

QUARTER THREE NEWSLETTER
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Psychology Association of Zambia

Licensing Psychologists in Zambia: Advancing a Profession for National Development

The Professional and Life-changing Psychotherapist, Psychologist or Counsellor

Understanding Suicide: Signs and First Aid

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Licensing Psychologists in Zambia: Advancing a Profession for National Development

Prof. Given Hapunda

President - Psychology Association of Zambia (PAZ)

“ The future of psychology depends on our ability to build a strong, well-regulated,
and inclusive profession that responds to society’s evolving needs. ”

— **American Psychological Association, 2023**

The Current Challenge

In Zambia, only psychologists working in health-aligned fields such as clinical, counseling, and neuropsychology are legally licensed under the Health Professions Council of Zambia (HPCZ).

However, a large number of psychologists work in non-health disciplines, including educational, organizational, forensic, developmental, and community psychology. These professionals currently operate without formal licensure or recognition, despite being trained, experienced, and active contributors to national development.

The Psychology Association of Zambia (PAZ) is leading an initiative to fill this gap by introducing a licensing framework that reflects the diversity of psychological practice in Zambia.

A History of Contribution, Yet Fragmentation

Psychology in Zambia has a long but under-recognized history. In the 1960s, Zambia established one of the first experimental psychology labs in sub-Saharan Africa and launched a psychology department at the University of Zambia in 1968 (Peltzer, 1989). Zambian psychologists have played critical roles in education reform, mining, occupational testing, and child development. However, as Peltzer (1989) and Mwanalushi & Ng’andu (1981) pointed out, the profession has struggled with fragmentation, lack of coordination,

DID YOU KNOW ?

- *Zambia hosted one of Africa’s first experimental psychology laboratories in 1965.*
- *Over 80% of Master’s level psychology graduates in 1984 trained outside Zambia.*
- *non-clinical psychologists are widely employed in education, mining, banking, and public policy—yet remain unlicensed*

REFERENCE:

American Psychological Association. (2023). Licensure and regulation of psychology. <https://www.apa.org>

British Psychological Society. (2022). Professional standards and accreditation. <https://www.bps.org.uk>

and absence of legislative recognition,
limiting its development and impact

Why Licensing Matters For Zambia

A comprehensive licensing system is not just about regulation; it's about strengthening psychology as a science and profession. Global psychology bodies such as the APA and BPS have long emphasized the importance of licensure.

- **Public Protection** – Licensing ensures only qualified, ethical professionals provide psychological services.
- **Professional Legitimacy** – It validates non-clinical psychologists, giving them the right to operate in schools, industries, justice systems, and beyond.
- **National Development** – Psychologists bring scientific insights into areas like curriculum design, labor relations, child development, and workplace productivity.
- **International Alignment** – Countries such as the UK, Canada, and South Africa regulate psychology across sectors. Zambia must follow suit to foster professional mobility and growth.

The PAZ Solution: A National Licensing Framework

PAZ is proposing a tiered licensing model, tailored to Zambia's context:

- **Associate Psychologist:** Bachelor's degree; practice under supervision.
- **Psychologist:** Master's degree or higher; independent practice.
- **Specialist Psychologist:** Advanced qualifications and experience in fields such as educational, developmental, forensic, or organizational psychology.

Why Licensing Matters For Zambia

- Revise the current PAZ Code of Ethics to make it more responsive to current trends such as AI and increasing media engagement by psychologist.
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as a requirement for annual license renewal.
- A governance board to oversee applications, supervision, compliance, and disciplinary action.

"Licensing validates the contribution of psychologists beyond clinical settings—whether in classrooms, HR departments, or policy units."

Looking Forward: Toward Parliamentary Recognition

While PAZ is currently not established by an act of parliament, the long-term goal is statutory recognition. This will position PAZ alongside HPCZ and similar professional regulatory bodies, with full authority to oversee training, licensing, and discipline across all psychology subfields. Such recognition will also help address the "brain drain" of psychology graduates who feel disillusioned by the lack of local opportunities and legitimacy (Peltzer, 1989).

Conclusion: A Call to Action

Licensing psychologists across all subfields is not just a regulatory update, it's an investment in Zambia's human capital. As global challenges grow more complex, Zambia needs every tool at its disposal including the full breadth of psychological science.

REFERENCE:

Peltzer, K. (1989). History and Present Status of Professional Psychology in Zambia. *Psychological Studies*, 34(1), 54–63.

Mwanalushi, M., & Ng'andu, B. (1981). Psychology's Contribution to National Development in Zambia. *African Social Research*, 32, 55–82.

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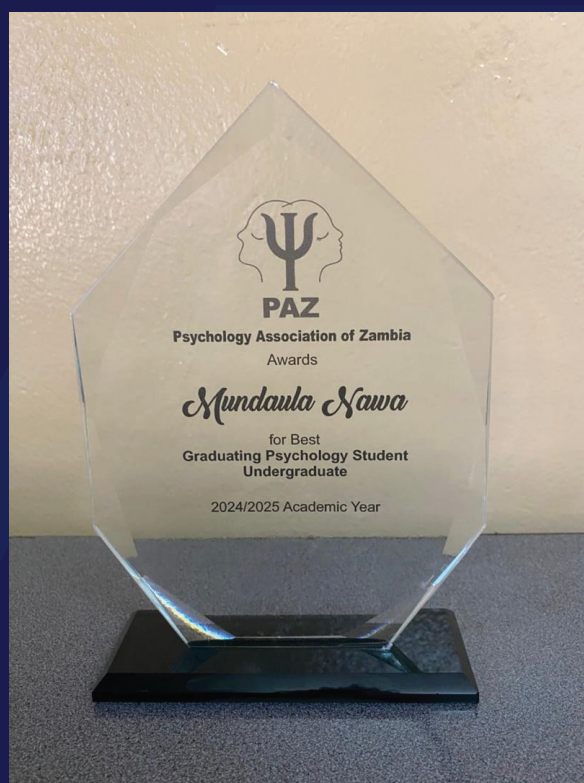
The Psychology Association of Zambia is ready to lead this transformation with professionalism, inclusion, and national development at its core.



L-R Chongwe District Planning Officer Madam Chileshe, President Graduate Women Dr Mubanga, Secretary General Psychology Association of Zambia, Chongwe District Guidance & Counselling Officer Madam Mabele



Dr Kalunga Cindy Nakazwe
Secretary General Psychology Association of Zambia



Best Graduating Psychology Student Undergraduate



The Professional and Life-changing Psychotherapist, Psychologist or Counsellor

By **Beatrice Kapindula Simpasa**

Overview

This article shares three main requirements and expectations for one to practice and offer life-changing services on mental health issues. The three areas discussed are academic qualifications and licensure, continuous education and research, and subscription to professional bodies.

1. Academic Qualifications and Licensure:

To become a psychotherapist, professional counselor, or psychologist in many countries, the qualifications needed are a minimum of a bachelor degree. In other countries, a minimum of a master's degree is required for one to qualify as a professional psychotherapist. After completing the needed academic qualifications, one needs to gain many hours of clinical experience through supervised practicums or internships or paid employment. In the United States of America, one needs to obtain 3000 hours of clinical work experience, and 100 hours of supervision under a licensed psychotherapist after obtaining a master's degree. Once the required hours are obtained, one needs to sit and pass the necessary licensing or certification exams to practice independently. However, these requirements differ in some countries, including Zambia.

2. Continuous Education and Research:

As psychotherapists, we are expected to offer professional and impactful mental health services to clients, patients, and society.

In order to support those who need our services, we must keep pace with the latest developments and advancements in the mental health field. We need to offer services using evidence-based interventions. Therefore, continuing education and research are key components of our professional growth.

It is also expected that any mental health practitioner must possess psychosocial skills. These skills are essential in offering effective, comprehensive and holistic support to ensure that a client's or patient's psychological, social, and emotional needs are met. Applying psychosocial skills in therapeutic alliance enable clients to overcome individual challenges, build resilience, and achieve their full potential. Psychosocial skills enable psychotherapists to understand the root causes of clients' mental health issues, build strong therapeutic relationships, empower and promote self-esteem, and promote positive behavioural changes, and facilitate holistic development.

3. Membership to Local and International Professional Bodies:

Reputable professional bodies provide numerous and beneficial networking opportunities to their members. Conferences, seminars, webinars, online forums or groups, and mentorship programs are different ways in which members engage in professional networks. Through these events and platforms, members interact with their peers, meet distinguished and influential professionals in the field, access advice,

develop skills, and progress in needed careers.

Annual membership subscriptions fees can be quite high for some professional bodies. However, belonging to good and reputable professional bodies should be considered as another great investment besides education. The benefits one gets in a year could outweigh the annual membership fees. Therefore, we should consider professional bodies as another gateway to career progression and great resource for life-changing mental health interventions.



Understanding Suicide: Signs and First Aid

By **Chuma Sharleen Subulwa**

Suicide remains a significant public health issue globally, including in Zambia. The World Health Organization estimates that every 40 seconds, someone dies by suicide worldwide. In Zambia, suicide is often shrouded in stigma and cultural misconceptions, making it challenging to address openly. However, understanding the signs of suicidal behaviour, knowing how to provide immediate first aid, and creating a safety plan are crucial steps in preventing this tragedy.

Recognizing Suicide Warning Signs

Suicide does not usually occur without warning. There are often signs that someone may be contemplating taking their own life. Recognizing these signs early can be the key to saving a life. Here are some common warning signs:

1. Verbal Cues:

- Expressing hopelessness, such as saying, "I feel like there's no way out" or "What's the point in living?"
- Talking about death or dying, like mentioning "I wish I were dead" or "Everyone would be better off without me."
- Making direct or indirect statements about suicide, for instance, "Soon, you won't have to worry about me."

2. Behavioral Changes:

- Depression, which can indicate a final decision to end their life.
- Giving away personal belongings or writing a will.
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs.

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3. Emotional Signals:

- Extreme mood swings or showing significant emotional distress. – Persistent feelings of sadness, anxiety, or guilt.
- Displaying a lack of interest in activities once enjoyed.

4. Physical Symptoms:

- Neglecting personal appearance or hygiene.
- Changes in sleep patterns, such as sleeping too much or too little. – Unexplained physical pain or frequent illness.

First Aid for Suicidal Individuals

If you encounter someone exhibiting signs of suicidal intent, your immediate response could save their life. Here are steps to take as mental health first aid:

1. Stay Calm and Engage:

- Approach the person with empathy and calmness. Listen to them without judgment, allowing them to express their feelings.
- Ask direct questions, like "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" It's a myth that asking about suicide can implant the idea; it actually shows you care and allows them to open up.

2. Ensure Safety:

- Remove any means of self-harm from the vicinity, such as sharp objects, medications, or firearms.
- Avoid leaving the person alone. Stay with

are in a safe environment.

3. Seek Professional Help:

- Encourage the person to seek help from a mental health professional. In Zambia, Lifeline/Childline Zambia (933), UTH, Chainama, Silverline clinic, Serenity and many other mental clinics provide confidential crisis counseling.
- If the situation is critical, call emergency services or take the person to the nearest hospital or clinic immediately.

4. Encourage Self-Care:

- Encourage them to take care of their physical health, as it can have a positive impact on their mental state. Simple activities like eating a healthy meal, exercising, or resting can help.

5. Create a Safety Plan:

A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan that helps someone struggling with suicidal thoughts to stay safe. It involves identifying coping strategies and sources of support that can help in a crisis.

a. Recognizing Warning Signs:

- The individual should be aware of the personal signs that indicate their mental state is worsening.

b. Internal Coping Strategies:

- List activities that can distract or calm the person when they feel distressed, such as taking a walk, listening to music, or practicing deep breathing.

c. Social Support:

- Identify people who can provide immediate support, whether it's friends,

family, or a community leader. It's essential that these individuals are aware of their role in the safety plan.

d. Professional Support:

- Include contact details for mental health professionals or organizations, such as local clinics or suicide prevention hotlines in Zambia.

e. Safe Environment:

- Identify steps to ensure the person's environment is safe. This might involve removing potential means of self-harm from their living space.

f. Emergency Plan:

- Have a clear plan for what to do if the individual feels they are in immediate danger, such as contacting emergency services or going to the nearest hospital.

Conclusion

- Suicide prevention in Zambia requires a concerted effort from individuals, families, communities, and healthcare providers. By recognizing the signs of suicide, providing immediate first aid, and creating a personalized safety plan, we can make significant strides in reducing the number of lives lost to suicide. Open conversations, reduced stigma, and increased access to mental health resources are vital steps in this direction. Remember, help is always available, and no one should face their struggles alone.



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Membership Spotlight

Gibson Banda



Gibson Banda, a Correctional Officer at Mukobeko Maximum Security Correctional Centre, is a dedicated member of the Psychology Association of Zambia (PAZ). With a Master's in Criminology and Security Studies and multiple qualifications in psychology, education, and social work, he bridges correctional practice with psychological insight. Through PAZ, Gibson has strengthened his counseling skills,

mental health advocacy, and commitment to rehabilitation.

A highlight of his membership was initiating the BIG BANG group therapy program, bringing inmates and officers together for healing and dialogue. He remains passionate about promoting dignity, transformation, and mental well-being in Zambia's correctional system.



PSYCHOLOGY ASSOCIATION OF ZAMBIA NEWSLETTER

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Membership Details:

Honorary Members: No cost

Distinction bestowed upon them at the recommendation of the Board, ratified by the AGM.

Student Members: K200 / Year

Currently enrolled as student of Psychology.

Full Members: K1000 / Year

Master's degree in Psychology or higher degree in Psychology (or related field).

Affiliates : K400 / Year

From related fields such as Sociology, Health related fields and with keen interest in the field of Psychology.

Associates: K800 / Year

Bachelors degree in Psychology (or related field).

Foreign Affiliates : \$200 / year

Non-Zambian psychologists.

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