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Highlights

A Christian Ethics Reflection

The Human Perception of Green Spaces

"Bethlehem" Games of Ukrainians

The Interplay of Ubuntu and Hospitality

Discovering Thoughts, Inventing Future

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The Human Perception of Green Spaces (GS) and the Research Pattern in the Last Decade: A Systematic Review

By Maria Cristina Celuppi, Célia Regina Moretti Meirelles, Raquel Cymrot & João Paulo Assis Gobo

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Abstract- The growth of urbanization has reduced the availability of green spaces (GS) and the decrease in these spaces, as well as the difficulty in accessing them, has impacts on human physical and mental health, proven by research that deeply investigates this theme around the world. Thus, understanding the impacts of GS on human perception within the contemporary scenario is of fundamental importance, since the population has been subjected to a high level of stress generated by the high work demand, as well as the quarantine scenario imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on this, the present research aimed to investigate the implications of GS on self-reported well-being through the perceptions generated by these environments and for that, a systematic literature review (2010-2020) was carried out, based on selected pre-criteria, which were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively through meta-analysis. The results describe and discuss 14 implications of GS for human well-being and mental health, 7 demographic differences verified in the way of perceiving these environments and statistical dependencies in the research pattern of certain study variables in the last decade.

Keywords: *human perception; green spaces; natural vegetation; self-reported mental health.*

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The Human Perception of Green Spaces (GS) and the Research Pattern in the Last Decade: A Systematic Review

Maria Cristina Celuppi [α], Célia Regina Moretti Meirelles [σ], Raquel Cymrot [ρ] & João Paulo Assis Gobo [ω]

Abstract- The growth of urbanization has reduced the availability of green spaces (GS) and the decrease in these spaces, as well as the difficulty in accessing them, has impacts on human physical and mental health, proven by research that deeply investigates this theme around the world. Thus, understanding the impacts of GS on human perception within the contemporary scenario is of fundamental importance, since the population has been subjected to a high level of stress generated by the high work demand, as well as the quarantine scenario imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on this, the present research aimed to investigate the implications of GS on self-reported well-being through the perceptions generated by these environments and for that, a systematic literature review (2010-2020) was carried out, based on selected pre-criteria, which were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively through meta-analysis. The results describe and discuss 14 implications of GS for human well-being and mental health, 7 demographic differences verified in the way of perceiving these environments and statistical dependencies in the research pattern of certain study variables in the last decade. Thus, an unprecedented compilation of implications and perceptive differences caused by GS is presented, serving as a theoretical contribution to the government, planners, architects and urbanists in the provision of cities with potential to mitigate stress and favorable to human well-being.

Keywords: human perception; green spaces; natural vegetation; self-reported mental health.

I. Introduction

It is expected that almost 70% of the world population will live in urban areas by 2050 and this rapid urbanization makes access to vegetated green spaces (GS) more rare (LU, SARKAR, XIAO; 2018), bringing impacts to human health, as GS are associated with various psychological and physical benefits, such as, for example, better attitudes towards perceived stressful everyday situations (BERG *et al.* 2010); decreased cases of asthma in children (LOVASI *et al.* 2008); decreased obesity (LOVASI *et al.* 2013); direct action in increasing life expectancy (TAKANO *et al.*, 2002); and even in the quality and quantity of sleep (SHIN *et al.* 2020). In a study funded by the World Health Organization - WHO, Rojas-Rueda *et al.* (2019) affirm that GS surrounding homes are inversely associated with several causes of mortality and, therefore, the authors draw attention to the fact that all interventions to increase GS should be considered as a public health strategy.

The reduction of GS in parallel with the growing urbanization directly impacts the physical environment, bringing to surface the effects of urban heat islands, a phenomenon characterized by the anomalous increase in city temperatures in relation to the nearby rural areas, which has been presented as a threat to urban ecology, causing damage to the residential and environmental health of cities (YAO *et al.* 2020). In this sense, increasing urban GS presents itself as an effective approach in mitigating and decreasing the effects of heat islands, through climate regulation in urban areas, and can also provide important positive impacts on the concentration of pollution and air (RYSWYK *et al.* 2019; YAO *et al.* 2020). On the other hand, when investigating the implications of GS on human thermal perception through the study of thermal comfort, we can perceive the complexity of the factors involved in this process, since although the microclimate parameters directly influence the thermal sensation, they cannot totally explain the wide variation between the assessment of objective and subjective comfort, showing that psychological adaptation is a factor of considerable impact in these assessments (NIKOLOPOULOUA; STEEMERS, 2003).

Amidst these oppositions, attempts to understand these impacts permeate, as already exposed by Lee and Maheswaran (2011), who stated that most studies on the impact of GS report the benefits of these in relation to human health, but fail to totally establish a causal relation of these benefits and this happens in view of the complexity of the parameters that base them, where the evidences that relate physical/mental health, well-being and urban GS are not totally defined, because they are based on individual parameters; for this reason, many studies fail in the

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method of analysis, leaving gaps to be observed and understood.

Based on this, also considering the emerging theme of Covid-19 that forced the world population to quarantine for long periods (CHEN, 2020; CUI, 2020; DŽIUGYS, 2020; SHEN, 2020) and that natural environments, especially when available in the neighborhood favor mental health (Liu *et al.* 2020), understanding the perceived effects of GS is a promising field for new research, since experiencing these environments on a daily basis is associated with positive self-reported health behaviors of relaxation, improvement in restoration levels, positive mood, reduction of physical and mental stress (Nath *et al.* 2018; Mesimäki *et al.* 2019; Elsadek *et al.* 2019).

In an analysis of the reactions caused by health professionals who face Covid-19 on a daily basis, FUKUTI *et al.* (2020) assessed the high level of stress suffered while working to cope with the pandemic and found a high level of emotional stress that has reflected in insomnia, irritability, depression and anxiety, among other negative symptoms to mental health, indicating the need for - in addition to psychiatric medical treatment - the promotion of spaces favorable to the self-reported restoration of these professionals.

Based on the above, which points to physical and mental health benefits arising from the availability of GS on the negative perceptive effects caused by daily stressors, as well as the current moment generated by the Covid-19 pandemic and also considering the lack of studies that relate the possible contributions provided by GS as mitigators of the negative impacts generated by such stressors, the present research aims to analyze the state of the art on the implications and differences in the perception of GS, in order to present a set of evidence already scientifically validated on the benefits that vegetated natural environments, whether internal or external, can offer to human beings. In addition, the objective is also to verify the pattern of publications of these implications in the period of analysis.

II. Method

As a reference for the systematic review process, the method used by Ahmad, Aibinu and Stephan (2019) was used, which was applied in order to understand the current state and future directions of the management of the development of green buildings.

Through the PICOS diagram presented in chart 1, it was possible to safely construct the research question: "*What is the impact of green spaces on the perception of human well-being and on the human thermal perception*?".

Description	Abbreviation	Question component
Population	P	Adults (men and women) aged 18+
intervention	I	Vegetated green spaces
Comparison	C	Human perception/local microclimate
Outcome	O	Impact
Study type (optional)	S	That applied interviews to the population

Org.: The authors

Chart 1: PICOS Anagram

Search platform Science Direct (https://www.sciencedirect.com/) was chosen, a page operated by Editora Elsevier, which gathers a large number of periodicals and books grouped in the following sections: Physical Sciences and Engineering, Biological Sciences, Health Sciences and Social and Human Sciences. The determining factor in choosing this database was the fact that the platform has access to the main journals that publish research on the subject of study in this review.

After reading studies within the theme for greater knowledge of the keywords usually used, the following keywords were searched on the search page: "*green spaces*" *OR* "*vegetation*" *AND* "*thermal perception*" *AND* "*microclimate*" *AND* "*interview*", as a research article from 2010 to 2020.

The present study considered as GS any and all vegetated environments such as: balconies with vegetation, parks, vegetated squares, tree-lined streets, community gardens, rural areas and environments built with integrated vegetation in the surroundings.

For the selection and exclusion of papers for the next phase of the process, the following factors were chosen:

- Research published in peer-reviewed journals;
- Research published in Portuguese/English;
- Research on the impact of (vegetated) GS on the perception of human well-being with the application of a questionnaire;
- Research on the impact of (vegetated) GS on human thermal perception with and without microclimate measurement, in addition to the application of a questionnaire;
- Research published in the last decade (2010 - 2020), until the search date (May 13, 2020).

The search was carried out on May 13, 2020 and found 1,441 studies using the aforementioned keywords and, from these, all titles were read in order to select papers for the next phase. Then, titles that could answer the research question were selected ($n = 448$).

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448 papers were selected for reading of the abstracts, and after reading them, the selection/ exclusion was carried out based on the criteria already mentioned, leaving 128 papers for complete reading. Of these, 55 were excluded, leaving 73 to compile data, which make up the results of this review.

Of the 73 selected papers, the following data were collected from each study: authors; year of publication; journal; objective; place of study; climatic zone (polar, temperate, tropical); continent (North America, Central America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania, Antarctica); microclimate measurement (carried out or not); number of respondents; type of study (cross-sectionao or longitudinal); type of questionnaire applied (perception of well-being or climate perception/vote of sensation); thermal comfort index (used or not used); and main contributions of the study, which were later presented as 14 implications and 7 demographic differences, in the perception of GS.

Based on the sample size analyzed here (73 selected papers), it was possible to verify the search trend for certain implications, through meta-analysis. The collected data were tabulated in a Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet and imported for use in the Minitab® *Statistical Software* v.19 used to perform statistical analysis. A descriptive analysis of the data was performed through the construction of tables with frequencies and their respective percentages.

The Chi-square test of independence was used, but when there was more than 20% of expected values below five, not meeting the necessary assumption for its use, and for that reason, we chose to carry out Fisher's exact independence test (SIEGEL; CASTELLAN JR., 2008).

III. Results

a) Presentation of data

This research sought to understand the impacts caused by green spaces (GS) on the perception of human well-being and human thermal perception, using research criteria, as presented in the method.

This research is based on the assumption that the application of questionnaires to the population is a fundamental tool for the understanding of human perception and, in view of that, it searched only for papers that used this method. The surveys presented here have a wide range of number of respondents: 35.6% (*n = 26*) interviewed from 1 to 300 people; 21.9% (*n = 16*) interviewed 301 to 500 people; 15.1% (*n = 11*) interviewed from 501 to 1,000 people; 8.2% (*n = 6*) interviewed from 1,001 to 2,000 people; 9.6% (*n = 7*) interviewed from 2,001 to 5,000 people and 9.6% (*n = 7*) interviewed 5,001 or more people. This denotes the complexity of conducting surveys that involve interviews, as 57.5% of the papers use up to 500 responses for population analysis and only 9.6% of the papers were able to interview more than 5,000 people.

97.3% (*n=71*) of the studies applied questionnaires with questions aimed at the perception of well-being and health. In contrast, only 6.8% (*n = 5*) applied only or simultaneously questionnaires aimed at thermal/climatic perception/vote of thermal sensation and in this sense, only 8.2% (*n = 6*) used thermal comfort indexes for analysis of the local microclimate, where 5 studies used the PET index and 1 used the UTCI index.

Of the 73 papers analyzed here, only 9.6% (*n = 7*), conducted interviews parallel to microclimate measurements of GS, compared to 90.4% (*n = 66*) that conducted only interviews.

Most of the studies conducted, 90.4% (*n = 66*), were cross-sectional, while 8.2% (*n = 6*) were longitudinal. Only 1 study was conducted in both cross-sectional and longitudinal ways (Cleary *et al.* 2019).

The climatic zones where the studies were developed (polar 1, temperate 2, and tropical 3) were also verified. 84.9% (*n = 62*) of the studies conducted were in the temperate zone (2) and 15.1% (*n = 11*) were conducted in the tropical zone (3).

Table 1 shows the confidence interval for the proportions (p) calculated from the data extracted from the studies analyzed here:

Table 1: Confidence interval for certain proportions.

Data Extracted	N	Event/Occurrence	P	95% Confidence Interval For P
Climate Zone 3	73	11	0.151	(0.068; 0.233)
Questionnaire on perception of well-being and health	73	71	0.972	(0.935; 1.000)
Thermal/climatic perception/vote of sensation questionnaire	73	5	0.068	(0.0105; 0.126)
Microclimatic Measurements	73	7	0.096	(0.028; 0.163)
Cross-sectional study	72	66	0.916	(0.853; 0.980)
Papers published up to 5 years ago	73	48	0.657	(0.549; 0.766)

Source: The authors.

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Based on the selected surveys, there were 14 implications of GS for well-being and mental health, in addition to 7 demographic differences in the way of perceiving GS. Table 2 presents the synthesis of these variables and figure 1 summarizes the percentage with which each of these verifiable was researched among the 73 studies.

TYPE OF PERFORMANCE OF GREEN SPACES (GS)		REFERENCE
GS contributions to human mental health		
1	Report of restorative effect when in a GS *(n = 16):*	Grilli et al. (2020); Elsadek et al. (2019); Gulwadi et al. (2019); Elsadek et al. (2019); Mesimäki et al. (2019); Dzhambov et al. (2018); Al-Akl et al. (2018); Nordh et al. (2017); Scopelliti et al. (2016); Cervinka et al. (2016); Thomas (2015); Pietilä et al. (2015); Finlay et al. (2015); Carrus et al. (2015); White et al. (2013); Peschardt et al. (2013).
2	Report of satisfaction/positive quality with life when in a GS (n = 13):	Han et al.(2020); Yigitcanlar et al. (2020); Wenjie et al. (2020); Li et al. (2019); Gulwadi et al. (2019); Yuan et al. (2018); Coldwell e Evans (2018); Bertram e Rehdanz (2015); Mansor et al. (2015); Wassenberg et al. (2015); Conedera et al. (2015); Thompson et al. (2013); Mansor et al. (2012);
3	Report of self-assessed positive health when in a GS (n = 11)	Han et al.(2020); Vujcic et al. (2019); Nath et al. (2018); Yuan et al. (2018); Romagosa (2018); Liu et al. (2018); Wood et al. (2017); Dadvand et al. (2016); Thomas (2015); Pietilä et al. (2015); Dzhambov et al. (2014).
4	Report of feeling well-being when in a GS (n = 30)	Bell et al. (2020); Han et al.(2020); Chang et al. (2020); Liu et al. (2020); Li et al. (2019); Cleary et al. (2019); Wang et al. (2019); Elsadek et al. (2019); Mesimäki et al. (2019); Vujcic et al. (2019); Nath et al. (2018); Yuan et al. (2018); Lewis et al. (2018); Coldwell e Evans (2018); Wood et al. (2017); Panno et al. (2017); Artmann et al. (2017); Shanahan et al. (2017); Van Den Berg et al. (2016); Cervinka et al. (2016); Thomas (2015); Finlay et al.(2015); Gilchrist et al. (2015); Carrus et al. (2015); Mansor et al. (2015); Nasir et al. (2012); Wendel et al. (2012); Mansor et al. (2012); Taib et al. (2012); Martens et al. (2011).
5	Report of feeling well-being when viewing a GS (n = 9)	Liu et al. (2020); Wenjie et al. (2020); Elsadek et al. (2019); Mesimäki et al. (2019); Lam e Hang (2017); Scopelliti et al. (2016); Van Den Berg et al. (2016); Gilchrist et al. (2015); Conedera et al. (2015).
6	Report of positive mood when in a GS (n = 9)	Kondo et al. (2020); Elsadek et al. (2019); Lin et al. (2019); Navarrete-Hernandez e Laffan (2019); Li et al. (2019); Elsadek et al. (2019); Mesimäki et al. (2019); Dzhambov et al. (2018); MacKerron e Mourato (2013).
7	GS influences the practice of physical activity (n = 18)	Bell et al. (2020); Lin et al. (2019); Li et al. (2019); Wang et al. (2019); Vujcic et al. (2019); Nath et al. (2018); Dzhambov et al. (2018); Bornioli et al. (2018); Triguero-Mas et al. (2017); Artmann et al. (2017); Dadvand et al. (2016); Akpinar (2016); Thomas (2015); Finlay et al.(2015); Astell-Burt et al. (2013); Thompson et al. (2013); Sugiyama et al. (2013); Mansor et al. (2012).
8	Safety pointed out as a critical factor in the use of GS (n = 6)	Campagnaro et al. (2020); Navarrete-Hernandez and Laffan (2019); Barrera et al. (2016); Bertram and Rehdanz (2015); Finlay et al. (2015); Thompson et al. (2013).
9	GS relieve stress (n = 13)	Campagnaro et al. (2020); Lin et al. (2019); Navarrete-Hernandez e Laffan (2019); Li et al. (2019); Yang et al. (2019); Wang et al. (2019); Nath et al. (2018); Triguero-Mas et al. (2017); Akpinar (2016); Thomas (2015); Wassenberg et al. (2015); Astell-Burt et al. (2013); Peschardt et al. (2013).
10	GS contribute to and improve the individual's social cohesion (n = 14)	Yang et al. (2020); Liu et al. (2020); Wang et al. (2019); Lewis et al. (2018); Triguero-Mas et al. (2017); Artmann et al. (2017); Barrera et al. (2016); Dadvand et al. (2016); Thomas (2015); Pietilä et al. (2015); Finlay et al.(2015); Wendel et al. (2012); Mansor et al. (2012); Taib et al. (2012).
11	GS contribute to the individual's settlement/belonging in the region (n = 4)	Chang et al. (2020); Liu et al. (2020); Barrera et al. (2016); Mansor et al. (2012).
12	Perception of the larger area of GS implies less perception of stress and greater feeling of well-being (n = 7)	Yang et al. (2020); Cleary et al. (2019); Yang et al. (2019); Dzhambov et al. (2018); Wood et al. (2017); Shanahan et al. (2017); Akpinar et al. (2016).
13	GS imply less perception of pollution and noise (n = 4)	Wang et al. (2019); Yuan et al. (2018); Finlay et al. (2015); Wendel et al. (2012).
14	GS contribute to perceived thermal comfort (n = 6)	Liu et al. (2020); Elsadek et al. (2019); Wang et al. (2018); Panno et al. (2017); Lam e Hang (2017); Klemm et al. (2015).

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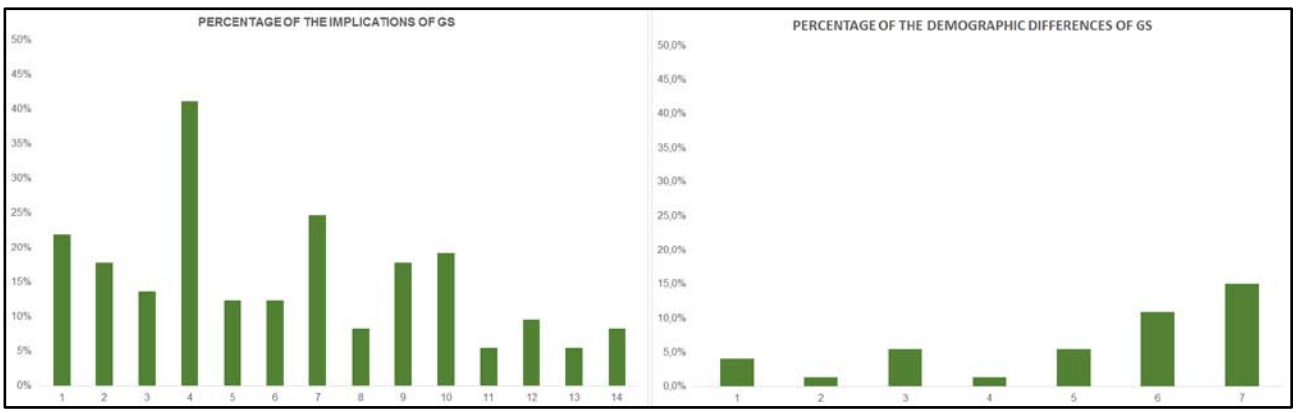
Demographic differences in GS contributions to human mental health		
1	Differences between the level of education in the perception of GS (n = 3)	Root et al. (2017); Triguero-Mas et al. (2017); Van Den Berg et al. (2016).
2	Differences between race in the perception of GS (n = 1)	Root et al. (2017).
3	Differences between income level in the perception of GS (n = 4)	Barrera et al. (2016); Scopelliti et al. (2016); Zhang et al. (2013); Wendel et al. (2012).
4	Differences between weight in the perception of GS (n = 1):	Thomas (2015).
5	A study points out that it did not find differences between gender in the perception of GS (n = 4):	Yang et al. (2019); Elsadek et al. (2019); Romagosa (2018); Taib et al. (2012).
6	Study points out that it found gender differences in the perception of GS (n = 8)	Yang et al. (2020); Liu et al. (2018); Triguero-Mas et al. (2017); Dadvand et al. (2016); Thomas (2015); Conedera et al. (2015); Zhang et al. (2013); Wendel et al. (2012).
7	Study points out that it found differences between age groups in the perception of GS (n = 10)	Chang et al. (2020); Kondo et al. (2020); Li et al. (2019); Romagosa (2018); Riechers et al. (2018); Triguero-Mas et al. (2017); Dadvand et al. (2016); Conedera et al. (2015); Dzhambov et al. (2014); Astell-Burt et al. (2013); Zhang et al. (2013).

Org.: The authors.

Chart 2: Complete summary of implications and demographic differences of the review.



Source: The authors.

Figure 1: Graphical summary of the research percentage of the implications and demographic differences in the perception of GS.

We also sought to understand the pattern of publications made in the last decade. Despite the research looking for papers published since 2010, the studies selected for full reading do not include this year. It was observed, according to Table 2, that 79.46% of the papers were published after 2015 and only 20.55% were published in the first half of the last decade, within the criteria presented in the method of this review. In order to understand the publication patterns within the theme addressed here, Table 3 presents the synthesis of the independence tests used.

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Table 2: Annual publication count.

Year of Publication	N=73	%
2011	1	1.37
2012	5	6.85
2013	7	9.59
2014	2	2.74
2015	10	13.70
2016	7	9.59
2017	8	10.96
2018	11	15.07
2019	11	15.07
2020	11	15.07

Org.: The authors.

Table 3: Descriptive level (p-value) for independence tests between pairs of variables, sample size, event, point estimate and by interval of the proportions of occurrence of events.

Variable	Year Of Publication P-Value	Study Climate Zone P-Value	Type Of Study (Cross-Sectional Or Longitudinal) P-Value	N	Event/ Occurrence	P	95% Confidence Interval for P
GS contributions to human mental health							
Report of *restorative effect* when in a GS	0.949	0.436	0.326	73	16	0.219	(0.124; 0.314)
Report of *satisfaction/ positive quality with life* when in a GS	0.347	1.000	0.583	73	13	0.178	(0.090; 0.265)
Report of *self-assessed positive health* when in a GS	0.477	1.000	1.000	73	10	0.136	(0.058; 0.215)
Report of *feeling well-being when in a GS*	0.891	**0.006**	0.390	73	30	0.410	(0.298; 0.523)
Report of *feeling well-being when viewing a GS*	0.709	0.616	1.000	73	9	0.123	(0.047; 0.198)
Report of positive mood when in a GS	0.152	0.338	0.160	73	9	0.123	(0.047; 0.198)
GS influences the *practice of physical activity*	0.979	1.000	1.000	73	18	0.246	(0.147; 0.345)
Safety pointed out as a *critical factor* in the use of GS	0.405	0.582	1.000	73	6	0.082	(0.019; 0.145)
GS relieve *stress*	1.000	1.000	1.000	73	13	0.178	(0.090; 0.265)
GS contribute to and improve the individual's *social cohesion*	0.535	**0.005**	0.589	73	14	0.191	(0.101; 0.282)
GS contribute to the individual's *settlement/ belonging* in the region	1.000	**0.010**	1.000	73	4	0.054	(0.002; 0.107)
Perception of the *larger area of GS* implies *less perception of stress and greater feeling of well-being*	**0.087**	1.000	**0.075**	73	7	0.095	(0.028; 0.163)
GS imply *less perception of pollution and noise*	0.602	0.105	1.000	73	4	0.054	(0.002; 0.107)
GS contribute to *perceived thermal comfort*	0.657	1.000	1.000	73	6	0.082	(0.019; 0.145)
Demographic differences in GS contributions to human mental health							
Differences between the level of *education* in the perception of GS	0.546	1.000	1.000	73	3	0.041	(0.000; 0.086)
Differences between *race* in the perception of GS	1.000	1.000	1.000	73	1	0.013	(0.000; 0.040)

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Differences between *income* level in the perception of GS	0.602	0.105	1.000	73	4	0.054	(0.002; 0.107)
Differences between *weight* in the perception of GS	0.342	1.000	1.000	73	1	0.013	(0.000; 0.040)
Study points out that it found *gender* differences in the perception of GS	0.740	0.374	1.000	73	12	0.164	(0.079; 0.249)
Study points out that it found differences between *age groups* in the perception of GS	1.000	1.000	1.000	73	11	0.150	(0.068; 0.232)

Source: The authors.

The independence tests revealed some findings between the study's Climate Zone (polar, temperate and tropical) and the implications presented:

- At the 5% significance level, there was dependence with the variable "report of feeling well-being when in a GS" ($p = 0.006$);
- At the 5% significance level, there was dependence with the variable "GS contribute to and improve the individual's social cohesion" ($p = 0.005$);
- At the 5% significance level, there was dependence with the variable "GS contribute to the individual's settlement/belonging in the region" ($p = 0.010$).

b) Discussion

Within the presented scope, the main contributions of this review are:

- To present the compilation of the implications and demographic differences provided by GS raised in publications of the last decade that can contribute to the mitigation of negative psychological effects generated by daily stressors as well as by the Covid-19 pandemic, by providing the compilation of validated scientific evidence by scientific journals, so that public planners, architects and urbanists can consider providing greater availability of GS in the public and private urban context;
- To present, through meta-analysis, the research pattern of the variables observed here (implications and differences) and analyzed by researchers, in the publications during this period.

Based on this, starting from the main assumption considered in this review, that interviewing people is the most coherent way of identifying the perceptive effects of GS and bearing in mind that all the studies analyzed here had as one of the selection criteria to use interviews with the population, we opted for the individual presentation and discussion of each of the verified implications, as the demographic differences will be presented and discussed together. Therefore, the verified implications will be discussed individually from item 3.2.1 to 3.2.14, demographic differences will be discussed in item 3.2.15, the pattern of publications observed within the scope of this review will be discussed in item 3.2.16 and the limitations of the work and suggestions for future research in item 3.2.17.

Before starting the discussion, it is important to highlight that, in order to understand the perceptive actions of GS in human beings, it was noticed that all the studies analyzed here ($n = 73$) bring contributions from these environments to mental health, a broad term without an official definition by the World Health Organization (WHO). There are several descriptions of factors that make up mental health, such as the dimensions of emotional, psychological and social well-being, which in turn can be measured and analyzed through self-report of self-esteem, mood, anxiety, stress, type of sleep, depression, loneliness, mental vigor, patience, energy, happiness, optimism, among others (Yigitcanlar *et al.* 2020). Liu *et al.* (2020) complement these factors, stating that mental health refers to a general state of well-being where an individual is able to perform his/her duties productively in the midst of daily stress, contributing to the community.

However, there is a consensus that understands the term "mental health" as a means of describing a level of cognitive or emotional quality of life and the way an individual reacts to daily challenges and demands by balancing his/her emotions (Hospital Albert Einstein, 2020). Therefore, any benefits perceived through the action of GS indirectly contribute to mental health (Yang *et al.* 2020; Campagnaro *et al.* 2020; Bell *et al.* 2020; Han *et al.*2020; Yigitcanlar *et al.* 2020; Grilli *et al.* 2020; Chang *et al.* 2020; Bogerd *et al.* 2020; Liu *et al.* 2020; Wenjie *et al.* 2020; Kondo *et al.* 2020; Elsadek *et al.* 2019 (a); Lin *et al.* 2019; Navarrete-Hernandez e Laffan 2019; Li *et al.* 2019; Cleary et al. 2019; Yang *et al.* 2019; Wang *et al.* 2019; Gulwadi *et al.* 2019; Elsadek *et al.* 2019 (b); Mesimäki *et al.* 2019; Vujcic *et al.* 2019; Nath *et al.* 2018; Yuan *et al.* 2018; Dzhambov *et al.* 2018; Romagosa 2018; Liu *et al.* 2018; Lewis *et al.* 2018; Coldwell e Evans 2018; Riechers *et al.* 2018; Bornioli *et al.* 2018; Al-Akl *et al.* 2018; Wang *et al.* 2018; Wood *et al.* 2017; Root *et al.* 2017; Panno *et al.* 2017; Triguero-Mas *et al.* 2017; Nordh *et al.* 2017; Artmann *et al.* 2017; Lam e Hang 2017; Shanahan *et al.* 2017; Akpinar *et al.* 2016; Barrera *et al.* 2016; Dadvand *et al.* 2016; Scopelliti *et al.* 2016; Van Den Berg *et al.* 2016; Akpinar, 2016; Cervinka

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et al. 2016; Bertram e Rehdanz 2015; Thomas 2015); Pietilä *et al.* 2015; Finlay *et al.* 2015; Gilchrist *et al.* 2015; Carrus *et al.* 2015; Klemm *et al.* 2015; Mansor *et al.* 2015; Wassenberg *et al.* 2015; Conedera *et al.* 2015; Weber *et al.* 2014; Dzhambov *et al.* 2014; Astell-Burt *et al.* 2013; Thompson *et al.* 2013; MacKerron e Mourato 2013; Sugiyama *et al.* 2013; White *et al.* 2013; Peschardt *et al.* 2013; Zhang *et al.* 2013; Nasir *et al.* 2012; Wendel *et al.* 2012; Mansor *et al.* 2012; Taib *et al.* 2012; Hofmann *et al.* 2012; Martens *et al.* 2011).

i. *Report of restorative effect when in a GS*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 21.9% (*n= 16*) addressed this effect, which is presented as an individual's ability to recover from everyday stress (Grilli *et al.* 2020; Pietilä *et al.* 2015), showing a connection to privacy and the feeling of being away from the city (Al-Akl *et al.* 2018; Nordh *et al.* 2017). There are also a range of benefits that help and are directly linked to the restorative effect, such as mental well-being (Thomas, 2015; Finlay *et al.* 2015) that occurs through the relief of stress and anxiety, favoring emotions, clarity and security, as well as the maintenance of positive family dynamics (Thomas, 2015), which corroborates the assumptions of the foundation of the concept of mental health, reported at the beginning of this discussion. Some of these aspects are addressed individually in the next discussion items.

Some research found that GS are essential in cities and that they imply a greater restorative effect for users of these environments through positive associations between perceived green and perceived mental restoration. (Grilli *et al.* 2020; Gulwadi *et al.* 2019; Scopelliti *et al.* 2016; Peschardt *et al.* 2013). The effect generated by the visualization of green facades, as opposed to facades without vegetation, has positive associations with the optimization of brain activity, suggesting that people experienced a greater sense of relaxation (Elsadek *et al.* 2019 a) in the same way as people who were able to view and be on a small green roof, which provided a high level of perceived restoration (Mesimäki *et al.* 2019).

Aspects of length of stay and number of GS have impacts on the restorative effect. For Dzhambov *et al.* (2018), the greater the amount of vegetation surrounding the residences, the greater the quality of the restoration effect of GS for these residents. Carrus *et al.* (2015) observed that both the location and the biological quality of the GS affect the relationship between humans and nature and that peri-urban GS and high biodiversity GS are more likely to have restorative effects on their users, that is, for the author, spending more time in urban and peri-urban green areas consequently contributes to greater restorative effects, favoring mental health (Carrus *et al.* 2015), a fact that is in accordance with the indications made by White *et al.* (2013), where they state that the duration of the visit is positively associated with restorative impacts. Elsadek *et al.* (2019 b) claim that short walks through tree-lined streets already provide mechanisms capable of favoring human mental restoration. In this sense, it is not possible to state the time required for a better favoring of the restorative effect, however, it is possible to state that being in a GS, regardless of time, has positive impacts on an individual's ability to recover from everyday stress.

Some peculiarities regarding the type of GS were also analyzed. One of the papers (Cervinka *et al.* 2016) analyzed the perceived restoration capacity of private gardens and found that this type of garden has a strong restorative potential that occurs through the emotional bonds that arise in the design of this type of garden. Another type of GS addressed here are cemeteries (Al-Akl *et al.* 2018; Nordh *et al.* 2017) which, although at first denoting some curiosity, were considered restorative environments by its users.

ii. *Report of satisfaction/positive quality with life when in a GS*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 17.8% (n = 13) addressed this effect, where satisfaction and positive quality with life is a concept that can be measured empirically through self-report of subjective evaluations that an individual does about the circumstances of his/her life (Wenjie *et al.* 2020).

In this sense, the reduction in perceived quality of life is related to the absence of accessible public GS (Conedera *et al.* 2015), that is, visits to parks have an impact on improving individual satisfaction with life (Yigitcanlar *et al.* 2020), where GS have an indirect role in building satisfaction (Han *et al.* 2020; Mansor *et al.* 2015).

Vegetations can be the most significant attributes of these spaces, leading users to have experiences that promote a better quality of life (Wassenberg et al. 2015). This sensation may be associated with the perception of less air pollution (Yuan *et al.* 2018), as well as with the environment that surrounds GS through residential experience and even the income range observed in these places (Wenjie *et al.* 2020; Gulwadi *et al.* 2019, Conedera *et al.* 2015). Residents who have access to private gardens and individuals who live less than 100 meters from GS tend to have a better assessment of their quality of life (Conedera *et al.* 2015), as well as people living in rural settings, which are also associated with higher levels of satisfaction (Coldwell and Evans; 2018).

The aspects of satisfaction and positive quality with life can also be associated with the age group of people, since, for example, older adults tend to experience these moments of visiting GS more calmly, reflecting a higher level of satisfaction (Li *et al.* 2019).

On the other hand, Bertram and Rehdanz (2015) found that GS at first increase satisfaction and

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quality of life, however, above a certain limit there is a drop in this feeling and this is due to some factors such as traffic jams, crime and noises.

When analyzing underprivileged areas, it was observed that environmental interventions are able to positively impact the environmental perception and quality of life of residents (Thompson *et al.* 2013), since GS provide contact with nature that triggers several positive implications on mental health and in this sense, satisfaction with life is one of them (Mansor *et al.* 2012).

iii. *Report of self-assessed positive health when in a GS*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 13.7% (n = 10) addressed this effect, showing that self-assessed health is linked to the feeling of well-being provided by GS, capable of influencing user satisfaction (Han *et al.* 2020). Vujcic *et al.* (2019) indicate that people who use GS tend to visit doctors less frequently and, consequently, spend less money on medication, corroborating the indications of Romagosa (2018), who states that the search for physical health is a strong motivation for women visits to GS, showing a positive correlation between self-assessed health and the motivation for visits to these spaces. Dzhambov *et al.* (2014) also add that the impact of GS is related to the individual awareness of the experience with nature. On the other hand, people who have already presented some type of nervous disease tend to prefer indoor spaces to outdoor spaces, using less vegetated areas (Vujcic *et al.* 2019).

The effects of GS on self-reported health can also be related to the feeling of insertion of an individual in that environment, since Nath *et al.* (2018) found that although visitors to a GS spend more time inside these spaces, residents in the vicinity of the same GS are able to better perceive health benefits. Therefore, living close to GS may be associated with increased physical activity and positive health behaviors (Nath *et al.* 2018), as already noted by Wood et al. (2017) and by Dadvand *et al.* (2016), who found that the greater the availability of GS in the neighborhood, the better the self-assessed health, which is also in accordance with the findings of Liu *et al.* (2018), who indicate that self-assessed health has a positive relationship with the perception of the natural attributes of GS.

The social opportunities generated by GS also imply on perceived health. On the poorest neighborhoods, participating in outdoor recreations in GS was vitally important in self-assessed health (Pietilä *et al.* 2015), once again relating the practice of physical activities to this perception. Another implication of GS that favors the perception of health is the perception of reduced air pollution. The higher the perception of air pollution by a given individual, the lower is his/her assessment of the positive perception of health (Yuan *et al.* 2018).

iv. *Report of feeling well-being when in a GS*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 41.1% (n = 30) addressed this effect, presenting well-being as a major impact factor on the construction of mental health, which covers physical, psychological and social aspects. Considering their characteristics and accessibility (Wendel *et al.* 2012), GS can contribute to human relaxation, physical activity practices, social cohesion (Liu *et al.* 2020; Vujcic *et al.* 2019), as well as more time spent with friends and family members positively impacting well-being (Bell *et al.* 2020). Likewise, people look for GS because they provide shade, fresh air and the real presence of vegetation (Wendel *et al.* 2012), as well as a place to rest where you can enjoy the company of other people and the landscape (Taib *et al.* 2012). In this sense, it is perceived that both GS in indoor and outdoor environments, of private or common access significantly and directly influence the self-reported well-being (Bell *et al.* 2020; Han *et al.* 2020).

The quality of GS indirectly impacts the way they are perceived, through the perception of environmental factors and the settlement of individuals in the place, providing experiences throughout their lives that affect them positively, implying a relationship between the quality of the place and well-being, based on individual emotional perspectives, perception of environmental stressors and perceived thermal comfort (Chang *et al.* 2020; Nasir *et al.* 2012). In addition to quality, the perception of quantity of GS directly implies the perception of well-being. Cleary et al. (2019) and Wood *et al.* (2017) affirm that when the increase in these spaces is noticeable, there is a greater probability of reporting improvements in well-being, in the same way that the perception of decreased GS implies a greater probability of reporting a decrease in the state of well-being. On the other hand, Wang et al. (2019) state that the urban green landscape, even if in a small size, enhances protection against stress and mitigation of air pollution and noise (Wang et al. 2019; Yuan *et al.* 2018), considering that larger GS are scarce in highly urbanized locations. Corroborating with Wang et al. (2019), Elsadek *et al.* (2019 b) state that making trees available alongside roads provides less experiences with negative emotions, discomfort, nervousness and disorders. Likewise, Mesimäki *et al.* (2019) claim that a small green roof influences the feeling of well-being, through visual and sensory experiences.

Well-being due to the length of stay in GS also stands out in some studies. Li *et al.* (2019) say that people who walked through these spaces quickly realized less benefits compared to people who had stayed longer in the place, just like Wood *et al.* (2017), Van Den Berg *et al.* (2016), Gilchrist *et al.* (2015), Carrus *et al.* (2015) and Mansor *et al.* (2015), who highlight that the longer the time spent in GS, the greater the benefits to self-reported well-being.

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In addition to quality, size, length of stay and biodiversity (Carrus *et al.* 2015), living close to GS is associated with several factors that imply a better perception of well-being, such as practice of physical activities and positive health behaviors, as well as feelings of renewal and restoration (Nath *et al.* 2018; Cervinka *et al.* 2016; Thomas, 2015; Finlay *et al.* 2015). Shanahan *et al.* (2017), in a survey that considered participants from different countries, show that keeping nature close to homes is an important factor to protect people's experiences with nature, also stating that lower levels of tree cover in the neighborhood are associated with reductions in visits to public and private GS, since this surrounding environment already favors human-nature interactions. In this sense, practicing gardening services also favors the feeling of well-being, making it in principle motivating, through the perception of interaction with nature (Lewis *et al.* 2018). Likewise, according to Gilchrist *et al.* (2015), GS in work environments, as well as their view through the window, provide higher levels of well-being. These aspects denote that, regardless of the environment, home or work, providing access and view to GS is a key factor in promoting well-being and, consequently, mental health.

Coldwell and Evans (2018) were unable to associate the size of the city and actual levels of urbanization with well-being, however they claim that visits to GS contributed to higher levels of perception of well-being regardless of level of urbanization, among their study participants. Several aspects, together, contribute to better perceptions of well-being, where the reduction of exhaustion, already mentioned by Panno *et al.* (2017), as well as how these spaces are favorable to the practice of physical activity, recreation and social interactions, are key in the construction of this perception (Artmann *et al.* 2017). Corroborating these statements, Mansor *et al.* (2012) highlight that contact with nature favors people in a physical and cognitive way as well as relaxation, comfort and satisfaction with life, directly impacting the perception of well-being.

In contrast to the aspects discussed here favoring the perception of well-being regardless of time spent in these places, Martens *et al.* (2011) state that the attractiveness generated by GS does not affect changes in well-being and that the level of tiredness of individuals does not interfere differently in how they perceive well-being, that is, for the authors, people more or less psychologically exhausted do not have different benefits. Panno *et al.* (2017) point out that the reduction in exhaustion favors well-being, however they do not report differences in this favoring for people more or less exhausted. Thus, based on the above, it is not possible to say whether or not there are differences between more or less tired or exhausted people, however, Martens *et al.* (2011) also state that GS that present themselves in a more "carefully maintained" way have a more positive impact on the perception of well-being compared to wild GS, corroborating with Artmann *et al.* (2017), who state that aesthetics was an important factor for the participants in their study.

v. *Report of feeling well-being when viewing a GS*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 12.3% (n = 9) addressed this effect. As already mentioned in the previous item, there are several factors associated with GS capable of promoting well-being and, in this sense, exposure to green by viewing, in the work or domestic environment, can provide a feeling of attachment in individuals which impacts their well-being and, consequently, their mental health (Liu *et al.* 2020), as well as connective, restorative and affective feelings with nature, increased positive emotions and reduced negative emotions (Scopelliti *et al.* 2016). Wenjie *et al.* (2020) found in their research that residents living close to golf courses perceive the impact of green on life satisfaction and well-being, through the viewing of these spaces, and this association tends to decline in a non-linear manner with the distance from these fields.

Elsadek *et al.* (2019 a), in an analysis that compared the view of green walls with built walls, claim that the viewing of vegetated walls had positive associations with improved brain activity. The authors also state that when participants observed the green walls, there was an increase in the relative alpha power and parasympathetic activity, which denotes better relaxation, which provides better mood and higher levels of attention. Similarly, for Mesimäki *et al.* (2019), the participants of their research had, in addition to sensory experiences, visual experiences such as the impact with the beauty of the place, as well as interest and desire to explore the GS.

For Van Den Berg *et al.* (2016), visual exposure to GS can promote vitality, well-being and mental health. For Gilchrist *et al.* (2015) spending more time on visits to GS provides higher levels of well-being, however the viewing of GS was also positive and independently associated with self-reported levels of well-being in the study participants. Corroborating with these authors, Conedera *et al.* (2015) suggest that the reduction in the perception of quality of life of the participants in their study is related to the absence of accessible GS, which could be compensated by the high visual scale of the surrounding nature, suggesting that eye contact in general also contributes to increase the feeling of well-being.

On the other hand, Lam and Hang (2017) tried to verify differences in the thermal sensation, through the viewing of shaded GS, however they were unable to find significant differences that would affect this perception which, consequently, would indirectly affect the feeling of well-being.

vi. *Report of positive mood when in a GS*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 12.3% (n = 9) addressed this effect, showing that

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exposure to natural environments affects several factors that make up mental health, such as cognitive functions and mood (Kondo *et al.* 2020). Thus, it can be inferred that people exposed to GS are substantially happier (MacKerron and Mourato 2013). In this sense, several studies have attempted to measure mood as a function of exposure to GS, such as Kondo *et al.* (2020), who found that residents of environments with lower GS availability experience a greater positive response when immersed in these environments. The authors also observed that 10 minutes of exposure to GS were more efficient to mood when compared to 30 minutes of exposure, suggesting that the impact of these spaces on mood may be short-term, thus corroborating the research by Elsadek *et al.* (2019 b) that states that simple interventions like trees by the side of roads are already capable of raising people's mood. Elsadek *et al.* (2019 a) state that the physical impact on brain activity caused by the viewing of GS causes people to experience better sensations of mood, in the same way that Mesimäki *et al.* (2019), who indicate that when viewing a green roof, participants in their study reported feeling more joy, bringing benefits to their mood, among other sensations. In addition to viewing GS, visiting these environments for recreational activities is associated with a significant improvement in self-reported mood (Li *et al.* 2019) and in this sense, the reduction in noise provided by GS leads to less annoyance for people (Dzhambov *et .al* 2018), bringing positive effects to the mood sensation.

Regarding the availability of GS, Lin *et al.* (2019) state that medium to high per capita areas of these environments provide lower rates of negative mood and Navarrete-Hernandez and Laffan (2019) complement this by stating that whatever the ecological intervention inserted in an environment, it will have the ability to significantly improve mood.

vii. *GS influences the practice of physical activity*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 24.7% (n = 18) addressed this effect. There are several physical and mental benefits provided by physical activity and, thus, providing favorable and motivating environments (Finlay *et al.* 2015) of these activities has direct implications for the health and well-being of the population. In this sense, several studies sought to understand how GS can impact and contribute to the practice of physical exercises, since physical activity is a partial mediator between perception of GS and well-being (Wang *et al.* 2019), as well as has its practice facilitated through GS (Thomas, 2015). Bell *et al.* (2020) found that people who have access to GS tend to better meet the physical activity guidelines, which leads them to report a better sense of self-assessed health, as for example by the practice of walks that are favorable to relaxation, improvement of stress and mood (Lin *et al.* 2019). For the elderly, if the GS have attractive elements for their attention, they can spend more time on these visits, stimulating them to various activities that are favorable to physical and mental health (Li *et al.* 2019), where physical activity and recreation activities are the most perceived benefits in the quality of life of this group (Artmann *et al.* 2017).

Vujcic *et al.* 2019 found that the participants in their research who have or had nervous diseases tend to prefer indoor spaces when compared to participants who did not report nervous problems, who perceived the social benefits of GS and used to associate walking with common activities, in the same way that participants who did not use medications and associated running, as well as more time spent outdoors.

Nath *et al.* (2018) found that residents of neighborhoods with good availability of GS better perceive benefits related to health and physical fitness, as well as the maintenance of body weight, when compared to people who visit parks, but who do not live nearby, which led the authors to affirm that living close to urban GS leads to an increase in physical activity and positive health behaviors, corroborating Dzhambov *et al.* (2018), Astell-Burt *et al.* (2013), Thompson *et al.* (2013) and Mansor *et al.* (2012), who also state that greater availability of GS around the residence increases the practice of physical activity by local residents and reduces physical inactivity.

Akpinar (2016) also associated the accesses close to the GS and the quality of these environments to the increase in the practice of physical activity and this increase, according to the author, implies less stress and better mental health, where stress presents itself as a mediator of the relationship of physical activity and mental health.

On the other hand, Bornioli *et al.* (2018) found that, although walking practices in areas with vegetation are positively evaluated, walking in a quality urban environment also shows positive results and, for the authors, the critical factor for analysis was the reduction of traffic, that is, offering quality urban environments can provide the same benefits as GS. Similarly, Triguero-Mas *et al.* (2017) state that in their study stress was a mediator between associations of mental health and natural outdoor environments, however the practice of physical activity was not. On the other hand, Dadvand *et al.* (2016) state that the practice of physical activity was a mediator between general subjective health and exposure to green in their study, and there may be some changes between age and sex.

Regarding the motivation for exercising, although GS have already been cited as a motivator for this practice (Bell *et al.*, 2020; Akpinar, 2016; Finlay *et al.* 2015; Thomas, 2015), Sugiyama *et al.* (2013) state that in their research no attribute of GS was associated with the beginning of a walk, however the perception of the presence of green was significantly associated with a

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greater probability of maintaining these walks. It is clear that the sample size, methodology and technique used imply different ways of observing this variable.

viii. *Safety pointed out as a critical factor in the use of GS*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 8.2% (n = 6) addressed this factor and among the papers that deal with the theme of safety within GS, it was noticed that it is a determining factor in the patterns of use, since the attitudes towards GS are directly linked to the perception of safety (Thompson *et al.* 2013), which is also associated with the quality and location of the GS (Campagnaro *et al.* 2020). Together with the feeling of stress relief and happiness (Navarrete-Hernandez and Laffan, 2019), safety is the main factor that influences the use of GS and in this sense the presence of people becomes essential for the use of these environments to transmit security for the practice of activities, whether recreational or physical activities (Campagnaro *et al.* 2020; Navarrete-Hernandez and Laffan, 2019; Barrera *et al.* 2016).

Bertram and Rehdanz (2015) present results that show that, at first, the increase in GS improves participants' satisfaction with life, however this satisfaction tends to decrease above a certain limit. For the authors, this is due to the fear of criminality, among other variables, in accordance with what was exposed by Finlay *et al. (*2015), who state that the sense of security in the use of GS influences the entire therapeutic relationship of the research participants with the landscape.

ix. *GS relieve stress*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 17.8% (n = 13) addressed this effect and although GS provide several positive implications for their users, if they are not associated with safety they cannot positively impact stress relief, which is one of the main motivators for using these environments (Campagnaro *et al.* 2020)

In this sense, the available per capita area of GS can bring different benefits depending on the activity practiced. Lin *et al.* (2019) state that walking in an area of high GS per capita and sitting in an area of low GS per capita have the best effects for stress reduction, corroborating with other studies presented above, on the benefits of GS, regardless of their size (Cleary *et al.* 2019; Elsadek *et al.* 2019 a; Mesimäki *et al.* 2019; Wang et al. 2019; Wood *et al.* 2017), as well as with Wang *et al.* (2019), who report that small GS positively correlate with stress protection and with Astell-Burt *et al.* (2013), who state that residents of greener neighborhoods are exposed to a lower risk of psychological suffering, impacting on stress reduction. Navarrete-Hernandez and Laffan (2019) state that all types of green interventions have strong benefits in reducing perceived stress, with varying effect sizes according to different interventions.

Yang *et al.* (2019) also found that the presence of GS reduces the uncertainty of stress with life, where the larger the area per capita, the greater the decrease in stress. According to the authors, there are no differences in this perception due to gender. For Nath et al. (2018) both residents of areas with good availability of GS and visitors to these environments agree that vegetated areas are calm places for relaxation and that these help to reduce stress. Triguero-Mas *et al.* (2017) go further, stating that perceived stress is a mediator of several relationships between mental health and natural outdoor environments, and Peschardt *et al.* (2013) complement by stating that the perceived sensory dimension of GS was presented, in their research, as more important for more stressed individuals.

Li *et al.* (2019), in a survey focused on the elderly, state that visits to parks for recreational purposes are significantly associated with the reduction of stress that occurs through improved mood and self-reported perception of mental health benefits. Akpinar (2016) and Thomas (2015) refer to the other beneficial implications of GS mentioned above, where reductions in stress levels are caused by increased physical activity, which in turn is motivated by better access to GS. Wassenberg *et al.* (2015) complement by stating that plants are the most significant attributes of GS, leading research participants to experience stress relief, new experiences and relaxation.

x. *GS contribute to and improve social cohesion*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 19.2% (n = 14) addressed this effect. Social cohesion occurs through the interaction between people that promotes contacts and experiences while using an environment. Several studies have sought to understand how this factor occurs due to the green space, such as Yang *et al.* (2020), who found that GS are directly and indirectly related to mental health as they reduce perceived environmental disturbances and are able to improve social cohesion. For the authors, GS are also inversely related to environmental disturbance and positively to social cohesion.

The perception of the urban landscape is positively correlated with mental health and social cohesion acts as a mediator of this correlation (Wang *et al.* 2019). Viewing GS on the streets of the neighborhood in which the individual lives contributes to mental health through the feeling of social cohesion that occurs through attachment to the place and community interactions (Liu *et al.* 2020; Lewis *et al.* 2018), showing that small GS, as places for small community gardening practices (Lewis *et al.* 2018), are favorable to mental health, acting as protectors from stress, mitigating environmental pollutants and presenting themselves as

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essential, especially in highly urbanized cities (Wang *et al.* 2019). Mansor *et al.* (2012) had previously stated that green infrastructures, from small domestic gardens to large parks, provide and motivate various activities and promote better social interactions, where people can enjoy the company of others (Taib *et al.* 2012).

Barrera *et al.* (2016) and Dadvand *et al.* (2016) reinforce that neighborhoods with good availability of GS cause residents to have the habit of meeting in these spaces, building a better sense of community, belonging and positive family dynamics (Thomas, 2015); in addition, having the opportunity to participate in recreational activities and social engagement (Finlay *et al.* 2015) in GS is vital for self-reported health assessment (Pietilä *et al.* 2015). Similarly, Artmann *et al.* (2017), who surveyed the elderly, claim that GS are essential to social interaction, keeping them active. Corroborating these statements, Wendel *et al.* (2012) had already verified that parks around the neighborhood were referred by users as places of social gatherings and that they had facilities for children.

Triguero-Mas *et al.* (2017) found no statistically significant associations between mental health and exposure to natural outdoor environments. In their research, social contact was not a mediator between associations, unlike Wang *et al.* (2019), who found that social cohesion was a significant partial mediator of the perception of urban vegetation and mental health. However, Triguero-Mas *et al.* (2017) found that contact with natural outdoor environments was statistically and significantly linked to better mental health.

xi. *GS contribute to the individual's settlement/ belonging in the region*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 5.5% (n=4) addressed this effect, where the relationship between the quality of the GS and mental health and well-being, in addition to environmental stressors, occurs in the emotional perspective with these spaces. For Chang *et al.* (2020), the quality of GS has no direct influence on well-being, however it contributes positively to this, through the availability of environmental factors and the feeling of settlement in the place. Likewise, Liu *et al.* (2020) state that the view of the neighborhood with tree-lined streets contributes positively to mental health through the feeling of residential attachment. Mansor *et al.* (2012) found in their research that the social experience generated by GS offers empowerment and cohesion to the community, which provides an opportunity for socialization that positively strengthens territoriality and the feeling of belonging to a place.

Regarding differences related to income class, Barrera *et al.* (2016) observed that in middle and low income neighborhoods the residents have the habit of meeting in GS, favoring the sense of community and belonging, unlike the high income neighborhoods, where these spaces are less valued, used only as an environment for children's recreation and not for social interactions.

xii. *Perception of the larger area of GS implies less perception of stress and greater feeling of well-being*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 9.7% (n = 7) addressed this effect. Some studies sought to identify whether the perception of a larger area of GS available would bring benefits to stress and self-reported well-being, as GS are directly and indirectly related to mental health, by reducing perceived environmental stressors (Yang *et al.* 2020). In this sense, Cleary *et al.* (2019) found positive correlations between perceived quantity of GS and well-being, whereby the greater the availability of GS, the greater the likelihood of participants in their research to report higher levels of psychological well-being and, similarly, they found that the lower the availability of GS, the more likely they were to report a drop in well-being levels. Wood *et al.* (2017) corroborate these statements, as they investigated several types of parks and for all these types, the greater the availability, the greater the perception of them, providing an increase in mental health measures. The authors also state that the possibility and the act of spending more time in these environments increase the benefits offered to mental well-being.

The higher the perceived GS, the greater the opportunities for residents to experience restorative benefits and also, the lower the opportunities for boredom (Dzhambov *et al.* 2018). Yang *et al.* (2019) found that when the per capita area of GS increased (more than 40 ha/1,000 people) there was a significant reduction in stress levels, reaching 39% reduction.

The perception of the number of available GS also correlates with the type of relationship that people have with nature, that is, the number of visits to these environments. Shanahan *et al.* (2017), in a survey conducted in Brisbane, in Australia, and the Cranfield Triangle, in the United Kingdom, found that lower levels of tree cover availability in the neighborhood were associated with a reduction in the frequency of visits to public and private GS, as well as in time spent on these visits. The authors also state that the responses from both places surveyed had a good correlation and that regardless of the urban design, it is vital to maintain the availability of nature in the vicinity of the homes in order to protect the experiences with natural environments.

On the other hand, Akpinar *et al.* (2016) found that when they tried to associate all types of GS they researched, there were no associations between them and mental health in the applied statistical tests, however they observed that greater availability of urban GS was associated with fewer days of mental health complaints and that the size of the forest in urban areas seems to be an important factor in the relationship between GS and mental health.

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xiii. *GS imply less perception of pollution and noise*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 5.5% (n = 4) addressed this effect. Yuan *et al.* (2018) found evidence that air pollution affects self-reported satisfaction with life and that green coverage increases this satisfaction. Thus, GS are able to improve people's well-being not only because of the positive impact on mental health, but also through their indirect effects of improving air quality and their subjective health conditions. In this sense, in highly urbanized cities with scarcity of GS, small vegetated environments are positively correlated with mental well-being, as they protect people against stress by mitigating environmental pollutants, including air pollution and noise (Wang *et al.* 2019).

Wendel *et al.* (2012) and Finlay *et al.* (2015) address the perceived aspects of pollutants stating that their participants reported that GS motivate them to leave home to practice physical activity and to experience environments with fresh/clean air, which denotes the perception of better air quality in these spaces.

xiv. *GS contribute to perceived thermal comfort*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 8.2% (n = 6) addressed this effect. Thermal comfort is a state of mind that represents satisfaction with the thermal environment (Fanger, 1970) and has been widely studied around the world. Its parameters include physical, environmental and psychological factors, since two people can perceive the same environment in different ways, therefore many studies seek to understand comfort through different methods: *in loco* microclimate measurements, application of *in loco* questionnaires, use of thermal comfort indexes and models calibrated according to the region of the study; thermoenergetic simulations, remote sensing, satellite images, among others. However, surveys that apply questionnaires to ascertain the vote of sensation tend to be more accurate, given that the psychological parameters that underlie human responses can determine an individual's state of comfort. It was found, within the scope of this review, that most of the studies that seek to verify thermal comfort do not apply simultaneous questionnaires to measurements or simulations.

Corroborating the difficulty of determining an individual's state of comfort, Wang *et al.* (2018) investigated three types of GS in Guangzhou, China, and concluded that the GS that physically produced the best cooling capacity was perceived as the hottest and most uncomfortable environment by the participants and, similarly, the GS that presented the highest air temperatures was perceived as the most comfortable place by them. This study suggests the individuality of the parameters that underlie human thermal comfort, as well as the importance of investigating the vote of sensation in research on human perceptions of GS.

Elsadek *et al.* (2019 a) found that viewing green facades, as well as other types of GS (Liu et al. 2020), compared to built facades, significantly increased parasympathetic nerve activity and decreased sympathetic nerve activity, a significant decrease in skin conductance, as well as a substantial increase in the comfortable and relaxed sensations of participants, suggesting that they could experience better sensations of relaxation, humor and attention, favoring the perception of a comfortable environment. Panno *et al.* (2017) had already presented results that are in accordance with Elsadek *et al.* (2019 a), in which GS users have higher levels of well-being in the summer and also a lower level of ego exhaustion. For the authors, the results suggest that people with higher levels of exhaustion tend to overestimate the maximum air temperatures, also bringing the importance of investigating the individual parameters that underlie the state of individual comfort.

Lam and Hang (2017) had a hypothesis that the viewing of shaded GS could affect the perceived thermal comfort of the participants of their research, however the authors found no significant differences in the thermal sensations of the people analyzed. However, the authors point out that visual comfort may affect thermal comfort in outdoor environments, but that this effect may occur differently between shaded and exposed environments.

On the other hand, Klemm *et al.* (2015) state that GS are generally perceived as thermally comfortable, since the participants in their research assessed that these spaces have positive effects of thermal comfort in the summer. For the authors, the thermal comfort of GS is also greater than the comfort experienced in built environments, and they claim that a large part of the variation in comfort is perceived by the type of environment.

xv. *Demographic differences in the perception of GS*

Of the total surveys gathered in this review, 4.1% (*n = 3*) addressed differences in education, 1.4% (*n = 1*) addressed differences between race/ethnicity, 5.5% (*n = 4*) addressed differences income, 1.4% (*n = 1*) addressed weight differences, 11% (*n = 8*) researched gender differences and found positive results, 5.5% (*n = 4*) researched gender differences but did not find results that supported this statement and, finally, 15.1% (*n = 11*) addressed the age group difference.

As already seen in this review, there are several factors that interfere with how a person perceives an environment. Root *et al.* (2017) state that the sense of place differs by ethnicity and level of education, considering that among the participants of his research,

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Hispanics and blacks with low education have consistently lower GS assessments than people with higher education. The authors are unable to establish the parameters that underlie these differences but suggest that education alters the perceptions and experiences of these groups in relation to the environment.

For Van Den Berg *et al.* (2016), the associations with visits to GS were significantly modified by the level of education of the participants as well as the time they spent in nature during childhood. Higher levels of vitality associated with GS were found among low-income participants when compared to people with a high level of education. Corroborating these findings and without verifying ethnic issues, Triguero-Mas *et al.* (2017) state that contact with GS outdoors is related to better levels of mental health, where younger men with low-middle schooling had greater reflexes in the levels of mental health.

Regarding differences by race/ethnicity, as already presented above, Root *et al.* (2017) found ethnic/racial differences between the participants in their research. For the authors, environmental perceptions and preferences occur differently between ethnic/racial groups, as well as groups of different socioeconomic levels. In this sense, the authors investigated, among other parameters, differences between non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanics in Denver, USA, and when they analyzed the effect of ethnicity/race and education interaction, they found different aesthetic perceptions of GS between the analysis groups, where Hispanic and black participants had lower GS aesthetic assessments.

As for income, for Barrera *et al.* (2016) the pattern of use of GS is influenced by an individual's income level, reflecting a greater use of these environments in a middle - and low-income neighborhood. In these locations, according to the authors, social cohesion is favored, since neighbors have the habit of meeting in these vegetated environments and for the residents of these regions, the availability of GS is perceived as an indicator of local development, unlike high-income neighborhoods, which tend to have less use of local GS, and residents of these environments perceive GS only as amenities already expected from urban design.

Scopelliti *et al.* (2016) corroborate these statements, in part, since they found evidence that middle-income people reported higher levels of relationships with nature, which reflected in better self-assessments of affective feelings, well-being and restoring benefits assigned to GS. On the other hand, the authors found that for low- and high-income groups, the feeling of well-being was more related to economic factors than to the surrounding nature. The authors also observed that the low-income group was the group that reported the lowest levels of perceived accessibility to GS. For the high-income group, it was observed that the variables related to the use of parks did not present themselves in a relevant way in the promotion of well-being, which is in accordance with the findings of Barrera *et al.* (2016).

In accordance with the findings of Scopelliti *et al.* (2016) and Barrera *et al.* (2016), Zhang *et al.* (2013) identified that the participants in their study who had a monthly income of less than US$ 960 had greater their need to use GS for recreational activities and social cohesion, however for participants with an income greater than US$ 960, the need for social cohesion decreased. Wendel *et al.* (2012) also found this pattern of differences in the use of GS between low- and high-income groups, and data from their research show that low-income residents had more need for the health, social and environmental benefits promoted by GS.

Addressing weight differences, in a survey that sought to examine how the experiences in different types of GS and blue spaces provide important health and well-being benefits for women in Copenhagen, Denmark, Thomas (2015) found that a minority of women participating in his study reported not-so-favorable experiences in natural spaces. This fact was observed among low-income and overweight women, since for these women spending time on GS, which are associated with the practice of physical activities and healthy lifestyles, exposed them to the criticisms and opinions of others, so this was a psychological pattern presented by the participants of that study.

Regarding gender differences, Liu *et al.* (2018) found that both men and women had a good relationship between self-reported health and the perception of the natural attributes of GS, however only for men, a cognitive response to restoration and perceived health was observed. Similarly, for Triguero-Mas *et al.* (2017) contact with natural outdoor environments was significantly linked to better mental health, however this relationship was stronger for men, since they experience higher levels of stress in urban life, which implies lower levels of mental health, Yang *et al.* (2020). Dadvand *et al.* (2016) corroborate these statements, since they also observed that benefits to mental health and social support were better perceived among the male participants of their research.

Thomas' findings (2015) show that overweight and socio-political associations among women seemed to be critical factors in the use of GS in these groups. On the other hand, Conedera *et al.* (2015) found that, like the elderly, women are more likely to feel part of the GS and therefore spend more time in these places, which allows them to feel free from their responsibilities and daily activities.

Zhang *et al.* (2013) found recreational needs in GS for both men and women, however, noted that for men this need was greater between 45 and 64 years of age, and for women, under the age of 45. As for usage

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patterns, Wendel *et al.* (2012) observed that higher frequencies of uses of GS were found for men, which was due to the availability of existing sports fields in the analyzed GS.

Yang *et al.* (2019) found beneficial effects of GS on the daily stress of participants in their research, where larger areas of GS resulted in a significant decrease in stress, however when the authors included gender in the analyzes, there was no marked influence on this relationship. Likewise, Elsadek *et al.* (2019 b) found among their participants several benefits of trees by the side of roads, however did not observe significant differences between men and women in the perception of these benefits.

Corroborating with Yang *et al.* (2019) and Elsadek *et al.* (2019 b), Romagosa (2018) states that 89.9% of the surveyed GS visitors reported that physical health motivated visits to GS and 88.0% reported improvement in physical health during visits to these GS, however, the correlations between motivation to visit and gender were weak, as also noted by Taib *et al.* (2012).

Addressing age group differences, it was found that neighborhoods with availability of GS provide benefits to well-being through human experiences with nature, which favors mental health (Kondo *et al.* 2020). Elderly people have better abilities to perceive the beauty of GS (Conedera *et al.* 2015), and among this age group, residents of peri-urban areas have greater preferences for ecosystem services of GS that are related to their experience with these natural environments (Riechers *et al.* 2018).

Chang *et al.* (2020) found that elderly residents seek GS in the vicinity, not for interactions with nature but for strengthening social cohesion, since these environments provide meetings between friends and the community. Also for the authors, when the perception of environmental stressors is reduced, the elderly are more likely to visit, improving their social adhesion. Romagosa (2018) found that although participants from all age groups in their study perceive physical health as motivating visits to GS, it is the elderly who have higher levels of motivation for this purpose.

As for the pattern of use, Li *et al.* (2019) found that the elderly have different patterns of activities in GS and this requires that these environments favor these activities by offering diverse environments. In addition, the authors observed that for the group of elderly people who experience these recreational activities in GS, a significant reduction in stress and improved mood was associated, favoring experiences of greater relaxation, satisfaction with life, as well as less anxiety and depression for these people.

Zhang *et al.* (2013) found that adults aged 45 to 64 years have greater needs for the use of GS for recreational activities and Astell-Burt *et al.* (2013) state that middle-aged adults who live in neighborhoods with good availability of GS have a lower risk of experiencing psychological distress, unlike people who are not physically active, which suggests, according to the authors, that the association between health mental and GS is dependent on the individual lifestyle as people get older. Zhang *et al.* (2013) complement that by stating that among the participants in their study, women under 45 years of age have greater needs to practice recreational activities in GS.

Dzhambov *et al.* (2014) observed that the elderly participants in their research had higher levels of health anxiety when compared to other participants and in this sense, interactions and experiences with nature were predictors of health anxiety, regardless of other factors.

Regarding younger people, Triguero-Mas *et al.* (2017) found that exposure to natural outdoor environments was favorable to mental health and that these interactions were better for people of younger age groups, male and low to medium income. Corroborating with the authors, Dadvand *et al.* (2016) also observed that people under the age of 65 perceived in a more relevant way the benefits offered by the GS in relation to the general health perceived in the vicinity of their homes.

Regarding the preferences for services offered by GS, Riechers *et al.* (2018) state that among the participants in their research, younger residents tend to prefer cultural ecosystem services, as these facilitate their social interactions.

xvi. *The pattern of publications within the scope of this research*

Statistical tests proved the hypothesis of independence between the years of publication and studies that investigated the variables raised in the review (14 implications and 7 demographic differences), even when these were grouped into groups of 3 and 5 years.

Likewise, there was independence between the type of study (cross-sectional or longitudinal) and studies that investigated the variables raised in the review (14 implications and 7 demographic differences).

However, the independence tests revealed some statistical dependencies and important findings, regarding the Climate Zone in which the study site is located (polar, temperate and tropical) and some of the variables raised in the review (14 implications and 7 demographic differences):

- At the 5% significance level, there was dependence between the Climate Zone and variable "report of feeling well-being when in a GS" ($p = 0.006$), that is, studies carried out in the tropical zone proportionally investigated and used such variable more;
- At the 5% significance level, there was dependence between the Climate Zone and variable "GS contribute to and improve the individual's social

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cohesion" ($p = 0.005$), that is, studies carried out in the tropical zone proportionally investigated and used such variable more;

- At the 5% significance level, there was dependence between the Climate Zone and variable "GS contribute to the individual's settlement/belonging in the region" ($p = 0.010$), that is, studies carried out in the tropical zone proportionally investigated and used such variable more.

These findings prove that surveys that took place in tropical countries investigate in a relevant way the issues of well-being within GS, the contributions of GS to the social cohesion of individuals, as well as perceptions of settlement and belonging to the place of residence. This may be due to the recent climate projections that point to an increase in global temperatures in the coming decades, where the tropical zones - the warmest areas - will be the most affected by this increase (Chou *et al.* 2014; IPCC, 2014), and this fact can explain the findings presented here, since we seek to mitigate heat islands in these regions, aiming at GS as an alternative for this purpose. This also corroborates the increase in research on the theme that addresses the perceptive aspects of GS, in the last 5 years, as already shown in Table 2.

Although the tests did not show dependencies between the years of publication and type of study (cross-sectional or longitudinal), the descriptive levels of the independence tests showed a possible tendency for dependence between year of publication and variable "Perception of the larger area of GS implies less perception of stress and greater feeling of well-being" ($p = 0.87$), as well as for the type of study (cross-sectional or longitudinal) and the same variable ($p = 0.075$). In other words, there is the possibility that, with a larger sample, the dependence between variables can be verified, proving that in the last 5 years of publications variable "Perception of the larger area of GS implies less perception of stress and greater feeling of well-being" has been investigated and used more in the studies carried out and, likewise, its dependence on the type of study (cross-sectional or longitudinal) could be verified.

xvii. *Research limitations and suggestions for future studies*

This review sought to answer the basic question that supported the adopted methodology. Bearing in mind that the 1,441 papers located in the initial search were based on the keywords adopted, as well as on the platform chosen for search, the inclusion of other keywords and the search on other platforms could bring a greater number of studies to be analyzed, which consequently could give greater theoretical support to discussions and meta-analysis.

Likewise, although this research has contact with an extensive number of papers published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, the research started at the beginning of the quarantine period generated by the Covid-19 pandemic, therefore the extraction of data from the selected papers does not rely on the theoretical contribution of surveys that have been carried out during this confinement period.

We suggest that future research should include published papers focusing on GS during the pandemic, so that it is possible to analyze the real perception of people in the quarantine period in relation to the benefits of GS, so that they serve as complementary studies to this research.

IV. Final Considerations

Through an extensive literature search, we sought to answer the question "*What is the impact of green spaces on the perception of human well-being and on the human thermal perception*? ". Based on this review, it was possible to verify that being in a GS, as well as viewing these environments, imply better self-reported levels of: restoration; satisfaction and positive quality with life; health assessment; well-being when in a GS and viewing a GS; mood; physical activity; stress; social cohesion; settlement and belonging; less perception of pollution and noise; as well as changes in perceived thermal comfort.

It was also found that the perception of a larger area of GS available can benefit well-being and reduce the level of stress. However, the perception of safety in these environments was presented as a critical factor for use that can become an obstacle to all the benefits mentioned.

In addition, it was possible to identify demographic differences in the construction of the perception of GS, such as: level of education; race/ethnicity; income; weight; gender; and age group.

The compilation of the implications and differences in the perception of GS presented here can be used as a theoretical basis for contributions to planners, architects and urbanists, in the design of public and private spaces that are favorable to human well-being, especially in the current pandemic period faced by all nations. Based on all the studies analyzed here, it is possible to state that making GS available to the population presents itself as a public health measure, capable of easing and mitigating everyday stress, whether due to the high work demand in the modern world, as well as the period of confinement imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Finally, we suggest that future research analyzes human perceptions in pandemic periods and that they be included in the database presented here, in order to increase the evidence regarding the implications and differences in the perception of GS.

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Authors 'Contribution

Conceptualization, first author; Methodology, first and second authors; Software, third author; Validation, first and fourth authors; Formal analysis, first, second, third and fourth authors; Research, first and fourth authors; Data curation, first author; Writing - Original Preparation of the project, first, second and fourth authors; Writing - Review and editing, first author; Visualization, first author; Supervision, according to author; Project administration, first and second author.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare in the conflict of interest.

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The Interplay of *Ubuntu* and Hospitality as Defining Tenets in African and South African Ethics: A Christian Ethics Reflection

By Clement Kholopa

Abstract- The notion of Ubuntu as a moral theory in the South African and African contexts, presents attractive norms of an African world view that can be articulated and applied to contemporary Christian ethics. The proponents of Ubuntu perceive it as an African philosophy based on the maxim, 'a person is a person through other persons', whereby the community prevails over individual considerations. It is not merely an empirical claim that our survival or well-being is causally dependent on others but is in essence capturing a normative account of what we ought to most value in life. The shortcomings of Ubuntu should not preclude from reflecting on Ubuntu as a natural ethic potential that enforces and engenders hospitality, neighbourliness and care for all humanity. In this instance, Ubuntu should shift to liminal Ubuntu with Christ as a bond as Ubuntu seeks to restore African communal cultural behaviours. Hospitality should be practiced by doing or reflecting on things which might look insignificant such as, supporting the vulnerable, the marginalized and the migrants that come to South Africa from the neighbouring African countries that bear the brunt of xenophobic acts. This article seeks to appeal to the predominant influence of Ubuntu and Judeo-Christian ethos embedded in the South African psyche to the challenge posed by xenophobia. The article further argues for human dignity as understood by identifying and exhibiting solidarity with others.

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The Interplay of *Ubuntu* and Hospitality as Defining Tenets in African and South African Ethics: A Christian Ethics Reflection

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Abstract- The notion of Ubuntu as a moral theory in the South African and African contexts, presents attractive norms of an African world view that can be articulated and applied to contemporary Christian ethics. The proponents of Ubuntu perceive it as an African philosophy based on the maxim, 'a person is a person through other persons', whereby the community prevails over individual considerations. It is not merely an empirical claim that our survival or well-being is causally dependent on others but is in essence capturing a normative account of what we ought to most value in life. The shortcomings of Ubuntu should not preclude from reflecting on Ubuntu as a natural ethic potential that enforces and engenders hospitality, neighbourliness and care for all humanity. In this instance, Ubuntu should shift to liminal Ubuntu with Christ as a bond as Ubuntu seeks to restore African communal cultural behaviours. Hospitality should be practiced by doing or reflecting on things which might look insignificant such as, supporting the vulnerable, the marginalized and the migrants that come to South Africa from the neighbouring African countries that bear the brunt of xenophobic acts. This article seeks to appeal to the predominant influence of Ubuntu and Judeo-Christian ethos embedded in the South African psyche to the challenge posed by xenophobia. The article further argues for human dignity as understood by identifying and exhibiting solidarity with others.

I. Introduction

This article will explore the notion of *Ubuntu* with hospitality as its central tenet, as deeply imbedded in African ethics' perspectives of contemporary moral theorists that is largely shaped by the world views of the indigenous black peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, excluding those of Arab, Indian and European descent and culture. The world views of the indigenous people of sub-Saharan Africa have recently, especially in the past five years or so, been compared and contrasted with Western philosophy, with the maxim often associated with *Ubuntu* being: 'A person is a person through other persons' (Tutu, 1999, 35; Khoza, 1994, 3), notwithstanding that, there has been no rigorous engagements between the two. This has led to what Wiredu (2016:80) has observed, that when he reads Western philosophy, he reads it to see what he can learn from it, but he is of the opinion that we have not reached a stage where somebody will look at African philosophy and readily say: what can I learn from it?

Therefore, a brief comparison will be undertaken to conceptualise and understand the notion of *Ubuntu* as a moral theory for the purposes of the study. It is in this context that the more analytical and critical approaches to the attractive norms of an African world view will be articulated and applied to contemporary Christian ethics, to develop and defend *Ubuntu* as a deeply moral principle (Tutu, 1999; Ramose, 1999; Shutte, 1993, 2001; Metz, 2007, 2011; Magezi, 2017; Meylahn, 2017).

II. The Nature and History of the Notion *Ubuntu*

The scholarship on *Ubuntu*, the Nguni word often used as an ethic or philosophy- based concept on communal relationships that grew out of traditional sub-Saharan lifestyles, has attracted diverse academic approaches in the 21st century (Metz, 2014:447). *Ubuntu* in its literal translation from the African Nguni linguistic group (ie Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swati), means humaneness, hence, it is common for traditional black people on the continent to believe one's aim in life is to exhibit *Ubuntu* (different linguistic groups have their own corresponding meaning for the term) by prizing communal relationships with other people. The substantial anthology devoted to the work in African ethics began with the classic but somewhat dated texts by Placide Tempels (1959) and John Mbiti (1969) (Metz, 2017: 62). However, these classic texts from Tempels and Mbiti were mainly used by sub-Saharan ethicists as a matter of moral anthropology in an attempt to shape indigenous morality to address their own interpretations of the world.

Tempels (1959:18, 30) acknowledges that all behaviour depends on a system of principles and for Africans (Bantu) according to Tempels, that system of principles, has a different conception of relationships between people, of causality and responsibility contrary to the one held in European thought. He postulated that the fundamental concept of African ontology is centred in a single value, which he termed 'vital force', that denotes the integrity of the whole being and which is not used exclusively in the bodily sense (*ibid.*, 44-45). Therefore, he posits that 'muntu' signifies the vital force that is endowed with intelligence and will in African ontology as espoused in the interpretation of the African saying '*Vidye i muntu mukatampe*': meaning "God is the great Person", alluding that He is the great, powerful

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and reasonable living force. Therefore, for Tempels, the philosophy of forces in the theory of life is the guiding principle in the motivation for all African customs that decrees the norms in which personality in the individual shall be kept unaltered or allowed to develop (*ibid.*, 74).

He (Tempels) further posits that 'objective morality to the African is ontological, immanent and intrinsic morality' as their moral standards are essentially dependent on things ontologically understood (*ibid*., 120-121). The knowledge to discern the natural order of forces is informed by their natural intelligence and by their philosophical notions of the relationships and interactions between things. Thus, Tempels concluded that an act or usage will be described as '*ontologically good*' by the African and will be similarly accounted as '*ethically good'*; therefore, by deductive extension, be evaluated as '*juridically just' (ibid*., 121). The knowledge of an individual's moral duty and legal obligations is bound to the pain of losing their vital force, as they know that by carrying out their duties, they will enhance the quality of their being. It is therefore important for the '*muntu*' to live life in accordance with their vital rank in the community, to make a meaningful contribution to its well-being and maintenance by the normal exercise of their favourable vital influence. This not only exists for members of their community but has to be extended to outsiders as they are equally God's people; and their vital force has to be respected, as the destruction or diminution of an outsider's life is tantamount to the disturbance of the ontological order and the subsequent repercussions thereof (*ibid*., 136).

According to Tempels (*ibid*. 142-143), evil is conceived by Africans as an injustice towards God and directed towards the natural order which is the expression of His will; and it is also seen as directed to the ancestors in an attempt to act against their vital rank. Accordingly, every injustice is an attempt on the life of a person, whether belonging to the community or a foreigner, of which the attendant malice in it proceeds from the great respect due to human life, the supreme gift from God. Thus, for Africans, real injustice is the harm done to the vital force which accords restitution based in terms of the worth of life, which will serve as the basis of assessment of the damages or compensation. Tempels concluded that the inherent principle in African philosophy is the vital force, with the preservation of the vital force the all-consuming and motivating aim that guides and motivates all their practices (ibid., 179).

The seminal work of Mbiti (1969), 'African religions and philosophy', set a new intellectual climate for understanding African social and cultural studies from their own norms, internal rules, and within the logic of their own systems. According to Mbiti (1969:1), Africans are notoriously religious with each person having their own set of beliefs and practices, as religion permeates each facet of their everyday life. Through his comprehensive anthropological study of the African traditional concept of God, he concluded that the ontological expression of God for all these people was that He is the origin and Sustainer of all things, the Supreme Being (*ibid*., 29). For Africans, God is simultaneously transcendent and immanent, therefore a balanced understanding of these two extremes is necessary for the discussions concerning African conceptions of God. The knowledge of God by Africans emanates from expressions about Him in proverbs, songs, prayers, names, myths, stories, short statements and religious ceremonies (*ibid*., 29).

Mbiti contends that (ibid., 29-38) for Africans, their concepts of God are shaped by the historical, geographical, social and cultural background or environment of each person. This explains the similarities and differences when considering their beliefs about God throughout the continent. Their attributes of God for an African are difficult to grasp and express, since they pertain more to the realm of the abstract than concrete thought forms, albeit, African thought forms are broadly speaking more concrete than abstract. Therefore, many African societies consider God to be omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent in that He knows all things, He is simultaneously everywhere, and almighty. Thus, in a similar vein, God is considered to be merciful, shows kindness and takes pity on mankind by averting calamities, supplying rain and providing fertility to people, animals and plants.

Mbiti (*ibid.,* 108. 204-215) observed that:

> in traditional life the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. This community must therefore make, create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group.

The sense of corporate relationship is so deep and perverse that the solidarity of the community must be maintained, otherwise there is disintegration and destruction, and this must be avoided at all cost as this order is primarily conceived of in terms of a kinship relationship. According to Mbiti, most African peoples accept or acknowledge that God is the final arbiter of all moral and ethical codes as well as the final guardian of law and order, therefore, the breaking of such an order either by the individual or by a group, is tantamount to condemnation by the corporate body of society (*ibid*., 206).

Mbiti concludes that in African societies one can interpret what constitutes a good character as it pertains to the traditional concepts of 'good' and 'bad' or evil, as it relates to the morals and ethics of any given society. Good character in African ethics shows itself in the following ways: hospitality, generosity, kindness, protecting the poor and weak (especially women and orphans), giving honour and respect to the elderly, with

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justice, truth and rectitude as essential virtues (*ibid*., 212). Thus, good character is the propensity to accept and adopt the customs, laws, regulations and taboos that govern conduct in society that obviate, what Mbiti aptly called, a distinction between 'moral evil' and 'natural evil'. 'Moral evil' pertains to what a man does against his fellow man and 'natural evil' is suffering, calamities and accidents wrought upon others through 'natural' causes that are caused by some agent (either human or spiritual) which in African ontology are intricately associated with certain individuals (*ibid*., 214-215). Finally, Mbiti warns that the dilemma facing African societies rooted in traditional solidarity and yet increasingly being faced with a rapidly changing world, is to search for new values, identities and self-consciousness based on the time-honoured ideas of their forefathers as being 'valuable', 'good' and 'honourable' (*ibid*., 271).

The texts written by Tempels and Mbiti, while viewed from different perspectives and motivations, take cognisance of traditional African morality that is founded on traditional African ontological reflection (a reflection on being). The texts are written, albeit on different planes of understanding, as a sympathetic and systematic account of the worldviews of a wide array of traditional African peoples, in particular, Mbiti's interpretations on African personhood. However, both authors tend to speak of the beliefs of a particular group of African people; they at least provide an overview of some notable strands of moral thought and practices of sub-Saharan peoples (Metz, 2017:63). Thus, they both shed some light on the discovery of man, of meaning in himself from the reflection on his being and his relation to other beings and how he ought to be. This provided the basis of traditional African morality (Musoke, 2018: 6). Of particular interest to this study about the texts of Tempels and Mbiti, is that the common ground in African thought of the observed societies is traceable to language which is the vehicle for thought, and thought being the originator of culture (Cononici, 1999: 2-3). Therefore, we can advance our discourse by generalising that African thought and culture has common elements on which to base assumptions on African morality, despite the diversity of cultures.

III. The Historical Development of *Ubuntu*

The development of *Ubuntu* was largely influenced and inspired by the context of social transformation of post-colonial Africa whereby leaders in most spheres of life attempted to identify past values that they believed should inspire politics and life in general in the future society (Gade, 2011:304). The advent of Africans gaining sufficient political power post-independence propelled them to attempt to restore their dignity and culture by returning to their traditional, humanist, or socialist values, which has been best represented in recent years by President Thabo Mbeki's propagation of an African Renaissance ideal (Gade, 2011: 305). Therefore, the promotion of African ethics as a field that is systematically studied started properly only in the 1960s with the advent of literacy and the decline of colonialism, as more often than not, African traditions were largely oral, lacking written documentation of ethical practices (Metz, 2017: 62).

Gade (2011:315) opines that the historical development and definition of *Ubuntu* in "written sources happened during different historical periods" which he (Gade) divided into the

> period in which *Ubuntu* was defined as a human quality; the period in which *Ubuntu* was defined as something either connected to, or identical to, a philosophy or an ethic; the period in which *Ubuntu* was defined as African humanism; the period in which *Ubuntu* was defined as a worldview; and the period in which *Ubuntu* was defined as something connected to the proverb '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*'.

These historical periods indicate that much of the initial material mainly recounted the mores of a given sub-Saharan people, with a hint of a typical Western approach, as a desperate need for Africans to overcome the yoke of colonialism and become familiar with African interpretations of the world, particularly those of their own people. This prompted Wiredu (1992) to assert that 'African philosophy must be understood within the context of its emergence with its associative socio-cultural and political milieu'. Therefore, it is reductionist to conceive of African philosophy as merely 'ethonophilosophy' as "the authority of African philosophy is the ability to create meaning for a culturally differentiated society, meanings that are not anachronistic but relevant to the socio-political and economic condition of people" (Eze & Metz, 2016:75).

Hountondji (1995) in his African Philosophy: Myth and Reality, asserts that Africans may learn philosophy in Western institutions of higher learning abroad or at home and become extremely skilful in philosophical disputation and may even make original contributions in the discipline, however, the fact remains that they are not engaged in African philosophy but rather in Western philosophy. Part of the concerns of contemporary African philosophy has been the controversy of Hountondji's critique of ethonophilosophy that has precipitated and constituted a large discourse, nevertheless, there is still a pervasive belief among African philosophers that there were unpublished or unrecorded philosophical texts in traditional African philosophy (Mahaye, 2018). Wiredu (2016) opines that there are basic human questions concerning people that can only be answered by utilising embedded knowledge in their indigenous thought systems of which the study of such philosophical texts by Africans has not

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been conceptually illuminating nor has it been eminently critical and reconstructive.

These days, one often finds African ethicists wanting to know not only what merits preserving from their tradition, but also what should be taken seriously by those outside it, with more robust arguments and critical approaches (Metz, 2017: 63). Metz (2017: 63) contends that scholarship in African philosophy has evolved with the publication of texts that appeal to deep moral principles from African cultures in order to judge certain common cultural practices to be either matters of mere etiquette or to be downright immoral as evidenced by Wiredu (1996: 61-77) and Gyekye (1997: 242-258). He (Metz) further asserts that there are texts that seek to develop and defend comprehensive African moral philosophies in contrast to utilitarian, Kantian and Aristotelian grand ethical traditions in the West (Bujo, 1997, 2001; Gyekye, 1997; Ramose, 1999; Iroegbu, 2000; Shutte, 2001; Odimegwu, 2008; Metz and Gaie, 2010).

The relationship between *Ubuntu* and the aphorism associated with it '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' is no coincidence as it was a desire to find something uniquely African in post-apartheid South Africa in an attempt to transform society by incorporating traditions from the past that were deemed to be noble or worthy. This is reinforced by the observation of Louw (2001:15) that

> The maxim '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'* articulates a basic respect and compassion for others…As such, it is both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic. It not only describes human being as 'being-with-others', but also prescribes how we should relate to others, i.e. what 'being-with-others' should be all about.

The principles of *Ubuntu* resonate with values of human worth and dignity that are universally acknowledged.

Unsurprisingly, Shutte (1993, 2001) was persuaded by the appeal of *Ubuntu* as a guiding principle to harness its usefulness as the foundation for moral theory. Metz (2007: 321-341, 2011: 532-559), when responding to critics of *Ubuntu* as too vague, collectivist and anachronistic, constructed a moral theory of Southern African world views based on the conception of human dignity that is based on the premise that "human beings have a dignity by virtue of their capacity for community, understood as the combination of identifying with others and exhibiting solidarity with them, where human rights violations are egregious degradations of this capacity". The proponents of *Ubuntu* such as Shutte (2001) and Broodryk (2002) have advocated that *Ubuntu* should be exported to the rest of the world as Africa's unique gift to humanity (Eliastam, 2015: 2).

IV. The Definition of *Ubuntu* as a Moral Concept

Designating the meaning of the term *Ubuntu* is a problematic and yet tantalising activity as the term resists vigorous exercises to describe it, particularly when interpreted, given the hegemonic, foreign development and civilisation discourse prevailing in the sub-Saharan region (Mawere & van Stam, 2016). What *Ubuntu* entails is context dependent as the different shades of meaning and presence depend on the geographical, historical, linguistic and other components that weave together the texture and matrix of societies. *Ubuntu* is well grounded and understood in African communities and is also embedded in their cultures (Gade, 2012:486).

According to Mnyaka and Motlhabi (2015:216), the origins, usage and contextual development of the word *Ubuntu* has often been vague, ill-defined and amorphous, however, most of the sub-Saharan African populace know the word or its equivalent but are not usually able to define it. During the various stages of written sources of the term from the early 1800s through to the present day, different authors have defined *Ubuntu* broadly as: a human quality, African humanism, a philosophy, an ethic, and as a world view (Gade, 2011:21). However, African usage reveals *Botho*/*Ubuntu* as a significant quality of *motho*/*umuntu* and is a person who respects other people (Motlhabi, 1988: 127). Motlhabi and Mnyaka (2005: 217) explain that it is difficult to define *Ubuntu* precisely. They note that:

> Defining an idea like "*Ubuntu*" is akin to trying to give a definition of "time." Everybody seems to know what "time" is until they are asked to define it or detail its essential characteristic without which "time" could not be "time." This is based on the notion that *Ubuntu* is something abstract, [a] non-perceptible…quality or attribute of human acts the presence or absence of which can only be intuited by the human mind.

This quality is meant to be acquired by human beings. So "*Ubuntu* is not only about human acts, it is also about being, it is a disposition, and it concerns values that contribute to the well-being of others and the community" (Mnyaka & Motlhabi, 2005: 217). Mnyaka and Motlhabi are of the opinion that "*Ubuntu* is not only just accepted human qualities but also the very human essence itself, which points to become *Batho*/*Abantu* or humanized beings who have amicable relationships in the community and the society" (*ibid.*).

The word *Ubuntu* is derived from Nguni and represents notions of universal human interdependence, solidarity and communalism that can be traced back to small-scale communities in pre-colonial Africa, and mostly underlie every sub-Saharan African culture (Roederer & Moellendorf, 2004:441). The adage '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'* (I am a person through other persons) articulates a basic respect and caring for

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others. It is both a factual description and a social ethic that not only describes an individual as being-with-others, but also prescribes how one should relate to others, that is, it is all about being-with-others (Louw, 2001:15). This places the concept of *Ubuntu* within the realm of the contemporary Western philosopher Sartre who asserts that being-for-others is the way that places the individual in the state of possessing equal ontological status with the rest of society (Sartre, 1958: 222). It is succinctly expressed as '*no man is an island*'. It is therefore unsurprising that Cornell and van Marle (2005:207) posit that *Ubuntu* is 'an ontic orientation within an interactive ethic'.

These understandings of *Ubuntu* coincide with some of the modern perspectives of Western philosophy as espoused by Sartre (1958: 370) that being-in-the-world presupposes the existence of the other in that 'others are for me as I am for them, and I enter into relations with them much as they enter into relation with me'. Khoza (1994) views *Ubuntu* as a world in which people share and treat each other as humans based on the underlying 'universal brotherhood' of Africans. The practising of the concept of *Ubuntu* thus unlocks the capacity of an African culture that encapsulates and expresses compassion, caring, reciprocity, dignity, humanity and mutuality in the interests of building and maintaining communities based on justice and solidarity (Poovan *et al*., 2006: 23-25). Thus, *Ubuntu* practises fairness, compassion and values human dignity that governs communal accountability for life's preservation (Chaplin, 2006: 1).

V. The Characteristics of *Ubuntu* as a Moral Concept

Msengana (2006:89) views *Ubuntu* as a social value from the African context which is characterised by relatedness, collectivism, communalism, spiritualism and holism. The relatedness is invoked by the African cultural practices embodied in the principles of *Ubuntu* that are dependent on interpersonal relations which are the basis of tightly woven societal fabric. Hence, collectivism is at the heart of African culture, which by its nature places the importance of the group above the individual as group success is more valued than that of the individual (Msengana, 2006: 91). Consequently, within the *Ubuntu* framework the autonomy of an individual is submerged into the community as it is understood and practised in that community (Mnyaka, 2005: 215-37). Mbiti argues that spiritualism is manifested since, "only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his own being, his own duties, his privileges and responsibilities towards himself and towards other people" (Mbiti, 1969: 108). Thus, holism is founded on African humanism entrenched in *Ubuntu* as the universal brotherhood of Africans which can be described as all-encompassing.

Khomba illustrates that practising *Ubuntu* represents an African conception of human beings and their interactions within the community that encapsulates their social behaviours that define their African ethics (Khomba, 2011:130). However, according to Ng'weshemi (2015:15), "for Africans, one is not human simply by birth. Rather one becomes human through a progressive process of integration into society". This means that human beings are communal beings who cannot be conceived apart from their relationship with others.

According to Sebidi (1998), the collective values of *Ubuntu* cannot be compromised as *Ubuntu* is not just an attribute of individual acts that build the community, but a basic human orientation towards one's fellow human beings. The notion of *Ubuntu* is based on the spirit of hospitality in which people display an unconditional collective hospitality (Msengana, 2006: 92). *Ubuntu* suggests hospitality and acceptance of fellow human beings in that it guarantees unconditional dignity through fostering the spirit of unconditional collective dignity and respect (Mbigi, 1997:6).

For Lenkabula (2008: 381), the collective consciousness of African people in found through theoretical and practical commitments in community life which is often referred to as communalism. This communalism is understood as the expression of justice, wisdom, intergenerational concern and commitment, characterised by compassion in daily interactions and relations. The traditional African person is a social and community orientated person of whom the community is an embodiment of solidarity with most of the duties being performed by the community. Therefore, the ideal person will be judged by his relationship with others, which can be attributed to his kindness and good character as well as respect and living in harmony with others.

The spirits according to Mbiti (1969: 75) "in general belong to the ontological mode of existence between God and man". In African religions, the spirit is one's total being or soul. In *Ubuntu,* spirituality is expressed and realised in the manifestation of deeds of compassion, caring, kindness, solidarity and sharing. Hence, these acts produce positive results for the community and the individual (Mnyaka & Motlhabi, 2005:227). It is difficult to discuss the social and religious systems in isolation to each other in the African way of life as they are strongly interrelated. According to Mbigi (1997: 32-33), in both thought and practice, the organisation of African lives is based and influenced by their religious belief either consciously or unconsciously.

The spirit of *Ubuntu* is of no consequence if it is articulated and perceived in the absence of a collective survival agenda as the solidarity embodied in the collective is born out of kinship culture that is the heart and soul of their existence. It is in this solidarity that when he suffers or rejoices, he does not suffer or rejoice

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alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours and relatives whether dead or alive (Mbiti, 1969: 108). Therefore, the spirits are seen to actually define and identify the community, as people need to know who they are before they know what they are to become (Msengana, 2006: 95).

VI. *Ubuntu* Anthropology

> In line with the meaning of *Ubuntu*, we would like to reflect on *Ubuntu* anthropology. This enables us to undertake a detailed analysis of *Ubuntu* anthropology regarding aspects of the culture and personality, political organization and social life of Africans as seen from the perspective of its roots and religion (Kholopa, 2016: 8).

As a result, "this will give us an idea of how and why *Ubuntu* is often misinterpreted in today's world and how *Ubuntu* anthropology is in line with culture" (*ibid*.). Haviland (1990:30) defines *Ubuntu* anthropological culture as "a set of rules or standards shared by members of a society, which when acted upon by the members, produce behaviours that fall within a range of variation the members consider proper and acceptable", he continues, "whereas, society is a group of people who occupy a specific locality and who share the same cultural traditions". The significant feature of *Ubuntu* is that people learn from families through integration in the family and community. In order to maintain *Ubuntu's* anthropological culture, Haviland (1990:28) states that *Ubuntu* must "satisfy the basic needs of those who live by its rules, (and) provide an orderly existence for the members of a society". Indeed, *Ubuntu* culture is "the common denominator that brings the actions of the individual intelligible to the community" (Haviland, 1990). Haviland (*ibid*.) argues that "there cannot be *Ubuntu* culture without community or society, the two of them are interlinked". Conversely, there cannot be community/society without reflecting on individuals. Accordingly, every community has its own culture that portrays *Ubuntu (ibid)*.

VII. *Ubuntu* in a Pluralistic Community

Haviland (1990:28) defines the pluralistic society of South Africa as a "society in which there exists a diversity of sub-cultural patterns". He explains that by virtue of the identity of their subcultural dissimilarity different groups are importantly working with different interpretations of regulations. Admittedly, in a diverse plural society such as South Africa, it is not easy to understand the different benchmarks by which different communities function. For instance, South Africa has people from Asia, the Middle East, Northern and Southern Europe and Africans from within the continent. Hence, on the one hand, they may enrich *Ubuntu* if it is explained and practiced well by the indigenous people, but on the other hand may distort it if *Ubuntu* is imposed on other communities and may cause distrust among people, and lose the essence and the meaning of *Ubuntu* and its values in South Africa.

Therefore, building on *Ubuntu*'s anthropological culture, *Ubuntu* is learned, it is not inherited. It is worth mentioning that for *Ubuntu* culture to take root, there should be an amicable integration among all cultures in South Africa. However, for South Africans to integrate, they need to reflect not only on behaviours, values and beliefs, but also on the economic, political, and social aspects of cultures and structures that are put in front of them, that is different forms of media, literature or even oral conversation. Therefore, for *Ubuntu* to provide a valuable contribution to South Africa with the diverse cultures, races and creeds, the people have to reflect on *Ubuntu* so that it can profoundly unite South Africans and continue to preserve the traditional values as past experiences are linked with the present and future realities (Kholopa, 2016: 8-9).

VIII. *Ubuntu* and Religion

> Africans' understanding and beliefs spring from the world which surrounds them. However, they interpret life given to them by *Molimo* in Sesotho, and *Unkulunkulu* in Zulu languages; that is the Highest One, the Supreme Being. Before the Christian missionaries arrived, this Supreme Being, *Molimo*, had no gender; it was neutral, neither male nor female. Likewise, the *Badimo* ancestors had no gender; it could mean male or female. Hence people's understanding of life was both natural and supernatural and provided the guidance of how to behave and act (Kholopa, 2016: 42).

Tylor (1990:358) argues that religion is viewed as the belief and model of behaviour by which members manipulate a situation that is beyond their understanding using various prayers, singing and dancing, offering sacrifices etc. Gathogo (2016) sees indigenous religion as a "system of beliefs and practices that are integrated into the culture and worldviews of the African peoples". In the same vein Gathogo (2016) believes that, "every person is born into a specific culture that influences a person's religious pattern". Hence, religion is a necessary tool for the members' ethos and culture. Religion offers people ethical values and guides them to hope and provides solutions for people to lead harmonious lives; that is to say, it regulates between right and wrong and nourishes one's spiritual hunger through rituals like meditation, ceremonies and devotions.

Ubuntu's foundation can be traced to both culture and religion. Seemingly both culture and religion influence each other, just as *Ubuntu* has elements of cultural-religious aspects, so Christianity has its Judeo-Roman influences. However, religion also influences politics since human beings are social beings and the organisation of communities is understood as part of the foundation of life. Berger and Buttimer (1976:29) argue that "it has been seen throughout human history that

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the maintenance of the community has been the role of religion". I argue that the Africans knew God/the Supreme Being before Christianity arrived in both South Africa and the whole African continent. Indeed, Christianity is a recent religion in South Africa. Mofokeng (1988:38) argues that, "when the white man came to our country, he had the Bible and we [Blacks] had the land. The white man said to us 'let us pray'. After the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible".

This then is how the Christian religion was received and embraced. The above anecdote may, however, have different interpretations. Thus, West (2016:143) interprets it using three arguments: Firstly, the Bible is an integral part of a continual process of colonization, regional oppression and exploitation; secondly, Africans acknowledged the unclear contradiction of being colonized by a Christian people and accepting their ideological philosophy; and thirdly, blacks themselves convey commitment in accepting it and passing it on to the next generation. Hence, black South Africans had no problem with the Good News, however, they did have problems with the ideological interpretation of the Bible of the colonisers and missionaries (cited in Kholopa, 2016).

Msafiri (2002: 86-87) opines that within the New Testament, there are many family metaphors that reflect the relationship between the human community and the Church. Similarly, Paul upholds the Church community as a "household of God" (1 Timothy 3: 15). He goes further to say believers are "part of God's household" (Ephesians 2: 19-22). Thus, there are many references in the New Testament that refer to families that signify the beginning of communities, such as the household metaphor in Acts 11:14; 16:15, Colossians 3: 18-21, Romans 16: 3-5 and 1 Corinthians 16: 19. However, these communities were not perfect, just like African communities, but they held together clinging onto their similarities rather than their differences.

Do we find some similarities with biblical communitarianism? There are certainly many instances that indicate identical communal aspects in both *Ubuntu* and the Bible. The first correlation is in the gospels. These are narratives describing Jesus with his disciples forming a community. For instance, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, blessed are the poor in spirit…peacemakers…, (Matthew 5: 1-12). On the one hand, there are many places in the gospel where Jesus is with different communities, such as at Cana, and at Caesarea Philippi. Ela (1988:10) posits that there is evidence of communal dialogues, by and through African oral tradition, conversing and listening and passing on values to the future generation through rituals, ceremonies and purifications. Hence, the communication between Jesus and his early followers could be a form of socio-cultural structure and Jesus opened a mutual path leading to the formation of a community (*ibid.*).

Secondly, the early Christian community was formed when Jesus gathered disciples together in different places; on the hillside, on a boat, on the seashore. Hence, there is a resemblance between how the early *Ubuntu* community gathered in the past and still gathers today, in some places, under a tree. The people are still connected to nature when they go to the mountains, or the seashore to reflect on God speaking to them. One could say it is one of the best ways to be in tune with God and the present world (Èla, 1988, 11). Thirdly, we observe Jesus' concern, not only for the particular needs of his region, but also the entire universe. He does not want to deprive anyone, since there is an invitation to every individual to belong to and to participate in the community he founded. Hence, he postulates the great mission by sending his disciples to go out and make many more communities of believers, to heal and baptize them (Matthew 28: 19-20). Similarly, *Ubuntu* commenced with family clans and slowly expanded and planted its values in people's hearts. "A person becomes a person through or because of another person" (Gade, 2012: 486).

IX. *Ubuntu* as a Moral Theory in South Africa

Ideas associated with *Ubuntu* are often deemed inappropriate for public morality in today's South Africa as they are perceived to be too vague, anachronistic and collectivist (Metz, 2011: 532). We will proceed with the notion of Ubuntu as a moral theory, since it is not the purpose nor the scope of this study to engage in the nuances or ramifications of the claims that *Ubuntu* is too vague, anachronistic and collectivist. According to Metz (2011: 536) "a moral theory is roughly a principle purporting to indicate, by appeal to as few properties as possible, what all right actions have in common as distinct from wrong ones". Therefore, in contrast to the Western moral theories (ie utilitarianism and Kantianism) we appeal to the ubiquitous aphorism 'A person is a person through other persons', '*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' in Nguni and '*Motho ke motho ka batho babang*' in Sotho-Setswana. This aphorism to the Nguni or Sotho person is not merely an empirical claim that our survival or well-being are causally dependent on others but is in essence capturing a normative account of what we ought to most value in life (Metz, 2011:537). This is viewed by Shutte (2001:2) as an embodiment of an understanding of what it is to be human, what is necessary for human beings to grow and find fulfilment, and an expression of a vision of what is valuable and worthwhile in life.

Shutte (2001:2) opines that *Ubuntu* morality is rooted in the history of Africa and is at the heart of most South African cultures while its values are not just African but universal. Shutte (2001:30) further sums it up, thus:

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> Our deepest moral obligation is to become fully human. And this means entering more and more deeply into community with others. So, although the goal is personal fulfilment, selfishness is excluded.

"African moral ideas are both more attractively and more accurately interpreted as conceiving of communal relationships as an objectively-desirable kind of interaction that should guide what majorities want and which norms become dominant" (Metz, 2011:538). Metz (*Ibid.*) asserts that there are two recurrent themes in typical African discussion of the nature of community as an ideal, which he calls identity and solidarity. By identity, Metz (2007:335) refers to identify with each other whereby people think of themselves as members of the same group, and to conceive of themselves as 'we'. This entails people taking pride or feeling shame in the group's activities. For people to exhibit solidarity means to engage in mutual aid and to act in ways that are reasonably beneficial to each other. Metz (2007: 337) further states that while identity and solidarity are conceptually separable and logically distinct, in African thought they are viewed morally to be together. They indicate communal relationship with other human beings. Thus, solidarity and identity are to an extent conferred by *Ubuntu.* Thus, solidarity and identity are viewed as central definitive tenets or elements of *Ubuntu.*

There is a shift to liminal *Ubuntu* as espoused by Magezi (2017:116), which entails Christ as the bond for all humanity. The Christ bond promotes inclusiveness, responsibility and moral duty, values, and accountability to public structures among others. It entails transcending the boundary of community and relationship that is often defined by blood relationship and geographical location in popular and general *Ubuntu* discussion. This view of society is reinforced by Mbiti (1969:12) that Africans are found both in *Ubuntu* philosophy and in religion, and "that anything that threatens Africans would seem to threaten their whole existence". Bujo (2001:2) further explains that Africans tend in practice to speak about human beings rather than God. This is because one who pays heed to the dignity of the human person also pleases God and that one who acts against the human person offends precisely this God. It therefore follows that the ethical conduct is not only based on the individual but on a relational network that is equally anthropocentric, cosmic and theocentric.

Tutu (2009:24) notes that *Ubuntu* is a theological notion. As a theological notion, it enlightens our humanity's worthiness which is intrinsic to what we do and who we are, because we are created in the *imago Dei.* Furthermore, Meylahn (2017:123) states that *Ubuntu* theories are developed from oral traditions of African practices but shaped and informed by Western heritage. It is therefore unsurprising that *Ubuntu* is interpreted in Christian language and permeated by its texts thus becoming very difficult to differentiate from certain Christian interpretations. The conception of community in terms of sharing a way of life and exhibiting solidarity towards others is naturally understood in terms of caring about their quality of life. This is the broad sense of 'friendship' (or even 'love') that is at the heart of the morality of Southern African culture as it pertains to interpersonal relationships (Metz, 2011:539). This is summed-up by Tutu (1999:35):

> Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is the *summum bonum* – the greatest good. Anything that subverts or undermines this sought-after good is to be avoided like the plague.

A person is socialised to think of himself as inextricably bound to others as *Ubuntu* promotes the spirit of selflessness as espoused in the scriptures.

X. Concerns about *Ubuntu* as a Moral Concept

Ubuntu, as with all moral values, has its own gradation system and ethical standards that allows its practitioners to make value judgements, even when it refers to moral obligations towards other people. Enslin and Horsthemke (2004) argue that *Ubuntu* does not offer practical guidance for ills plaguing Africa. It does not offer solutions to Africa's problems such as the prevalence of autocratic rule, corruption, sexism, homophobia and xenophobia. I argue that our personhood, by virtue of *Ubuntu,* accompanies moral responsibility and ethical demands. We therefore ought to understand our responsibility to those who are marginalised/deprived in society and lacking material goods. It becomes a shared identity of a total personhood of *Ubuntu* philosophy (Ogude, 2018:5).

Cornell and Van Merle (2005:196) acknowledge that *Ubuntu* once had social value, but it bears no relevance to the current situation, especially for the youth of South Africa. Some have argued that it is patriarchal and conservative, and its usefulness has been eroded by its vagueness and its ability to accommodate a range of meanings. Matolino and Kwindwingi (2013: 197-2005) assert that it is an outdated notion that does not have the capacity to shape the ethics in the current South African context as it is not suited to the social and ethical challenges of the present-day situation, notwithstanding that there is no fault with the ideal of *Ubuntu* itself. Furthermore, they argue that *Ubuntu* does not treat all people equally since it is a cultural system that relegates women to a lower status, especially when it refers to the regulation of customary marriages, access to land and inheritance rights.

Louw (2001: 15-36) points out that *Ubuntu* is characterised by tribal conformity to group loyalty, which when interpreted in a narrow or ethnic fashion becomes

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corrupted. Thus, in a post-apartheid context it has been reduced to a form of nepotism, and a system of patronage that is used to pursue power and money (Naude, 2013: 246). This is especially evident from the dilemma of *Ubuntu*'s philosophy which is expressed in the provision of assistance to 'our people' who may well be a range of people close to us, and the obvious danger of choosing the criteria determining who are 'our people' and 'who is not one of us' (Gathogo, 2008: 47). It therefore leads one to legitimately question the existence or social value of *Ubuntu* in the face of the incidence of rape, murder, child rape and violent acts of xenophobia, corruption and nepotism in South Africa.

XI. The Understanding of Hospitality

For Hernandez (2015:93) hospitality means, "primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place". Indeed, it clearly elaborates that it is an offer and it renders unconditional respect and awarding an honour that empowers others as they certainly deserve the respect due to their dignity having been made in the likeness of God. It is certainly true that "no guest will ever feel welcome when his/her host is not at home in his/her own house". Likewise, no healthy relationship can develop when the community members reach out to others from their forlorn situation, because it can have a destructive result in the long run.

The community becomes a wounded healer, and we argue that it is not only hospitality that is changed in the community, but in addition, the community can become a healing community where pain and broken hearts become avenues for a new vision of sacrifice and love (Kholopa, 2016, 68). Certainly, "the South African community must learn to let things go so that the spirit of love and forgiveness can fill people's hearts for them to learn to accept others" (*ibid*.). Gooden and Wooldridge (2011:248) assert that "to accept others requires a commitment that might cause one to tolerate and take affirmative action to make the difference in the country".

How can members overcome the problem that easily arises and leads members to view others as strangers and threats? How can South Africans build a hospitable community so that this hospitality is not just a facade but a communal representation of life together in Christ? Hospitality should be practiced by doing or reflecting on things which might look insignificant, for instance supporting the vulnerable, the poor, the marginalized, and the immigrants that flock to the country from the neighbouring countries and from abroad (Kholopa, 2016:68). However, such simple gestures, although they may appear insignificant, can make the difference in the new South Africa. This is because one's individual example of such hospitality can expand to cover the whole community. It is true that love breeds generosity and mercy which leads in turn to hospitality. I argue that in order to be hospitable the members must acquire a sense of generosity by doing good to others and welcoming foreigners, since our fathers too were foreigners who were exiled during the Apartheid era (*ibid*.).

Developing the attitude of sharing and of being with others, not necessarily of the same tribe or culture, but also those different from them, can make the difference (Kholopa, 2016). Newman (2007:183) explains that ""being with" fits with our understanding of worship itself as hospitality, in worship we are welcomed and received, through Christ and the Spirit, into God's triune communion, God's desire to be with us, God gathers us". She emphasizes the point that South Africans must reciprocate that desire to be concerned with other nationals.

A Christian response in appreciation to God is to create service (work) for those who have nothing. Hence, there is a need to cooperate with God in order to serve the needs of others, to rebuild the country in a more hospitable manner which is conducive to the contract made by God and the human community. God does not accept people manipulating other human beings who do not possess the economic means for their own survival. He enjoys the human kindness whose actions are an expression of His stewardship (Kholopa, 2016:69). Surprisingly enough, Wogaman (1970:239) argues that

> Protestant ethics portrays a half-truth; the true half is the importance of work in human fulfillment. The false half is the subordination to man to work and, worse yet, the attempt to establish whether or not people are deserving of what God has already given them.

Humans are social and spiritual beings by nature. By drawing on Protestant ethics in South Africa and African countries in general, a major problem has emerged, since only elite blacks remain rich and the majority poor are suppressed. Unfortunately, ignorance has led these unfair and unwelcome situations to develop and has prevented many from enjoying the fruits of the earth God has given to humankind (Kholopa, 2016:70).

XII. Conclusion

Ubuntu scholarship has gained momentum in the past two to three decades as African scholars have started taking a keen interest in their own interpretations of their cultures and world views. African communitarianism is informed by an ethic of reciprocity as community is seen not as a mere association of individuals whose interests are contingently congruent, but a communal social order whereby there is a sense of solidarity and members of the group have common

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interests, goals, and values (Gyekye, 1997: 42-45; Wiredu, 1998:320). In a pluralistic society such as South Africa, behaviours that are anti-traditional African, like xenophobia, rape, murder, etc, have posed challenges to *Ubuntu* and social ethics by lowering the esteem of the community, and as a consequence community members have developed an individualistic philosophy that runs counter to the many traditional African values (Mabovula, 2011:39).

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Interdependence of *Ubuntu* and Hospitality and the Link to Theological Perspective: A Biblical Reflection

By Clement Kholopa

Abstract- The interdependence of Ubuntu and hospitality is drawn primarily from the investigation of theology and African cultural practices to address current Christian ethical practices of hospitality in the context of migration and the problems it poses to the practice of hospitality, and how it can be reconceived in the light of this context. This article argues that Christians have an identity defined by a new union in Christ, which has resultant ethics that flow from this relationship and 'theological life be considered as a pilgrimage of pressing to higher ideals in Christ' (Philippians 3:13). However, ethical expectations and conduct for people bound by Christ's fellowship have explicit ethical obligations to one another and a duty to fellow human beings, as people are created in the image of God (imago Dei). This suggests that our human actions as Christians should have an intentional goal of co-existence with other human beings as we are bound in contextual realities with other people. In this regard, Ubuntu means interdependence, communality, commonality and mutuality. The church and the individual Christian have a duty to be engaged according to Ubuntu's notion of identity and solidarity. Identity and solidarity imply a vector towards the other. This could be used to exhort South Africans to desist from acts of xenophobia as this is contrary to the ethos of Ubuntu that teaches the dignity of all people, as our well-being is intertwined and communally shared.

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I. Introduction

Sanders (2007) articulates that "*Ubuntu* suggests hospitality and acceptance of fellow human beings in that *Ubuntu* in its fundamental sense is hospitality as one's human being is folded together with the other, that other human being, being the stranger". Thus, the interdependence of *Ubuntu* and hospitality is drawn primarily from the investigation of theology and African cultural practices to address current Christian ethical practices of hospitality in the context of migration and the problems it poses to the practice of hospitality, and how it can be reconceived in the light of this context. Msafiri (2002:86-87) asserts that "the metaphors that reflect the relationship between the human community and the church can indeed be helpful in positioning *Ubuntu* ethos in the re-forming of communities that abide by the ethics that guide societal morality". Thus, we need to revisit and reinterpret the Bible considering the contemporary socio-political problems (i.e. *kairos* – xenophobia) and our experiences as Africans.

Genuine and true *Ubuntu* automatically assumes hospitality and vice versa. Such a human disposition can be maintained, sustained and made possible from humanity's natural common grace perspective. However, as also illustrated from biblical texts and theological discussion, the relationship and interplay of *Ubuntu* and hospitality reveals the very heart, essence and outward expression of how Christians should relate to one another. These concepts indicate an embodiment of Christian love, neighbourliness and concern. Practising such ideals is an embodiment of the 'one another' formula of the New Testament, Matthew. 25: 35-45, Mark. 6:34, Mark. 12:30-31.

Thus, *Ubuntu* according to Tutu (Battle, 1997: 6-7), concerns our relationship with God and neighbour and is what life is all about as our identity is formed by God, hence, the encounter with the reality of the Triune God reveals our personhood within the framework of interconnectedness that relates with God and with other human beings. However, this posture of *Ubuntu* as argued by scholars as a Christian notion is problematic. I argue that Christians have an identity defined by a new union in Christ, which has resultant ethics that flow from this relationship. At the same time Christians as people belonging to humanity are bound by the bond with other human beings as people are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*).

However, ethical expectations and conduct for people bound by Christ's fellowship have explicit ethical obligations to one another and a duty to fellow human beings. These ethical obligations are explicitly drawn from special revelation (Bible). The challenge, however, is to answer the question: from where does the challenge for non-Christians to act and respond ethically arise? Does this arise from human rights or natural revelation – herein lies the challenge of public pastoral care. Pastoral care in the public space needs to account for these dynamics.

II. Overview of Christian Public Ethical Issues: Biblical Analysis

Texts from the Old and New Testaments, notably, the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Peter, Philippians, Hebrews and Ephesians, will be used to ring-fence the *kairos* (ie xenophobia) facing the church. This article, therefore, advocates some normative responses to the challenges and what lessons could be learned. The Old Testament perspective on the stranger/foreigner is largely found in the legislative

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codes in a category that usually comprises the Covenant Code (Exodus 21:1-23.33), the Law of Holiness (Leviticus 17:1-26.46) and Deuteronomic Code (Deuteronomy 4:44-26.19) (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2009:43).

These were legislated after the constitution of Israel as a nation following the establishment of the covenant on Sinai. The stranger/foreigner was given special protection under the law (Exodus 22:20) and was even loved as a native Israelite (Leviticus 19:34). The Hebrew Bible in its usage of different terminology for the stranger, as *ger* for the stranger residing permanently among Israelites, *nokir* for the foreigner in transit, and *toshar* and *sakir* for paid immigrant workers; takes cognisance of the place of the stranger in the Israelite community. It is thus unsurprising that in the Torah the solicitude of the *ger* appears constantly out of natural generosity as in Exodus 22:20; 23:9 or by informed generosity in recalling days of slavery in Egypt granted by God in Deuteronomy 16:11-12 (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2009:44).

The New Testament as the proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of God, has its fundamental foundation in the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3, "A voice cries out in the desert prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God". The usage of this expression, however, was not a common or prevalent theme in the Old Testament but was rather an ardent wish of the post-exilic Israel as a desire for the coming of God to remove the injustices experienced by the people. This kingdom of God, interpreted by biblical scholars as preached by Jesus, contains the aspects of both the future and the present, and it has important implications for Christian morality as evil will be vanquished with justice reinstated and humanity restored to the values and virtues that conform us with the will of God (Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20.17:21).

The proclamation of the nearness of the coming of the kingdom of God by Jesus in his teachings (Matthew 4:17) and in the prayer he taught us (Matthew 6:10), is for humanity to be moulded by God's will as a departure point for the theological foundation of Christian ethics as echoed throughout the biblical tradition and summed up in Leviticus 19:2, "Speak to the whole Israelite community and tell them: Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy". The beginning of the ministry of the Messiah is characterised by the presence of foreigners, the vulnerable and the sick, and He constantly interacted with them, showing that God's love is ever present in the world (Matthew 2:1-12; Luke 17:18; John 4). His death on the cross for the sins of humanity broke down the dividing walls of enmity, thus establishing peace and reconciling all to God through his death (Ephesians 2:14-18). Therefore, it is incumbent upon the church to actively help the vulnerable and strangers by always reflecting on its identity and unequivocal love of God for the hapless (Matthew 25-44) and hospitality to characterise the life of a Christian (Hebrew 13: 2;1 Corinthians 12: 28-29; cf Acts 13:1-2).

a) The perspective of the stranger/foreigner in the Old Testament

i. *The exegetical view of the stranger/foreigner from Exodus 22:20-23 and 23:9*

The locus of Exodus 22:20-23 in the Pentateuch or Law of Moses is the continuation of the narrative that began in Genesis with the English translation having its roots in the Greek Old Testament word *exodos* meaning "departure" or "going out" (cf Exodus 19:1). The main theme of the book of Exodus is the liberation of Israel from oppression in Egypt by God, in which the same God binds himself to an oppressed people and gets actively involved in their liberation (Barnes, 2005:24). This same God of Exodus is the God whom Christians have known as the Father of Jesus Christ.

The message of Exodus can be summarised into three basic components, being the punishment and judgement of the oppressor nation, Egypt; the deliverance of the Israelites by the mighty arm of God; and the establishment of the Israelite nation through the covenant at Mount Sinai as his chosen people as those who obey Him alone. The submission to his authority in its canonical formulation in the apodictic laws details the morality of duties (deontology) for a balanced moral reflection suitable for our times (Pontifical Biblical Commission, 2009:38). These moral duties pertain to our relationship with God to whom we offer absolute homage, and our values regarding the relationships between persons such as dignity of the human person, solidarity, preferential treatment of the poor and the common good.

ii. *The analysis of the key verses in Exodus 22:20-23 and 23:9*

These key verses state: verse 22:20, "You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt" and verse 23:9 "You shall not oppress an alien; you well know how it feels to be an alien, since you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt". This is part of the apodictic laws as they specify the conduct of persons in respect to others, especially the vulnerable of society, namely the compositional triad of orphans, widows and aliens. The verses are an earlier expression of humanitarian concern for the unfortunate and the needy as they are most often in society prone to injury and abuse (cf Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 24:17-22). The Israelites themselves, after Sinai and the wilderness, were given the gift of the Promised Land. They would lose God's permanent presence if they sinned and would become temporary residents of the holy land (Jeremiah 14:8). Unsurprisingly, the entire existence of Israel has been bound up with offering a blessing to foreigners (Genesis 12:1-3).

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iii. *The exegetical view of stranger/foreigner from Leviticus 19:33-34 and 23:22*

According to Longman and Dillard (2006:83) Leviticus by its very nature, like the rest of the Torah, is a theological instructional history. Thus, it was written for Israel to live a holy life in fellowship with God, create awareness for people to know and value their privileges and responsibilities before God and how to maintain a continuous relationship with God by expressing it through worship. Therefore, the content of Leviticus is primarily aimed at supplementing and completing what has been stated in the Decalogue in Exodus for inclusion in the religious and social spheres.

iv. *The analysis of the key verses in Leviticus 19:33-34 and 23:22*

Leviticus 19:33 warns thus: "When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him". This is a strong message in Leviticus from the Lord directing that we must learn that a wrong done to another human being is also a wrong done to God. It is a reminder that they are *imago Dei*, people belong to God who has given them their lives in trust and whoever violates their basic rights, it is not only a wrong to that person but to God as well (cf. Genesis 39:9; Psalms 51:4). The challenge facing Christians today in South Africa is the sinful silence in the face of xenophobic attacks on foreigners with the hopeful wish that "Jesus paid all our sins", albeit forgetting that we could never compensate God adequately for the wrong we do to Him by sinning.

Verse 19:34 emphasises the love for the strangers as it states "You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God" (cf. Exodus 12:43). This reflects the application of the commandments to life situations and the expression of charity to your fellow human beings as neighbourly love is extended to everyone, irrespective of their social origins. The embodiment of the stranger/ foreigner as befitting acts of love and charity, is the forerunner to the teachings of Christ (Matthew 22:37-39: Mark 12:30-31) wherein "the neighbour" is applied in its broadest meaning with this lofty precept taken together with Deuteronomy 6:5 that sums up the whole of the Law and the Prophets.

b) The perspective of the stranger/foreigner in the New Testament

i. *The exegetical perspective of the stranger/foreigner from Hebrews 13:1-3*

Hebrews is placed last in the Pauline collection of Epistles in which the author exhorts Christians to persevere in the light of persecution. For all intents and purposes the author is unknown, even when he mentions Paul's collaborator Timothy in verse 13:23, nor does he claim any personal apostolic authority. The central theme of the epistle is the doctrine of Christ the Priest and His role as mediator between God and humanity (Koester, 2001:63).

The epistle is very unconventional in that it is written in epistolary conventions that are evident in some parts, as well as being cast in the form of a sermon. The epistolary conventions are pointedly in the last eight verses of the book, with the sermonic attributes taking up most of the book. The appearance of the sermonic attributes can be largely ascribed to the circumstances the Jewish Christians found themselves in. It was with this in mind that the author chose a sermonic tone to "exhort" the congregation towards Christian fellowship and love, as expounded in Hebrews 13:1-3, with exhortation being akin to a synagogue homily (Acts 13:15).

ii. *The analysis of the key verses in Hebrew 13:1-3*

The key verse in the chosen biblical text is verse 2: "Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels". Hospitality was considered an important virtue in early Christianity as apostles and others were often on the move from community to community, relying on the support of generous believers, and this was extended to the poor in Luke 14:12-14. Worship in itself is an act of hospitality by God, as Newman (2007:174) explains "in worship we are welcomed and received, through Christ and the Spirit, into God's triune communion, God's desire to be with us, God gathers us". The exhortations to be hospitable are not only intended for some, but for all (Romans 16:2; Philippians 2:29; 1Peter 4:29), with particular emphasis on local churches (1Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8).

Hospitality is recorded in the Bible, including the Old Testament, where people received unexpected blessings because of entertaining strangers in their midst, as in the case of the Patriarch Abraham (Genesis 18:2-8) who gained God's blessings because he entertained three men he thought were strangers but who were in fact angels. Lot (Genesis 19:1-15) avoided certain disaster with his family because he entertained two angels; Rahab the harlot (Joshua 2:8-15) and her family avoided death in the invasion of Jericho; the widow of Zarephath by serving the stranger, the prophet Elijah, and her jar of flour never got used up nor did her oil run dry. Therefore, those who have entertained and been merciful to strangers since time immemorial have gained God's grace and blessings, with His son reinforcing God's attitude towards strangers and making it a requirement for us.

iii. *The exegetical perspective of the stranger/ foreigner from Ephesians 2:11-22*

The letter to the Ephesians is more of a sermon than an outright epistle with the author specifically intending for it to be circulated to various churches around the Ephesus area, i.e. in Asia Minor. The basic theme of the epistle is to exhort the Christians to

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celebrate the life of the church in Christ and to live their lives in a manner worthy of Christ. The epistle places the position of the Gentiles prior to their conversion as a condition whereby they did not have the Messiah, nor did they have an outward relationship with God according to the Mosaic tradition. Unsurprisingly, the epistle has many baptismal themes so that it may originally have been intended to be composed as a baptismal homily as a forerunner to unity with Christ and among members of His church in the self-sacrificing love of Jesus himself.

iv. *The analysis of key verses in Ephesians 2:11-22*

The key verses in the epistle can be grouped together as they seemingly emphasise the same subject matter, albeit, in a complementary manner. Verses 11-13: The opening verse acts as a reminder that Gentiles were ridiculed by the Jews calling them derogatory names and referred to as uncircumcised. The reference in the verse of them being 'Gentiles in flesh' is a metaphor for them having no outward sign of a relationship with God in accordance to the Covenant Code, but by the blood of Christ they have 'become near', signifying their access to the awesomeness of God, as the people of the covenant.

Verses 14-17: The peace in verse 14, envisions the peace provided to the world by Christ as his purpose by God which must be promulgated by the church throughout the world (3:1-21).

The church as a community of people of God should take leadership in the promotion of peace and take the prophetic and pedagogical role in the formation of conscience by welcoming all people regardless of their status, especially the poor, marginalised and the suffering (1Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:26-29). The church is called upon to 'break down the dividing wall of enmity', in that there should no longer be ethnic and racial hostility as Christ himself has abrogated the law as there should be a "new humanity" (the church) before God, as in Jesus' death God and the world are no longer strangers (cf. Isaiah 65:17.66:22; 2Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:1-2).

Verses 19-22: In Christ, all are the children of the common household of God where everybody is equal in dignity and privileges and no longer a stranger or sojourner, since access to God has been achieved through Jesus whose death has broken all barriers. The imagery of the building is used by the author to place the church with its foundations as the 'apostles and prophets' with Christ ('capstone') being the structure that holds the building together. In this structure, Christ, the church, will grow like the body with the Christian community becoming the temple of God.

v. *The exegetical perspective of the stranger/ foreigner from Philippians 3:20*

It is generally accepted that the epistle to the Philippians was written in AD 62 while Paul was in prison in Rome. The city of Philippi was a Roman colony named after Phillip of Macedon the father of Alexander the Great, which Paul visited on his second missionary journey. The book of Philippians is characteristically Gentile in its nature as it is an informal letter with no doctrinal arguments nor a coherent plan in its spontaneous outpouring of love and gratitude, neither was there any error to refute or any wrongdoing to correct. The important themes in this letter throughout is personal joy, fellowship, the gospel and the purpose of Christian life as Christ-centred.

vi. *The analysis of the key verse in Philippians 3:20*

The key verse 3:20a "But our citizenship is in heaven", is a promise of dual citizenship for the Christian both here on earth and, later in heaven. It is a word of hope and an encouragement to Christians to look forward to a brighter future despite the tribulations they may face in life. The analogy chosen by Paul to his audience in Philippi, being of Greek ancestry but of Roman citizenry by virtue of their colonial status, was immediately understood by them. They might have citizenship on earth, but they had another in heaven. This was an encouragement for the Christians to conduct themselves in a manner befitting their citizenship in heaven as wherever they were they should be mindful of where they belong, that is, heaven. This also acts as a reminder that we are to live as citizens of heaven in our time on earth because the moment we received Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour we also took heavenly citizenship.

Verse 3:20b "and from it we also await a saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" enjoins Christians to always have the excitement and expectation of the coming of Christ, and what awaits them in heaven. Heaven is the abode of all good things, where there is no pain, no mourning, no crying, no death or sin, only the fullness of joy and an unending succession of happiness beyond our imagination, and the glory and character of God is fully manifested forever. It is then incumbent on every Christian to have a cardinal guiding principle of living a Christ-centred life.

vii. *The exegetical perspective of the stranger/ foreigner from 1 Peter 4:8-11*

The epistle itself claims to have been written by "Peter the apostle" (1:1), and the church has historically accepted from the time of Eusebius for this to be the case, a fact strongly supported by the author's claim to be a "witness to the sufferings of Christ" (1Peter 5:1). The theology is very Pauline, and the degree of church organisation it assumes would seem to discount Peter being the author. The genuine Peter would have referred to the period of the historical Jesus, however, the period of the letter reflects the reign of the Roman Emperors who reigned after the martyrdom of Peter.

The epistle was generally written to the Gentile Christians, in which he encourages them to endure

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suffering and persecution (1 Peter 1:6-7; 2:18-20; 4:1-4,12-19) by giving themselves entirely to God (1 Peter 4:19). It was a message of hope to those who persevere in faith while suffering persecution as they will certainly enjoy ultimate salvation since they are already enjoying God's saving promises here and now through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

viii. *The analysis of the key verses in 1 Peter 4:8-11*

Verses 8-9: These verses act as an exhortation to respond to suffering in a godly way, as "love covers a multitude of sins" in the sense that seems to be, that love will overwhelm and offset the wrongs that are being done to us and the call for love be in connection to Parousia, as in Romans 13:8-10; 14:9. It also encourages Christians to be hospitable to strangers in a way that is worthy to God so as to continue on their way as co-workers in the truth because they have testified their love for all people before the church (Romans 12:13-21; Hebrews 13:2; 3 John 5-8).

Verses 10-11: The stewardship of the church is entrusted to every Christian as they all share in the responsibility of its mission through baptism and confirmation. This responsibility is borne by the gifts given to every Christian by the Holy Spirit so that they are invited to share them with others to build the Christian community. All Christians have the obligation, including the poorest, to use their God-given talents for sharing the spiritual and temporal resources with members of the community and the universal church (Matthew 25:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12: 4-30; Ephesians 4:3-7). It is therefore imperative as the good steward in God's spiritual household to dispense to others what has been entrusted to your care.

In conclusion, the biblical texts from the Old and New Testaments, emphasises that hospitality towards strangers/foreigners is deeply embedded in the realms of biblical ethics as a virtue to be practised. This is characterised in the Old Testament by Abraham (Genesis 18:2-8) and in the New Testament by church elders (1 Timothy 3:2). The preaching of Amos (5:21) and Isaiah (1:10-20) espoused the linkage of divine worship with respect for rights and justice, and thus the moral preaching of the prophets places its accent on the concept of social justice. The biblical admonition exhorting the Israelites was encapsulated in the following verse since they also had a history as foreigners themselves: "You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt".

Innumerable texts deal with interpersonal relationships with the Decalogue listing fundamental duties to others and the various Israelite legal codes paying attention to the physical and economic welfare of the vulnerable in society. Deuteronomy 16: 11-12; 26: 11-12, makes it a social moral obligation for the hospitable treatment of the weaker members of society, the classic trio 'the widow, the orphan and the strangers', to be shown utmost compassion and respect. This is in many ways manifested in the mission of Jesus himself by his compassion and the utter commitment to heal the sick and feed the hungry, following the same long-held fundamental biblical ethic. This tradition of love of God and neighbour as fundamental tenets of the law enshrined in the Old Testament, has been repeatedly confirmed by Jesus when he declares in Matthew's gospel that he does not abolish the law and prophets but fulfils them (Matthew 5:17) and directs his disciples to continue the same mission in the life of the church (Matthew 10:7-8).

This in effect, encourages Christians to love one another with familial love as an ongoing process through their expression of welcoming strangers and remembering those who suffer. This is the basis for pastoral reflection in addressing the manifestation of xenophobia by remembering those who are going through persecution, suffering and rejection by doing good to those who are stigmatised and undesirable in the eyes of society. This is an expression of love and justice in accordance with God's covenant of love and reflecting on the consequences of our deeds in the coming judgement in the Kingdom of God.

III. Christian Public Ethics and the Injunction to Care for the Overall Public

Christian public ethics is about operating in the public space, i.e. a non-church environment, where xenophobic practices are performed. Christians exist in that public space as an institution (church) and as private human beings (individuals in the community and in their homes). It is in this space according to Muller (2003:300) where specific contexts and experiences are interpreted; in-context experiences are listened to and described; interpretations of experiences are made, described and developed; a description of experiences as it is continually informed by traditions of interpretation; a reflection on God's presence, as it is understood and experienced in a specific situation; a description of experience, understood through interdisciplinary investigation and the development of alternative interpretations that point beyond the local community. This suggests that our human actions as Christians should have an intentional goal of co-existence with other human beings as we are bound in contextual realities with other people. In this regard, *Ubuntu* means interdependence, communality, commonality and mutuality. However, the excesses of *Ubuntu* that manifest themselves in nepotism, corruption and benevolent acts of good and bad determined by family and community should be moderated by Christian values, as observed by Magezi (2017:118).

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Magezi (2020:4) asserts that true *Ubuntu* values are Christian values with a sense of humanity where human beings are universally bonded with Christ. He (Magezi) further elaborates that, "thus, when the humanistic notion of human dignity, based on human rights (*dignitas*), and the theological notion of the image of God (*imago Dei*) are considered together, pastoral care will be for the community by community individuals" (Magezi, 2020:4). This is reinforced by Louw's (2014:178) assumption of transspection which relates to putting oneself into the head as opposed to the feet of another person; and introspection which he (Louw) explains as the awareness of the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of meaning within the network of relationships, akin to what is meant by *Ubuntu*: "I am a human being through another human being" (Magezi, 2020:7). Therefore, to achieve the objective of being universally bonded by Christ, we must be guided by the biblical text John 15:5: "…, because without me you can do nothing". In Augustine's view, we are totally dependent upon God's generosity and unmerited attention to humanity, by which the process of healing may begin through the grace (*gratia*) of God that is freely (*gratis*) given (McGrath, 2001:446). Magezi (2017:117-120) suggests a shift from traditional to liminal *Ubuntu* where Christ is the bond of all humanity (*imago Dei*), *Ubuntu* is inclusive, benevolence is judged by principles of common good for all humanity, service is to all humanity accompanied by responsibility and duty-bound norms and values, and theological life be considered as a pilgrimage of pressing on to higher ideals in Christ (Philippians 3:13).

IV. Ubuntu and Hospitality and the Link to the Christian Theological Perspective

According to Sparks (1991), *Ubuntu* was created as a social security system based on reciprocal obligations that supported and protected the individual, and which obliged the individual to adhere to certain commitments in return. The assumption was not based on reciprocity to the giver but firmly based on the possibility of non-reciprocity. This then implies that *Ubuntu* implicates a form of survival that depends on the relationality that generosity is vital, but reciprocity is optional.

Furthermore, *Ubuntu* is cherished in a life grounded on appreciating the placing of a high value on harmony and community. According to Metz (2007:321-341), harmony manifests itself in solidarity and identity. Solidarity is having a relationship with every other human being and an obligation to pursue their well-being, especially in situations where they are not able to take actions on their own. This pertains to the fact that an individual is morally required to be concerned for the good of others. Therefore, "solidarity is the recognition of interdependence and the duty to act for the common good, that common good ultimately stretching to all who inhabit this planet" (Webb, 2017:252). Identity relates to a sense of shared belonging that is founded on a common vision of the nature of human life and relations in coordinating their behaviour to realise shared ends based on norms governing these. Christian ethics is guided by the principle "Do to others whatever you would like them do to you. This is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). This is encouraged by the words of Jesus, "the kingdom of God is among you" (Luke 17:21). Therefore, authentic Christian spirituality is undoubtedly concerned with the shaping of and practice of human life but embodies everyday practicalities and serves as a framework of ethics (Sheldrake, 2019: xi). In *Ubuntu* the failure to identify with each other could go beyond mere alienation and involve outright divisions between them as evidenced in the treatment of migrants and the subsequent violent actions of xenophobia directed at them. However, within theology the enabler is the Spirit while in *Ubuntu* it is identity and solidarity.

The Christian practices of hospitality within the Judeo-Christian tradition and scripture are theologically conceived as welcoming the stranger or alien into a home or congregation as an ethical responsibility mirroring the welcome of God in Jesus Christ (Sweeden, 2012:2). "A rather succinct description of the interrelation between *Ubuntu* and hospitality" is formulated by Mandela as follows (Stuit, 2013:31):

> A traveller through our country would stop at a village, and he didn't have to ask for food or water. Once he stops, the people give him food, entertain him. That is one aspect of *ubuntu*, but *ubuntu* has various aspects…. *("Ubuntu")*

Many Christians scoff at the assertion that the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was being inhospitable yet that is precisely the sin Jesus refers to when he talks about Sodom. Scripture is clear about the necessity of this for committed Christians as opposed to cultural Christians. What the Bible says is very important because the Scriptures are the basis of our faith. Since Jesus clearly says the sin of Sodom was being inhospitable, not other failings associated with Sodom, and without ever mentioning homosexuality as the sin of Sodom, we can place the scriptures above human opinion and as wise Christians joyfully agree with Jesus on this issue.

Solidarity as foundational in *Ubuntu* is also encapsulated by Pope John Paul II's definition of solidarity as, "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (John Paul II, 1987:38). It is, therefore, the destiny of all to be in communion with God and to the fullest fellowship with all human beings. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love another.

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No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us" (1John 4:11-12).

According to Gutierrez (1973:198), to refrain from serving is tantamount to refusing to love, and refusing to love is a sin as you reject the communion and fellowship of all people, and therefore you reject the very essence of human existence. The churches in Brazil have taken the attitude that if Christ's proclamation of God's Kingdom of love and justice is to make any sense, we must be at the forefront of public social issues in the country despite people having different theological perspectives. To accept migrants in our midst is to be mindful that acceptance is the cornerstone of the fellowship of all people. It is in the parable of the Good Samaritan that we find the inversion of the original question when Christ was asked "And who is my neighbour" and the reply "Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbour to the robbers' victim" (Luke 10:29, 36). Indeed, it is the Samaritan who was the neighbour as he approached the injured man and made him his neighbour. The neighbour is not whom you find in your path but rather it is whom you approach and actively seek out (Gutierrez, 1973:198-199). Pope Francis has made a call to us not to forget the tenderness and gentleness of Christ's love that has been aptly captured by the Prophet Isaiah "A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smouldering wick he shall not quench, until he establishes justice on the earth" (Isaiah 42:3-4). As disciples of Christ we are also enjoined to show gentleness to others (Brislin, 2017:9).

Individual local positioning and church positioning in the community suggests it is a challenge to be integrated and engage with issues affecting people in that community. The church and the individual Christian have a duty to be engaged according to *Ubuntu's* notion of identity and solidarity. Identity and solidarity imply a vector towards the other. The invitation into the community is also an invitation into the socio-cultural context of the community whereby hospitality has to be examined taking into account those cultural and socio-historical factors of society, the underlying models of worship and theological nuances as well as differences such as culture, race, ethnicity and language that can act as contributory factors to a welcoming or non-welcoming environment (Sweeden, 2012:3).

Bennett (2003) argues that "practicing hospitality means a radical openness to the other, attending to him or her in sharing and receiving insights and perspectives about self and the world". This means therefore, that being hospitable is a practice and discipline that requires us to do small things that might seem inconsequential in the eyes of the world but which from the perspective of the gospel is a manifestation of the kingdom of God (Newman, 2007:174). In fact, this is reinforced by the familiar verse "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son..." as a testament to His love that is universal and that has been revealed in one particular place and time and in one particular person (Newman, 2007).

African hospitality is embedded in the notion that no one is an island and emphasis is placed on interdependence, as every person is part of the whole community. Gathogo (2008:276) asserts that this agrees with the Pauline theology that we need to recognise other people's talents and gifts in order to strengthen the community at large and the church (Ephesians 4:10-12, 1Corinthians 12). The communal nature of hospitality in the *Ubuntu* sense is aptly captured by the Sesotho idiom: '*matshoho a hlatswana*', meaning that one hand helps to wash the other hand. In other words, by helping another person you are helping yourself. This is related to the fact that Jesus said that "…. whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" as a sign of his presence and active involvement in the worlds of those who are trying to do good and their loving deeds to others, a duty to act by Christians just like the solidarity and identity in *Ubuntu*. Hospitality is espoused by the verse (Leviticus 19:33-34):

> When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God.

This could be used to exhort South Africans to desist from acts of xenophobia as this is contrary to the ethos of *Ubuntu* that teaches the dignity of all people, as our well-being is intertwined and communally shared.

According to Gathogo (2007:115-116) in Kikuyu language a person who is hospitable is called *mutugi*, which is synonymous with 'a gracious person' and/or 'hospitable person'. It shows that Africans associate grace with hospitality, as grace is a divine attribute. God is described as 'gracious' among Africans with the person being hospitable partaking in God's gracious acts of doing good unto others, including working, for assisting in economic or social well-being of the society in general as well as the individual. Gathogo (2001:21) asserts that the Kikuyu proverb *Indo nikurimithania*, meaning 'wealth comes by working together', enjoins the community to work together in cooperation and mutual support for prosperity and success which is an agreement with Christ's admonition that no town or house divided against itself will stand (Matthew 12:25); with God as determiner of our being it suggests our duty to our fellow human beings – be like your Father in heaven (1John 4:16-18).

In some theological discourses *Ubuntu* is construed as identical to the biblical concept of kinship and hospitality (Psalm 133:1). Thus, some of the Mediterranean biblical values are used in reference to the concept of *Ubuntu* by some scholars as being synonymous (Tutu 1999:6; Vervliet 2009:20). The

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Christian ideal of existential being is synonymous with *Ubuntu* as it lends itself closely to biblical moral values such as love, compassion, friendship and peace. In the case of xenophobic attacks in 2008, the Bible was invoked in social media with the moral imperatives of verses like "blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9), as these narratives reflect on moral bankruptcy as evidenced in the attacks, and a cry for a return to the moral and ethical reorientation of African society as guided by the ethos of *Ubuntu* – humaneness. According to *Ubuntu* one has a moral obligation to provide warmth for all humanity regardless of whether they are outsiders or not. However, the moral aspect of *Ubuntu* in South Africa has not yet begun to arrive at any solid convictions or an authentic basis for actions. In an article, Walter Rauschenbusch (2014: 286-287), illustrates that *Ubuntu* has been talked about in different spheres and has been dismissed, not because the country has been able to solve its problems, but because we have not yet confronted the problems the country faces.

V. Conclusion

The article revealed that the interdependence of *Ubuntu* and hospitality as African communal behaviours can be linked to the theological perspective to restore humaneness, hospitality, respect and love. Buthelezi (1995:166-173) observed that "we must focus on the present situation using the Good News to address itself to the problems of the culture and society in which it is immersed and rediscover what it signifies to be human in the situation we find ourselves in, with the different challenges of today". Msafiri (2002:86-87) asserts that "the metaphors that reflect the relationship between the human community and the church can indeed be helpful in positioning *Ubuntu* ethos in the re-forming of communities that abide by the ethics that guide societal morality". Thus, we need to revisit and reinterpret the Bible considering the contemporary socio-political problems (i.e. *kairos* – xenophobia) and our experiences as Africans.

Considered from a moral philosophical perspective, the discussion embodied in the article provided insight and understanding that the relationship between *Ubuntu* and hospitality can be characterised as two sides of the same coin. Genuine and true *Ubuntu* automatically assumes hospitality and vice versa. Such a human disposition can be maintained, sustained and made possible from humanity's natural common grace perspective. However, as also illustrated from biblical texts and theological discussion, the relationship and interplay of *Ubuntu* and hospitality reveals the very heart, essence and outward expression of how Christians should relate to one another. These concepts indicate an embodiment of Christian love, neighbourliness and concern. Practising such ideals is an embodiment of the 'one another' formula of the New Testament, Matthew. 25: 35-45, Mark. 6:34, Mark. 12:30-31.

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FELLOW OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL is the most prestigious membership of Global Journals. It is an award and membership granted to individuals that the Open Association of Research Society judges to have made a 'substantial contribution to the improvement of computer science, technology, and electronics engineering.

The primary objective is to recognize the leaders in research and scientific fields of the current era with a global perspective and to create a channel between them and other researchers for better exposure and knowledge sharing. Members are most eminent scientists, engineers, and technologists from all across the world. Fellows are elected for life through a peer review process on the basis of excellence in the respective domain. There is no limit on the number of new nominations made in any year. Each year, the Open Association of Research Society elect up to 12 new Fellow Members.

Benefit

To the institution

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Career | Credibility | Exclusive | Reputation



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Certificate, LOR and Laser-Momento

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Career | Credibility | Reputation

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Career | Financial



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Career | Credibility | Reputation



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ASSOCIATE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL

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Benefit

To the institution

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Associate	Fellow	Research Group	Basic
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Certificate, LoR and Momento **2** discounted publishing/year **Gradation** of Research **10** research contacts/day **1 GB** Cloud Storage **GJ** Community Access	**Certificate,** LoR and Momento **Unlimited** discounted publishing/year **Gradation** of Research **Unlimited** research contacts/day **5 GB** Cloud Storage **Online Presense** Assistance **GJ** Community Access	**Certificates,** LoRs and Momentos **Unlimited** free publishing/year **Gradation** of Research **Unlimited** research contacts/day **Unlimited** Cloud Storage **Online Presense** Assistance **GJ** Community Access	**GJ** Community Access

Preferred Author Guidelines

We accept the manuscript submissions in any standard (generic) format.

We typeset manuscripts using advanced typesetting tools like Adobe In Design, CorelDraw, TeXnicCenter, and TeXStudio. We usually recommend authors submit their research using any standard format they are comfortable with, and let Global Journals do the rest.

Alternatively, you can download our basic template from https://globaljournals.org/Template.zip

Authors should submit their complete paper/article, including text illustrations, graphics, conclusions, artwork, and tables. Authors who are not able to submit manuscript using the form above can email the manuscript department at submit@globaljournals.org or get in touch with chiefeditor@globaljournals.org if they wish to send the abstract before submission.

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Authors must ensure the information provided during the submission of a paper is authentic. Please go through the following checklist before submitting:

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3. Ensure corresponding author's email address and postal address are accurate and reachable.
4. Manuscript to be submitted must include keywords, an abstract, a paper title, co-author(s') names and details (email address, name, phone number, and institution), figures and illustrations in vector format including appropriate captions, tables, including titles and footnotes, a conclusion, results, acknowledgments and references.
5. Authors should submit paper in a ZIP archive if any supplementary files are required along with the paper.
6. Proper permissions must be acquired for the use of any copyrighted material.
7. Manuscript submitted *must not have been submitted or published elsewhere* and all authors must be aware of the submission.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

It is required for authors to declare all financial, institutional, and personal relationships with other individuals and organizations that could influence (bias) their research.

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Plagiarism is not acceptable in Global Journals submissions at all.

Plagiarized content will not be considered for publication. We reserve the right to inform authors' institutions about plagiarism detected either before or after publication. If plagiarism is identified, we will follow COPE guidelines:

Authors are solely responsible for all the plagiarism that is found. The author must not fabricate, falsify or plagiarize existing research data. The following, if copied, will be considered plagiarism:

- Words (language)
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- Writings
- Diagrams
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- Illustrations
- Lectures

- Printed material
- Graphic representations
- Computer programs
- Electronic material
- Any other original work

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1. Substantial contributions to the conception and acquisition of data, analysis, and interpretation of findings.
2. Drafting the paper and revising it critically regarding important academic content.
3. Final approval of the version of the paper to be published.

Changes in Authorship

The corresponding author should mention the name and complete details of all co-authors during submission and in manuscript. We support addition, rearrangement, manipulation, and deletions in authors list till the early view publication of the journal. We expect that corresponding author will notify all co-authors of submission. We follow COPE guidelines for changes in authorship.

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Appealing Decisions

Unless specified in the notification, the Editorial Board's decision on publication of the paper is final and cannot be appealed before making the major change in the manuscript.

Acknowledgments

Contributors to the research other than authors credited should be mentioned in Acknowledgments. The source of funding for the research can be included. Suppliers of resources may be mentioned along with their addresses.

Declaration of funding sources

Global Journals is in partnership with various universities, laboratories, and other institutions worldwide in the research domain. Authors are requested to disclose their source of funding during every stage of their research, such as making analysis, performing laboratory operations, computing data, and using institutional resources, from writing an article to its submission. This will also help authors to get reimbursements by requesting an open access publication letter from Global Journals and submitting to the respective funding source.

Preparing your Manuscript

Authors can submit papers and articles in an acceptable file format: MS Word (doc, docx), LaTeX (.tex, .zip or .rar including all of your files), Adobe PDF (.pdf), rich text format (.rtf), simple text document (.txt), Open Document Text (.odt), and Apple Pages (.pages). Our professional layout editors will format the entire paper according to our official guidelines. This is one of the highlights of publishing with Global Journals—authors should not be concerned about the formatting of their paper. Global Journals accepts articles and manuscripts in every major language, be it Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, French, German, Dutch, Italian, Greek, or any other national language, but the title, subtitle, and abstract should be in English. This will facilitate indexing and the pre-peer review process.

The following is the official style and template developed for publication of a research paper. Authors are not required to follow this style during the submission of the paper. It is just for reference purposes.

Manuscript Style Instruction (Optional)

- Microsoft Word Document Setting Instructions.
- Font type of all text should be Swis721 Lt BT.
- Page size: 8.27" x 11'", left margin: 0.65, right margin: 0.65, bottom margin: 0.75.
- Paper title should be in one column of font size 24.
- Author name in font size of 11 in one column.
- Abstract: font size 9 with the word "Abstract" in bold italics.
- Main text: font size 10 with two justified columns.
- Two columns with equal column width of 3.38 and spacing of 0.2.
- First character must be three lines drop-capped.
- The paragraph before spacing of 1 pt and after of 0 pt.
- Line spacing of 1 pt.
- Large images must be in one column.
- The names of first main headings (Heading 1) must be in Roman font, capital letters, and font size of 10.
- The names of second main headings (Heading 2) must not include numbers and must be in italics with a font size of 10.

Structure and Format of Manuscript

The recommended size of an original research paper is under 15,000 words and review papers under 7,000 words. Research articles should be less than 10,000 words. Research papers are usually longer than review papers. Review papers are reports of significant research (typically less than 7,000 words, including tables, figures, and references)

A research paper must include:

a) A title which should be relevant to the theme of the paper.
b) A summary, known as an abstract (less than 150 words), containing the major results and conclusions.
c) Up to 10 keywords that precisely identify the paper's subject, purpose, and focus.
d) An introduction, giving fundamental background objectives.
e) Resources and techniques with sufficient complete experimental details (wherever possible by reference) to permit repetition, sources of information must be given, and numerical methods must be specified by reference.
f) Results which should be presented concisely by well-designed tables and figures.
g) Suitable statistical data should also be given.
h) All data must have been gathered with attention to numerical detail in the planning stage.

Design has been recognized to be essential to experiments for a considerable time, and the editor has decided that any paper that appears not to have adequate numerical treatments of the data will be returned unrefereed.

i) Discussion should cover implications and consequences and not just recapitulate the results; conclusions should also be summarized.
j) There should be brief acknowledgments.
k) There ought to be references in the conventional format. Global Journals recommends APA format.

Authors should carefully consider the preparation of papers to ensure that they communicate effectively. Papers are much more likely to be accepted if they are carefully designed and laid out, contain few or no errors, are summarizing, and follow instructions. They will also be published with much fewer delays than those that require much technical and editorial correction.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to make literary corrections and suggestions to improve brevity.

Format Structure

It is necessary that authors take care in submitting a manuscript that is written in simple language and adheres to published guidelines.

All manuscripts submitted to Global Journals should include:

Title

The title page must carry an informative title that reflects the content, a running title (less than 45 characters together with spaces), names of the authors and co-authors, and the place(s) where the work was carried out.

Author details

The full postal address of any related author(s) must be specified.

Abstract

The abstract is the foundation of the research paper. It should be clear and concise and must contain the objective of the paper and inferences drawn. It is advised to not include big mathematical equations or complicated jargon.

Many researchers searching for information online will use search engines such as Google, Yahoo or others. By optimizing your paper for search engines, you will amplify the chance of someone finding it. In turn, this will make it more likely to be viewed and cited in further works. Global Journals has compiled these guidelines to facilitate you to maximize the web-friendliness of the most public part of your paper.

Keywords

A major lynchpin of research work for the writing of research papers is the keyword search, which one will employ to find both library and internet resources. Up to eleven keywords or very brief phrases have to be given to help data retrieval, mining, and indexing.

One must be persistent and creative in using keywords. An effective keyword search requires a strategy: planning of a list of possible keywords and phrases to try.

Choice of the main keywords is the first tool of writing a research paper. Research paper writing is an art. Keyword search should be as strategic as possible.

One should start brainstorming lists of potential keywords before even beginning searching. Think about the most important concepts related to research work. Ask, “What words would a source have to include to be truly valuable in a research paper?” Then consider synonyms for the important words.

It may take the discovery of only one important paper to steer in the right keyword direction because, in most databases, the keywords under which a research paper is abstracted are listed with the paper.

Numerical Methods

Numerical methods used should be transparent and, where appropriate, supported by references.

Abbreviations

Authors must list all the abbreviations used in the paper at the end of the paper or in a separate table before using them.

Formulas and equations

Authors are advised to submit any mathematical equation using either MathJax, KaTeX, or LaTeX, or in a very high-quality image.

Tables, Figures, and Figure Legends

Tables: Tables should be cautiously designed, uncrowned, and include only essential data. Each must have an Arabic number, e.g., Table 4, a self-explanatory caption, and be on a separate sheet. Authors must submit tables in an editable format and not as images. References to these tables (if any) must be mentioned accurately.

Figures

Figures are supposed to be submitted as separate files. Always include a citation in the text for each figure using Arabic numbers, e.g., Fig. 4. Artwork must be submitted online in vector electronic form or by emailing it.

Preparation of Eletronic Figures for Publication

Although low-quality images are sufficient for review purposes, print publication requires high-quality images to prevent the final product being blurred or fuzzy. Submit (possibly by e-mail) EPS (line art) or TIFF (halftone/ photographs) files only. MS PowerPoint and Word Graphics are unsuitable for printed pictures. Avoid using pixel-oriented software. Scans (TIFF only) should have a resolution of at least 350 dpi (halftone) or 700 to 1100 dpi (line drawings). Please give the data for figures in black and white or submit a Color Work Agreement form. EPS files must be saved with fonts embedded (and with a TIFF preview, if possible).

For scanned images, the scanning resolution at final image size ought to be as follows to ensure good reproduction: line art: >650 dpi; halftones (including gel photographs): >350 dpi; figures containing both halftone and line images: >650 dpi.

Color charges: Authors are advised to pay the full cost for the reproduction of their color artwork. Hence, please note that if there is color artwork in your manuscript when it is accepted for publication, we would require you to complete and return a Color Work Agreement form before your paper can be published. Also, you can email your editor to remove the color fee after acceptance of the paper.

Tips for writing a good quality Social Science Research Paper

Techniques for writing a good quality homan social science research paper:

1. Choosing the topic: In most cases, the topic is selected by the interests of the author, but it can also be suggested by the guides. You can have several topics, and then judge which you are most comfortable with. This may be done by asking several questions of yourself, like "Will I be able to carry out a search in this area? Will I find all necessary resources to accomplish the search? Will I be able to find all information in this field area?" If the answer to this type of question is "yes," then you ought to choose that topic. In most cases, you may have to conduct surveys and visit several places. Also, you might have to do a lot of work to find all the rises and falls of the various data on that subject. Sometimes, detailed information plays a vital role, instead of short information. Evaluators are human: The first thing to remember is that evaluators are also human beings. They are not only meant for rejecting a paper. They are here to evaluate your paper. So present your best aspect.

2. Think like evaluators: If you are in confusion or getting demotivated because your paper may not be accepted by the evaluators, then think, and try to evaluate your paper like an evaluator. Try to understand what an evaluator wants in your research paper, and you will automatically have your answer. Make blueprints of paper: The outline is the plan or framework that will help you to arrange your thoughts. It will make your paper logical. But remember that all points of your outline must be related to the topic you have chosen.

3. Ask your guides: If you are having any difficulty with your research, then do not hesitate to share your difficulty with your guide (if you have one). They will surely help you out and resolve your doubts. If you can't clarify what exactly you require for your work, then ask your supervisor to help you with an alternative. He or she might also provide you with a list of essential readings.

4. Use of computer is recommended: As you are doing research in the field of homan social science then this point is quite obvious. Use right software: Always use good quality software packages. If you are not capable of judging good software, then you can lose the quality of your paper unknowingly. There are various programs available to help you which you can get through the internet.

5. Use the internet for help: An excellent start for your paper is using Google. It is a wondrous search engine, where you can have your doubts resolved. You may also read some answers for the frequent question of how to write your research paper or find a model research paper. You can download books from the internet. If you have all the required books, place importance on reading, selecting, and analyzing the specified information. Then sketch out your research paper. Use big pictures: You may use encyclopedias like Wikipedia to get pictures with the best resolution. At Global Journals, you should strictly follow here.



6. Bookmarks are useful: When you read any book or magazine, you generally use bookmarks, right? It is a good habit which helps to not lose your continuity. You should always use bookmarks while searching on the internet also, which will make your search easier.

7. Revise what you wrote: When you write anything, always read it, summarize it, and then finalize it.

8. Make every effort: Make every effort to mention what you are going to write in your paper. That means always have a good start. Try to mention everything in the introduction—what is the need for a particular research paper. Polish your work with good writing skills and always give an evaluator what he wants. Make backups: When you are going to do any important thing like making a research paper, you should always have backup copies of it either on your computer or on paper. This protects you from losing any portion of your important data.

9. Produce good diagrams of your own: Always try to include good charts or diagrams in your paper to improve quality. Using several unnecessary diagrams will degrade the quality of your paper by creating a hodgepodge. So always try to include diagrams which were made by you to improve the readability of your paper. Use of direct quotes: When you do research relevant to literature, history, or current affairs, then use of quotes becomes essential, but if the study is relevant to science, use of quotes is not preferable.

10. Use proper verb tense: Use proper verb tenses in your paper. Use past tense to present those events that have happened. Use present tense to indicate events that are going on. Use future tense to indicate events that will happen in the future. Use of wrong tenses will confuse the evaluator. Avoid sentences that are incomplete.

11. Pick a good study spot: Always try to pick a spot for your research which is quiet. Not every spot is good for studying.

12. Know what you know: Always try to know what you know by making objectives, otherwise you will be confused and unable to achieve your target.

13. Use good grammar: Always use good grammar and words that will have a positive impact on the evaluator; use of good vocabulary does not mean using tough words which the evaluator has to find in a dictionary. Do not fragment sentences. Eliminate one-word sentences. Do not ever use a big word when a smaller one would suffice.

Verbs have to be in agreement with their subjects. In a research paper, do not start sentences with conjunctions or finish them with prepositions. When writing formally, it is advisable to never split an infinitive because someone will (wrongly) complain. Avoid clichés like a disease. Always shun irritating alliteration. Use language which is simple and straightforward. Put together a neat summary.

14. Arrangement of information: Each section of the main body should start with an opening sentence, and there should be a changeover at the end of the section. Give only valid and powerful arguments for your topic. You may also maintain your arguments with records.

15. Never start at the last minute: Always allow enough time for research work. Leaving everything to the last minute will degrade your paper and spoil your work.

16. Multitasking in research is not good: Doing several things at the same time is a bad habit in the case of research activity. Research is an area where everything has a particular time slot. Divide your research work into parts, and do a particular part in a particular time slot.

17. Never copy others' work: Never copy others' work and give it your name because if the evaluator has seen it anywhere, you will be in trouble. Take proper rest and food: No matter how many hours you spend on your research activity, if you are not taking care of your health, then all your efforts will have been in vain. For quality research, take proper rest and food.

18. Go to seminars: Attend seminars if the topic is relevant to your research area. Utilize all your resources.
Refresh your mind after intervals: Try to give your mind a rest by listening to soft music or sleeping in intervals. This will also improve your memory. Acquire colleagues: Always try to acquire colleagues. No matter how sharp you are, if you acquire colleagues, they can give you ideas which will be helpful to your research.

19. Think technically: Always think technically. If anything happens, search for its reasons, benefits, and demerits. Think and then print: When you go to print your paper, check that tables are not split, headings are not detached from their descriptions, and page sequence is maintained.

20. Adding unnecessary information: Do not add unnecessary information like "I have used MS Excel to draw graphs." Irrelevant and inappropriate material is superfluous. Foreign terminology and phrases are not apropos. One should never take a broad view. Analogy is like feathers on a snake. Use words properly, regardless of how others use them. Remove quotations. Puns are for kids, not grunt readers. Never oversimplify: When adding material to your research paper, never go for oversimplification; this will definitely irritate the evaluator. Be specific. Never use rhythmic redundancies. Contractions shouldn't be used in a research paper. Comparisons are as terrible as clichés. Give up ampersands, abbreviations, and so on. Remove commas that are not necessary. Parenthetical words should be between brackets or commas. Understatement is always the best way to put forward earth-shaking thoughts. Give a detailed literary review.

21. Report concluded results: Use concluded results. From raw data, filter the results, and then conclude your studies based on measurements and observations taken. An appropriate number of decimal places should be used. Parenthetical remarks are prohibited here. Proofread carefully at the final stage. At the end, give an outline to your arguments. Spot perspectives of further study of the subject. Justify your conclusion at the bottom sufficiently, which will probably include examples.

22. Upon conclusion: Once you have concluded your research, the next most important step is to present your findings. Presentation is extremely important as it is the definite medium though which your research is going to be in print for the rest of the crowd. Care should be taken to categorize your thoughts well and present them in a logical and neat manner. A good quality research paper format is essential because it serves to highlight your research paper and bring to light all necessary aspects of your research.

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Informal Guidelines of Research Paper Writing

Key points to remember:

- Submit all work in its final form.
- Write your paper in the form which is presented in the guidelines using the template.
- Please note the criteria peer reviewers will use for grading the final paper.

Final points:

One purpose of organizing a research paper is to let people interpret your efforts selectively. The journal requires the following sections, submitted in the order listed, with each section starting on a new page:

The introduction: This will be compiled from reference matter and reflect the design processes or outline of basis that directed you to make a study. As you carry out the process of study, the method and process section will be constructed like that. The results segment will show related statistics in nearly sequential order and direct reviewers to similar intellectual paths throughout the data that you gathered to carry out your study.

The discussion section:

This will provide understanding of the data and projections as to the implications of the results. The use of good quality references throughout the paper will give the effort trustworthiness by representing an alertness to prior workings.

Writing a research paper is not an easy job, no matter how trouble-free the actual research or concept. Practice, excellent preparation, and controlled record-keeping are the only means to make straightforward progression.

General style:

Specific editorial column necessities for compliance of a manuscript will always take over from directions in these general guidelines.

To make a paper clear: Adhere to recommended page limits.



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Mistakes to avoid:

- Insertion of a title at the foot of a page with subsequent text on the next page.
- Separating a table, chart, or figure—confine each to a single page.
- Submitting a manuscript with pages out of sequence.
- In every section of your document, use standard writing style, including articles ("a" and "the").
- Keep paying attention to the topic of the paper.
- Use paragraphs to split each significant point (excluding the abstract).
- Align the primary line of each section.
- Present your points in sound order.
- Use present tense to report well-accepted matters.
- Use past tense to describe specific results.
- Do not use familiar wording; don't address the reviewer directly. Don't use slang or superlatives.
- Avoid use of extra pictures—include only those figures essential to presenting results.

Title page:

Choose a revealing title. It should be short and include the name(s) and address(es) of all authors. It should not have acronyms or abbreviations or exceed two printed lines.

Abstract: This summary should be two hundred words or less. It should clearly and briefly explain the key findings reported in the manuscript and must have precise statistics. It should not have acronyms or abbreviations. It should be logical in itself. Do not cite references at this point.

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- To-the-point depiction of the research.
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Approach:

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References	Complete and correct format, well organized	Beside the point, Incomplete	Wrong format and structuring

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