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Examining knowledge and environmental practices of adults in relation to the installation of electricity in Shitlhelani Village

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study examines knowledge acquisition and the environmental practices of Shitlhelani community members in relation to the uses and benefits of electricity. Prior to the installation of electricity, the main source of fuel was wood which villagers gathered from the natural vegetation surrounding their village. ESKOM installed electricity to the village in 1985 and 1994, however deforestation of the surrounding area continued. This research study draws primarily on a qualitative research paradigm, using participant observation; semi-structured interviews and document analysis, to investigate the relationship between knowledge and the development of healthy environmental practices. The qualitative research paradigm allows insight into the social context and experiences of the Shitlhelani villagers in order to understand the complexities and diversity of their daily lives. The study's main findings highlight the need to recognise and value the existence of social networks, and the importance of fostering collaborative learning within communities to achieve collective action. Developing social capital as a framework that supports the process of learning through interaction is necessary if the Shitlhelani villagers wish to develop their community educationally, socially, economically and environmentally.