



Traditional Governance Structures and Modern Democracy in Southern Africa: An Action Research Study in Eswatini

Khabatini Hlali¹, Masenana Mazizulala¹, Biswakimbili Bizumavi^{1,2}, Magagula Mabotja^{1,2}

¹ University of Eswatini (UNESWA)

² Department of Research, University of Eswatini (UNESWA)

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Correspondence: khlali@outlook.com

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Author notes

Khabatini Hlali is affiliated with University of Eswatini (UNESWA) and focuses on African Studies research in Africa. Masenana Mazizulala is affiliated with University of Eswatini (UNESWA) and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.

Biswakimbili Bizumavi is affiliated with University of Eswatini (UNESWA) and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.

Magagula Mabotja is affiliated with Department of Research, University of Eswatini (UNESWA) and focuses on African Studies research in Africa.

Abstract

Southern Africa, particularly Southern Eswatini (Swaziland), has seen a complex interplay between traditional governance structures and emerging modern democratic systems. This action research employs participatory methods, including interviews with local leaders, focus group discussions, and observations of governance processes. Data analysis focuses on qualitative content and thematic synthesis. Traditional leadership models significantly influence decision-making in many rural areas, with traditional councils maintaining significant social cohesion and conflict resolution mechanisms. However, there is a notable shift towards incorporating these traditions within modern democratic structures, indicating a gradual integration process. The study reveals the dynamic nature of governance transitions in Southern Africa, highlighting both continuity and change as elements shaping contemporary political landscapes. Policy makers should consider fostering dialogue between traditional leadership figures and modern governmental bodies to enhance mutual understanding and support for democratic reforms. Additionally, educational programmes could be developed to promote a balanced appreciation of traditional and modern governance principles. Southern Africa, Traditional Governance, Modern Democracy, Eswatini, Action Research

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