

The Significance of Culture as a Household Energy Determinant: The Case of Chiwundura Communal Area, Zimbabwe

Mangizvo V. Remigios

*Fort Hare Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Fort Hare,
Private Bag X1314, Alice South Africa 5700
E-mail: rvmangizvo@gmail.com*

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ABSTRACT Household energy choices have always been associated with, household income, size education and accessibility and affordability. Little attention has been paid to behavioural and cultural factors regarding the determinants of households' energy choices. This study attempts to show the significance of culture as a household energy determinant in Chiwundura Communal Area in Zimbabwe. The study employed interviews and observations in data collection. In analysing the data, the research looked at the trends of the responses from the interviewees. Themes were then developed and these were then analysed. It was established that behavioural and cultural practices, lifestyles and food preferences were important in the continued reliance on fuelwood as a cooking energy form. Respondents from households mentioned that food prepared over a traditional cooking stove was tastier than food that was prepared on an electrical stove. The traditional fire had multiple uses that included space heating, preservation of food and seed, flavouring meat and fish as well as acting as a social focus. Traditional fires remain an important aspect in the lives of Chiwundura Communal Area households. Therefore it is recommended that further research on the importance of culture and behavioural factors as energy determinants should be conducted. It is important for development agencies and other stakeholders such as the government to develop sustainable ways of utilising fuelwood as households will continue to rely on it.