, newspapers, films and magazines sometimes inadvertently carry ageist messages (Hungwe et al., 2023; Ng, 2021).

According to Bennet and Taylor's (2012) research, a study that aims to comprehend how popular music represents aging as a construct should look beyond song lyrics and also take into account elements of the music like rhythm and tonality that characterize the style as a whole. Drawing on selected songs by Mtukudzi, this study examines how aging identities are created and negotiated demonstrating the aesthetic qualities that the musician uses to accomplish this.

Why focus on Oliver Mtukudzi and his music?

Oliver Mtukudzi was one of the most celebrated award-winning musical icons whose ingenuity created a strong brand that is sure to live on for a very long time in Zimbabwe and the southern African region. Tuku, as he was affectionately known, passed on in 2019 after a successful music career spanning over four decades. Mtukudzi was born on September 22, 1952, and passed away on January 23, 2019, when he was 66 years old. He had not only become a household name but had become a global brand, a human rights activist and UNICEF's Goodwill ambassador for Southern Africa. His long musical career provides intriguing opportunities to examine how the musician viewed the idea of aging.

Oliver Mtukudzi is perceived as a global icon, a beloved popular singer, and prolific song writer (Kyker, 2016). The accolades and plaudits earned by Mtukudzi for his performance as a musician bespeak his superstar status which served to fan the interest of the researchers. Mtukudzi's music appealed to 'successive generations of listeners who saw his music as essential like 'food' and described themselves as 'born listening to his songs' (Kyker, 2016, p. 12). From a cultural gerontology perspective, it is quite pertinent to study Mtukudzi's contribution to Zimbabwean interpretation and understanding of aging given the fact that as an artist and a cultural 'worker and producer,' Mtukudzi contributed to the culture of Zimbabwe influencing and also being influenced by it. Because Mtukudzi's music has become a behemoth of Zimbabwean culture, this study analyses Mtukudzi's music to make visible how he perceived and imagined the process of aging and older people. This article contends that Mtukudzi's songs, (*Wasakara* and *Ndakuvara*) provide a unique setting for the observation and research on aging and its mediation through music in the Zimbabwean context.

A brief history of Tuku Music

The decade 1970–1980 is deemed very important for Zimbabwean music history as it represented the time when local artists gained fame and began to pursue music as a commercial venture (Chitando, 2002). In 1975, Mtukudzi issued his first single, 'Stop after Orange.' Two years later, he started playing live with the Wagon Wheels, a band that featured the well-known singer Thomas Mapfumo, although his time with them was brief. He parted with the Wagon Wheels in the late 1970s to focus on a solo career and start his own band, The Black Spirits. Many of Mtukudzi's early recordings have continued to have an impact today. In 1977, he recorded his debut album, *Ndipeiwo zano*. Mtukudzi released his final album, *Hany'a* (Concern), in 2018, just a few months before his death.

Mtukudzi's style, which is widely referred to as 'Tuku music' is a combination of traditional sounds from within various ethnic groups in Zimbabwe with the musician sometimes making distinct reference to regional styles such as South African mbaqanga. Tuku music has attracted considerable scholarship (Chirere & Mukandatsama, 2008; Eyre, 2001; Kyker, 2016; Sibanda, 2008; Turino, 2000). As reflected through literature, several factors have contributed to Mtukudzi's popularity. The first of these is the notion that Tuku's musical discourse is based on the African indigenous concept of '*Unhu/*

Ubuntu,' which incorporates and supports the virtues of self-discipline, the very basis of humanness or being a human among other humans (Kyker, 2016). Mtukudzi is thus credited for reflecting highly nuanced and textured Zimbabwean culture through his music (Kyker, 2016). Secondly, Mtukudzi acted as a social commentator engaging with issues affecting individuals, Zimbabwean communities and the nation at large. Such social issues include women's inheritance rights, HIV and AIDS and aging (Kyker, 2012; Sibanda, 2008). Thirdly, Mtukudzi's music has drawn attention because of the way that Zimbabwean politics are reflected in his style, particularly in the song '*Wasakara*' from the album *Bvuma* (Admit) (2000). '*Wasakara*,' which increased Mtukudzi's influence and popularity, as many listeners began to interpret it as a call for Robert Mugabe, whom the local media was wont to refer to as the octogenarian president of Zimbabwe, to step down as President of Zimbabwe (Eyre, 2001; Kyker, 2016; Machingura, 2022; Maguraushe, 2020; Mangeya & Jakaza, 2022; Sibanda, 2008).

Ageing in Zimbabwe

In understanding aging in Zimbabwe (and sub-Saharan Africa in general), researchers portray older adults as guardians of culture and generally a spent force mainly residing in the rural areas and relying on both subsistence farming and remittances sent by migrant children and relatives. In Zimbabwe old age as a stage of the life course is marked by poverty (Hungwe, 2022; Dhemba, 2014), particularly so in an economy that has been ravaged by the negative effects of climate change, high levels of inflation, unemployment and out migration especially from the 1990s onwards (World Bank & Government of Zimbabwe, 2016). Old age in Zimbabwe is characterized by economic challenges and health problems and it is difficult to attain healthy aging given the socio-economic challenges faced in the country. Healthy aging is defined by the WHO as 'the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age' (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020, p. 1). Functional ability means that the older adults continue to be able 'to meet their basic needs, learn, grow and make decisions, be mobile, build and maintain relationships, and contribute to society' (WHO, 2020). Healthy aging is attained when growing populations of older persons enjoy additional years of good health. Many older adults in Zimbabwe continue to struggle to survive, with some of them providing care for young children whose parents are either dead or have emigrated, in an informal economy devoid of any universal means of social protection (Hungwe, 2022; World Bank & Government of Zimbabwe, 2016).

Despite the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic, population aging continues to be one of the most pressing matters around the globe which requires the attention of scholars and policy makers alike (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2023). In sub-Saharan Africa, poverty among older adults continues to increase while the traditional family support mechanisms are failing due to various factors including the complexities of the economic and political crises, HIV/AIDS, migration, unemployment, and changing value systems (Aboderin, 2004; Kaseke, 2005; UNDESA, 2015). These factors have left older adults vulnerable; without social protection, and providing care for them is increasingly becoming viewed as burdensome (Mangoma & Wilson-Prangley, 2019). Such situations have also fueled ageist attitudes toward older adults.

Ageism is a growing global human rights challenge which threatens to cripple global efforts to address sustainable development goals on eradicating poverty, hunger and guaranteeing good health among older adults (WHO, 2021). While on the one hand aging narratives have become more negative (Ng, 2021; Ng et al., 2021) and older people underrepresented or absented in media products including in music (Kelly et al., 2016), the reality is that people are living longer and society should expect more and more older people around. This is due to a number of factors such as the successes and breakthroughs in health, education, politics and the empowerment of women. According to the World Social Report (UNDESA, 2023, p. iv) the number of persons aged 65 years or older worldwide is expected to double over the next three decades, reaching 1.6 billion in 2050, when older people will account for more than 16% of the global population. This includes Africa, although it is still at the early stages of the

demographic transition. Although statistics of demographic changes vary among African countries, He et al. (2020) warn against the misconception that there are 'no older people in Africa,' arguing that while in 2020 forty-five (45) of Africa's 56 countries had a population of less than 7% older persons, it is projected that by 2050 only 12 will have older adults constituting less than 7% of their populations. In Zimbabwe older adults aged 60 years of age or older constitute 6.5% (987,637) out of Zimbabwe's entire population of 15,178,583 and it marks an increase from 4.7% in 1982 (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency ZIMSTAT, 2023). Zimbabwe's population of older adults is projected to increase to 7–9,9% by 2050 (He et al., 2020). Given these developments, it is necessary to study how popular music represents the phenomenon of aging.

Theorizing aging in Zimbabwe

This papers utilizes arguments from the continuity and exchange theories to analyze the 2 selected songs by Mtukudzi. The continuity theory holds that, in the course of growing older, an individual will attempt to maintain stability in the lifestyle he/she has developed over the years. A person will strive to preserve the habits, preferences and lifestyle acquired over a lifetime and there may be a process of evolution of activities as the individual grows older (Atchley, 1989). While earlier theories such as the disengagement and activity theory suggest that successful aging is achieved by movement in a single direction, the continuity theory, in contrast, starts from the premise that the individual will try to preserve the favored lifestyle for as long as possible. It then suggests that adaptation may occur in several directions according to how the individual perceives her/his changing status (Victor, 2005, p. 22).

The exchange theory considers how individuals weigh costs and benefits of participating in interactions and relationships. This premise is true even for intergenerational relationships and interactions where exchanges between generations take place throughout the life course. Bould et al. (1989) distinguish immediate exchange strategies from deferred exchange strategies where over a long period of time an individual can accumulate 'social credits' which can then be utilized in the future. For example, a parent/guardian or grandparent can accumulate social credit and 'investment' by caring for children with the hope that these, in turn, will care for them in the future. There are four key assumptions which underpin this theoretical stance: (a) individuals choose interactions which maximize benefits and minimize costs, (b) individuals use past experiences of exchanges to predict the future, (c) interactions will be sustained only if they are beneficial, and (d) power is derived from imbalances in social exchange – if an individual is dependent upon another then he/she loses power and the other party accrues it (Victor, 2005, p. 31). Generally, in old age, older persons may become dependent on younger ones, however the social credits they would have accumulated and investments they would have made, create a legitimate expectation for them to receive care from those younger members whom they would have raised. The Shona proverb '*chirere mangwana chigokurerawo*' (Care for the child and s/he will care for you tomorrow) encapsulates the expected reciprocal intergenerational exchange of care and support.

In this paper, the concepts of filial piety and *Unhu/Ubuntu*, are also invoked to assist in understanding the cultural norms, attitudes of respect and expectations of informal care and support for the older adults in Zimbabwe. Jecker (2022) persuasively argues that orphaned children raised in skip generation households need to show gratitude, reciprocity and exercise humanness (*Ubuntu*) by taking care of the older grandparents who helped raise them. Jecker (2022, p. 154) further argues that Ubuntu as African philosophy encompasses authenticity, humanness (respecting and recognizing human dignity) having a virtuous disposition toward others, showing dignity, respect, conformity and reconciliation in the face of conflict and hardship, and a collective consciousness that reflects caring and sensitivity to the needs of others.

Methods

This study deploys a case study design (Yin, 2009) and to obtain data, researchers purposefully selected (Gentles et al., 2015; Patton, 2002) two case study songs *Wasakara* and *Ndakuvara* from Oliver Mtukudzi's musical archive of 67 albums produced over a period that spanned four decades of his musical career, with a total of more than 500 music tracks. These song tracks were selected on the basis that their lyrical content explicitly uses terms and expressions that address themes of older people, attitudes toward and experiences of aging in Zimbabwe. The selection process involved downloading the music albums, most of which are available on YouTube, playing them and carefully listening to and screening the lyrical content for words and expressions that unambiguously referred to aging or older people. The process was not difficult because the researchers were already familiar with most of Mtukudzi's songs, they shared the same cultural and linguistic background with the musician and grew up and lived in the environment from which Mtukudzi drew his artistic inspiration. One of the researchers is also grounded in music and musicology by training.

The Shona transcriptions of the selected songs were translated into English for analysis purposes. It is important however, to point out that loss of meaning in translation is inevitable in all cases involving translating from one language to another given that there may be no perfect equivalence of language and meaning across languages. Both songs are very popular in Zimbabwe, at the time of their release they were listed among the top ten of Mtukudzi's top rated hit songs (Munyuki, 2002; Samanga, 2019) and are well-known for their reference to the experiences that come with aging in the Zimbabwean society.

In this study we take the non-verbocentric view of music as irreducible to text and words (Fornäs, 1997) and thus employ a critical analysis of musical discourse which integrates elements of critical discourse analysis of the lyrical content with the analysis of aspects of harmony and rhythm (Van Leeuwen, 2012, p. 320) to closely examine the tensions and contradictions of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic ideologies of aging in Mtukudzi's songs *Wasakara* and *Ndakuvara*. We understand musical discourse as referring to a social practice relating to specific ways 'of representing specific aspects' of social life (Aleshinskaya, 2013, p. 425) in dealing with the phenomenon of aging and older persons in society. Critical musical discourse analysis was therefore chosen for this study because it enabled researchers to explore the deeper meaning hidden behind the lyrical, visual, and rhythmic elements of *Wasakara* and *Ndakuvara* to obtain a nuanced understanding of the emotional representation and expression of issues related to aging in these songs.

Findings

The lyrics, video, and rhythmic aspects of the selected songs are presented in a discussion interpreting the message being put across by the musician.

The context of Tuku's compositions on ageing

To obtain a nuanced understanding of Mtukudzi's compositions on aging in Zimbabwe of the late 1990s and early 2000s it is important to place the musician and his songs in the broader socio-historical context in which they were produced. Oliver Mtukudzi spoke and sang in the *Korekore* dialect of the *Shona* language, a language that is spoken as a 'mother tongue' by 80,9% of Zimbabweans (ZIMSTAT, 2023). The ease and masterful way with which Mtukudzi handled the Shona idiom to reveal at one level, and at another, to conceal meaning bespoke one who was well grounded in the ways and philosophies of the Shona – the people he sang for. The idea of *Unhu/Ubuntu* which permeates every aspect of the Shona's world view on such issues as religion, ethics and philosophy of life, social relationships with fellow human beings and nature formed the locus of Mtukudzi's musical articulations. Writing about the Shona worldview and attitudes toward older persons in society, ethnologists, Gelfand (1970) and Bourdillon (1979) point out how a religion based on the veneration of ancestors shaped the views of, attitude toward and treatment of older adults in Shona society. Gelfand states:

> The regard and respect for parents are so deeply ingrained in the Shona that the old are well cared for. [. . .] The old are considered to have one foot in the grave and therefore are halfway to becoming *vadzimu* (ancestral spirits) (Gelfand, 1970, p. 2).

Ancestral spirits are believed to protect the living members of the family and also act as intermediaries between the people and their God (*Musikavanhu/Mwari*) (Masaka & Makahamadze, 2013). Mtukudzi's songs about aging and the intergenerational expectation that the younger generation is duty bound to care for their aging parents draw from and in a way, reinforce the reciprocity expected for fear of upsetting those who may return to punish rather that protect them when they join the ancestors of the clan in the spirit realm at death.

Song 1: wasakara (album, Bvuma released 2000)

Grounded within the *Shona* phrase '*bvuma'* (admit/accept), the song '*Wasakara*' can be interpreted as a direct confrontation to the older persons who are portrayed here through Mtukudzi's lead vocal tone to be in denial of the fact that they have become old. Aging is presented in the song as an undesirable phase which people, nevertheless, enter but live in denial and often seeking ways to resist it. Words such as *kusakara* (to be worn out) and *kuunyana* (to be wrinkled) that Mtukudzi (2000) interchangeably uses to describe aging portray older persons not only as unattractive, but also as feeble and almost 'expiring.' The musician repeatedly invokes the term '*bvuma'* in high register within major scale primary chords, enabling the song to emphatically persuade the older adults to accept this phase of life:

Bvuma, bvuma iwe	Admit it, you accept it
Bvuma, bvuma chete	Admit, just accept it
Bvuma wasakara, bvuma waunyana	Admit you are worn out, admit you are wrinkled
Bvuma wasakara, bvuma waunyana	Admit you are worn out, admit you are wrinkled

*Authors' transcription.

'*Wasakara'* presents the experience of aging from the perspective of both the aging person as pointed out by the observers. This seems to be a dialogue between the older person who is refusing to admit/accept that they are old because they do not 'feel that they are old' although they can see the biological characteristics of getting old, and the observers. While the observers and the older adult him/herself can see the wrinkles, the older person 'feels young.' They are still 'young at heart.' Mtukudzi (2000) expresses this contrast of being 'old outside' but 'young inside' using syncopated rhythms on the keyboards, the bass guitar and the drums throughout the song. Syncopation is described by Huron (2006) as a cognitive mechanism where a musician accents a normally unaccented weak beat, which is, playing strong beats where a listener would expect weak beats. As a component of musical rhythm, syncopation creates metrical tension (Temperley, 1999), owing to the fact that it occurs only in contraction with an established metrical pattern thus breaking an existing expectation. Mtukudzi's syncopated rhythms in '*Wasakara*' and his description of being old outside and young inside/spiritually shows that aging is characterized by contradictions. The expression '*chiso kuwunyana, mweya imhandara*' (face is wrinkled, a young woman in spirit) captures this contrast, as it is posed as a way to convince someone that physical signs of aging such as wrinkles are not necessarily signifiers of aging. This expression breaks the widely accepted notion that aging is a burden which comes with loss of a number of things including memory, associations, sexuality, and power (Davidson, 2018). Thus the syncopated rhythms in '*Wasakara*' and its message that one remains young in spirit regardless of age, promote feelings of youthfulness among the older adults.

Chiso kuwunyana, mweya imhandara	Face is wrinkled, a young woman in spirit
Kunze kusakara, kunashe kakomana	Outside you are worn out, in God's eyes it's a young boy
Chiso kuwunyana, mweya imhandara	Face is wrinkled, young woman in spirit
Kunze kusakara, kunashe kakomana	Outside you are worn out, in God's eyes it's a young boy

*Authors' transcription.

To show the contestations involved in defining aging, this song can be interpreted from a constructivist and symbolic interactionist perspective which views aging as a social construction whose meaning is consistently being negotiated from moment to moment by individuals as social actors. Older persons, like other social actors, construct their own social reality. Consequently, aging is a dynamic process that is responsive to both structural and normative contexts and individual capacities and perceptions (Victor, 2005, p. 30). Therefore, while advancing the idea that old age comes with limitations and that the older adults should retire from their work, *Wasakara* is also open to being interpreted as challenging the notion that the old are finished and useless. For Mtukudzi (2000) being old '*mucherechedzo wenguva yakareba*' (is a sign of passage of time) which could mean that one has accumulated useful experience from which younger generation could benefit. It could be a celebration of age just as Mtukudzi argued:

> My idea of the song was to really produce the idea that if you are old, it doesn't mean you are finished. No. It means you have experience. It's a celebration of age. I even say in the song . . . . The song really started when I noticed how my daughters were growing up. I thought, if I can have such big daughters, then where am I that you might look old, worn out, whatever, but in the eyes of God, you are still a boy.' (Mtukudzi cited in Eyre, 2002, p. 77).

The song explores the multi-faceted nature of aging showing the biological (physiological aspects of aging such as the changing nature of body organs like the wrinkling of the skin), social aging (changing roles and relationships in family and society) and the diverse perceptions, contestations and interpretations involved. Physiological signs of aging include wrinkled skin and loss of strength, elasticity, bone density, and balance. Hooyman et al., highlight that:

> The ultraviolet light from the sun which damages the elastic fibres beneath the skin's surface, is primarily responsible for the wrinkled, dried, and tougher texture of many older people's skin. This exposure also results in darker pigmentation known as melanin (which has been produced by the body to protect it from the sun), and brownish age spots or liver spots on the face or hands. (Hooyman et al., 2015, p. 66)

Social aging concerns changes in roles, for example, when one becomes a grandparent, this may be interpreted as a sign of aging. One is also deemed old when they can no longer efficiently do what they used to do. This type of aging may be unrelated with chronological aging. Thus they may not have reached the ages of 60/65 which have been defined by the UN conventions and national legislations as the beginning of old age.

However, in this song, Mtukudzi implores older adults to accept and admit that they have reached old age and can no longer perform certain roles/duties that they used to do. He is encouraging older women and men to 'accept' aging, although the spirit may still want to pursue activities of youth. This is reflected in the following stanza;

Imi mai makwegura,	You mother you are aged,
Hamucharugona machembera	You can no longer manage you are aged
Makura ka musazoramba	You are old now don't deny it
Kuchembera, chiiko kuchembera?	Old age, what is old age?
Nemi baba tarirai muone	Even you father look
Mwana yave mhandara	Your daughter is now a young woman
Makura ka musazoramba	You are now aged, don't deny it

*Authors' transcription.

To some extent, Mtukudzi is admonishing older persons to disengage, make way for those that can perform certain roles effectively and efficiently and also to 'act their age'- not to pursue activities of the youth when one has gone past that stage. While this may be wise advice, sometimes encouraging older adults to disengage may lead to their exclusion from society and might have some ageist tendencies (Victor, 2005). In fact, the various conventions and platforms on aging encourage continuity rather than disengagement. It may be prudent to slow down or even adapt rather than pull out from well-established routine activities as these promote internal and external stability among older adults

(Huyck, 1989). Therefore, continuity is better than disengagement. In *Wasakara* Mtukudzi however expresses a contrary view.

While the song *Wasakara* can be interpreted as encouraging disengagement of older adults as a spent and worn-out force, this view is contrary to Jah Prayzah's (2016) song which celebrates the coming of an older man (*Mdhara Vachauya*) described as 'a prowling lion' (Chitando & Mlambo, 2020). For Jah Prayzah, the older man is full of vitality and not the wrinkles that Mtukudzi sang about. Although Mtukudzi was being realistic about the physiological and social characteristics of aging, it is important that, in order to preserve their health, older adults be encouraged to continue, adapt and maintain, rather than disengage from their routine activities (Atchley, 1989; Huyck, 1989). Tuku music must be interpreted as also asking older adults to 'act their age' in line with the prevailing Zimbabwean and African social norms. Within the African set-up, older adults are expected to be fountains of wisdom gathered through experience (Chiangong, 2021).

Maguraushe (2020) has argued that this song was written in protest of the late former president Robert Mugabe who clung to power for 37 years until he was ousted by his deputy. While Oliver Mtukudzi insisted that he was non- partisan and nonpolitical, Kyker (2016) argues that music is never politically neutral. Mtukudzi was a master of ambiguity when it came to using the Shona idiom. In this song, as in others, the meaning remains slippery, inconclusive, always open to various interpretations, and difficult to pin down.

Song 2: Ndakuvara (greatest hits: the Tuku years 2002)

The song track '*Ndakuvara*' was composed when Mtukudzi was about 50 years of age. It is a somber and emotional song about how a man who reared and fed his ox from when it was a calf has been hurt by it while taming/training it for domestic use. A tamed *tsiru* (young cow) or *hando* (young bull) is cooperative, obedient and productive. It can be yoked and easily used to pull a scotch cart, plow and other valuable domestic duties, without harming people or property. It knows when it is time to graze, work and come home at night. It knows its name and its owner. The untamed ox in the song can be interpreted to represent a child who was looked after and raised by their parents but has suddenly turned their back on the same parents. The agony the pain that the parents feel is what Mtukudzi (2002) expresses in this very touching song.

The words of pain that Mtukudzi sings are introduced in the first section of '*Ndakuvara*' being performed in a minor key (C#-minor) which successfully creates a low-spirited and gloomy mood. Within the C#-minor key, the guitars play chord progression from tonic chord, C#-minor, followed by a diminished seventh chord, B-Major. This chord progression creates instability and suspense in the listener's ear as the diminished chord gives a dark and worrying feel. Mtukudzi's voice accompanies this chord progression with a tone expressing agony and pain in the following excerpt;

Sheedza mai vemwana, ndakuvara	Call the mother of my child. I have been hurt
Pakupingudza mombe, ndakuvara	In taming the ox, I have been hurt
Dana mai vemwana, ndakuvara iwe	Call the mother of my child, I have been hurt
Pakupingudza mombe, ndakuvara	In taming the ox, I have been hurt

*Authors' transcription.

Hurt and pain inflicted by children on their aging parents take center stage at the opening of this song. In the video for this section of the song, an older man is seen being haunted by the memories of his son who migrated from their rural home to look for better opportunities in the city. The son never comes back and, as the video portrays, he instead pursues the pleasures of life with his peers spending money in gambling ventures. The father takes his son's behavior as rebellion against him and that hurts him badly. The first section ends on this sad note in a minor key.

In the second section of the song '*Ndakuvara*,' Mtukudzi modulates from C#-minor key to E-Major raising his tone to express what parents in old age expect from the children that they raised. In line with the Shona proverb which says '*chirere mangwana chigokurerawo*' (care for the child so that they can take care of you in the future) the singer expresses the hope that parents invest in their children as they raise them:

Ndaichichiva chiri mumakura (ah aa)	I used to admire it in the pastures
Ndaiti mangwana ndingazobopawo	I thought we would use it in the future
Chichandirimira chazokura (ah aa)	It would plough for us when it grows

*Authors' transcription.

The change of key from minor to a Major as Mtukudzi sings these words describes how sometimes parents are optimistic that their future as older people will depend on their children. The words *Pidigu mai vemwana chandikunda* (Alas mother of my child, it has rebelled) marks a change of key again from E-Major back to C#-minor expressing the level of disappointment that parents go through when their children fail to reciprocate by also caring for them in their time of need.

In keeping with norms of reciprocity and filial piety, parents expect that their children would look after them when they need care. This sense of entitlement to care is especially visible when parents forgo their pleasures and sacrifice family resources to educate and raise their children. The exchange theory by Bould et al. (1989) views the education of children as an investment which parents will draw from later in life as deferred social credit. The aspect of gratitude discussed earlier, is also part of this song as the song seems to be a lamentation of an older adult who after raising someone, that individual does not show any gratitude but instead rebels against and abandons the older adult. Such behavior throws older persons into what Ncube and Goodman Nhapi (2022) have termed un-African aging. As argued by Jecker (2022) and especially relating to orphaned children raised in skip generation households, such children should be grateful for the benevolence extended by their grandparents or kin in looking after them in place of their biological parents.

'*Ndakuvara*' addresses younger generations who, as they listen to it are challenged to be grateful to older adults and be sensitive to the needs of others. Mtukudzi wants intergenerational solidarity to be strengthened especially through association, function and norms of obligation and reciprocity. Exchange between generations is encouraged through the song when the singer laments how the expectation of being cared for is not fulfilled and ingratitude characterizes the younger societal member. For the singer, ingratitude is equated to rebellion and pierces the heart of the older adult who has a legitimate expectation because of the social credits earned and investments made in the younger member. While Mtukudzi does not address the cause of the supposed ingratitude, it is prudent to note how the harsh economic environment characterized by high informality and unemployment renders it difficult for the youth and adults to care for themselves and their families (Mate, 2023). It could be true to argue that what might be viewed as 'ingratitude' might be caused by these hard economic times.

Recommendations

Tuku teaches us through these two songs that the family structure is experiencing complex changes, some related to the changing values, while others are due to economic pressures and forces of globalization. While the country is reeling under economic challenges there is need for universal social protection for everyone above the age of 60 who can no longer rely on informal or family care mechanisms. Other countries in sub Saharan Africa already have a single flagship program that directly assists older adults and the poor in terms of social protection. Zimbabwe is yet to introduce one. There is a need to introduce the Older Persons Fund as prescribed in the Older Persons Act of 2012 (Hungwe, 2022). This would go a long way in assisting poor older persons. It is also prudent to ensure that older adults do not disengage from their established routine activities but maintain and

where necessary adapt these to the new circumstances they are confronted with so that they continue participating within familiar contexts. To attain the global goal of healthy aging (WHO, 2020) and in keeping with the continuity theory (Atchley, 1989), rather than admitting that they are old and quitting (disengagement), it is recommended that older adults continue engaging in familiar activities. The government of Zimbabwe must put in place mechanisms to enable continuity.

Conclusion

This paper has explored Mutukudzi's two songs whose lyrical content is largely about the status, experience, and process of aging. The gerontologist in Oliver Mtukudzi implores older men and women to accept physiological aging as normal and thus slow down or exit some roles. On the other hand, Mtukudzi shows the complexity of the phenomenon of aging looking at how some older adults may not 'feel' old. This reflects the negotiated nature of the interpretation of aging. Tuku's message to younger people is for them to practice filial piety and have compassion toward older adults. Members of the younger generations are obliged to appreciate the sacrifice and magnanimity of older adults in raising them; they are expected to reciprocate care. Everyone has a duty of care for one another. Personhood/humanness/*Unhu/Ubuntu* is revealed when one is sensitive to their needs and those of others, and they work to resolve conflicts amicably respecting the dignity of everyone.

To answer the question whether the Zimbabwean popular culture preparing society for population aging through music, this paper argues that to some extent, this is true. Through *Ndakuvara*, Tuku awakens society to the fractured intergenerational relationships, absence of reciprocity and the weaknesses of relying on informal social security/safety nets. This is a challenge requiring attention because, without care, older adults become vulnerable. Studying Oliver Mtukudzi's music makes us raise an important and urgent question about who will care for Zimbabwe older adults whose children are migrating out, some of whom are joining the global care sector (Crush & Tevera, 2010; McGregor, 2007). The global care chain which is largely feminized has meant that at the end of the chain, reproductive labor is ultimately unpaid and mostly done by older women (Yeates, 2012). The question that arises then is about the sustainability of such a situation where older women look after other older women and men. As population aging deepens and rural-urban and transnational migration continues unabated, policy initiatives that address this question would be beneficial to the Zimbabwean and African population. As Orozco (2009, p. 5) aptly notes, the care for migrants' parents is of increasing concern in a context of weakened social security systems. Already, in some contexts, global care drain is being experienced (Escrivia, 2005).

Mtukudzi had so much to say about aging as reflected in the songs analyzed in this paper. Gerontologists stand to benefit from the invaluable lessons of *Unhu/Ubuntu* portrayed in Tuku's songs. Zimbabwean older adults would not face social isolation or exclusion if the population embraced Tuku's ideas of human relations in general and intergenerational relationships in particular. Mtukudzi brings out the multidimensional nature of aging – that it is not just about the number of years/birthdays and changes in the physiological make up of individuals but also their social roles. Although the natural and biological process of aging is inevitable, the social reactions to it can be changed to ensure continued inclusion rather than disengagement, exit and exclusion of older adults.

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The authors complied with all ethical standards.

Data availability statement

All data pertaining to this study are contained within this article.

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