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Deradicalising student unrest in South Africa using decolonial approach

Abstract

South Africa has seen a surge in student protests, with virtually every institution of higher education experiencing some degree of disrupted productivity. This paper is a theoretical argument that presents the proponents of decoloniality as a tool to deradicalise students' minds against radical student unrest in the university system and answers the question of how to deradicalise student unrest using decoloniality as a tool. The study is located with a transformative worldview, and the argument was analysed using conceptual analysis to make sense of the argument. The study is structured to explain what decoloniality is in relation to decoloniality of the minds, the assumptions, and its correlational evidence with the deradicalisation of student unrest. The findings revealed that disrupting colonial ideologies, knowledge reclamation, changing discourse structures, and decolonising practices are dimensions needed to decolonise student mindset towards deradicalisation of student unrest. The study concludes that these dimensions are the potential for peace and tranquility in the university system.

Keywords: *Decoloniality, student mindset, deradicalisation, student unrest, South Africa universities.*

1. Introduction

The growing frequency of student unrest and protests in South Africa has highlighted several precautionary measures universities can take to mitigate any destructive behaviours. Some suggest that structured channels for dialogue between university leadership and students are essential in providing mutual understanding while allowing student grievances to be identified and addressed swiftly (Anderson, 2019; Hailu & Sarubbi, 2021). Others argued that universities must demonstrate increased empathy towards their students, fostering an environment where students feel like their voices are heard, which could potentially defuse tensions before they explode into disruptive protests (Freeman, 2014). Furthermore, implementing educational programmes in universities could be beneficial for both sides to increase the understanding of democratic activism as a legitimate channel for representation. Ultimately, curbing the rate of student protest and unrest depends upon creating a safe space for communication, where all parties involved have a say that is respected and taken seriously (Birya, 2020).

South Africa has seen a surge in student protests, with virtually every institution of higher education experiencing some degree of disrupted productivity. Several factors are responsible for this emergence of social unrest and agitation among students. The primary factors of student unrest include inadequate funding that is not properly allocated, such as bursary support and other resources essential for optimal learning (Godsell *et al.*, 2016; Chiliza *et al.*, 2022). There are growing concerns about issues relating to equity, quality and equality for those who study within the country's higher education system (McCowan, 2016; Hlatshwayo & Fomunyam, 2019). Students are further hampered by the lack of security on campus and the lack of adequate hostel accommodation (Kujeke, 2016; Mavunga, 2019). All these combine to create a volatile situation resulting in widespread protests taking place at these universities throughout South Africa.

Some see the protests as a necessary force for change (Mann, 1993), while others argue that disruptive tactics are likely to do more harm than good when it comes to achieving positive long-term objectives (Rapatsa, 2017). Nonetheless, the prevalence of such protests suggests that they reflect an underlying dissatisfaction with current university systems and will continue to be a component of university life until there is meaningful reform. To facilitate this reform, academics must work collaboratively to understand what these protests represent, how best to constructively engage with them, and how to implement approaches that address their grievances to reduce further disruption.

To this end, there is a need to focus on deradicalisation initiatives that could bring about more peaceful and tranquil conditions within university campuses. This requires a multi-dimensional approach which encompasses both preventive and curative measures. At the preventive level, emphasis should be placed on education aimed at fostering tolerance for divergent perspectives (Bolhuis, 2003), ensuring access to quality education for all students regardless of socio-economic background and providing greater support for students who display signs of emotional distress or mental health issues. Such an approach would promote intellectual growth among student populations by nurturing their capacity for critical thinking and enabling them to address matters of concern through rational discourse. At the curative level, universities should consider introducing formal mechanisms for resolving student grievances and developing measures to ensure greater accountability from student bodies and university staff (Hess, 2009). This is consistent with an argument that student forums should be established that provides a safe space for dialogue and constructive engagement between students and management (Ntuli, 2020). Additionally, initiatives such as peer-to-peer mentorship programmes can help ensure that those with extreme views are counselled on the importance of peaceful protest and respect for the rights of others.

Ultimately, deradicalisation is necessary to bring about relative peace and tranquility within South African university environments. With a multi-dimensional approach that combines both preventive and curative measures, universities can create safer environments that nurture intellectual and personal growth. This would help to ensure greater stability within campus settings, and student protests in South African Universities could be prevented. Therefore, a holistic approach to deradicalisation that acknowledges the existence of decoloniality is imminent. This entails utilising higher education as a platform for promoting meaningful discussion between students about matters of shared concern, which can lead to mutual understanding and respect for alternative perspectives. Moreover, this could open the opportunity to encourage civil protest amongst young people as opposed to involving in radical actions or forms of violence.

Such an approach is essential to providing university campuses with an environment that is conducive to learning, personal development, and growth. An argument exists that students are agitative disruptively because they believe and see university authority as a sub-set of colonial legacies which only understand or listen to violent protest. That is, the way and manner students expressed their grievances in the colonial era has affected the way they think in the 21st century (Omodan, 2020). In my own argument, the place of decoloniality is essential in a deradicalising student mindset in South Africa. Hence this study is positioned to explicate decoloniality as a tool to deradicalise student mindset against destructive social unrest in the university system. Decoloniality provides an essential framework for understanding and managing the student unrest that has been seen in South African university campuses. By looking at historical and contemporary oppression, decoloniality gives us the means to disentangle seemingly intractable problems and gives a basis for an inhabitable environment for learning, personal development, and growth (Busbridge, 2018). This paper set out from the premise that decolonisation should be considered a tool to deradicalise student discourse, shifting it towards constructive remedial strategies rather than destructive social unrest. The significance of this approach lies in its ability to have a direct impact on contributing towards providing universities with an environment conducive to learning and growth.

2. Research objective

Based on the above, the study aims to present the proponents of decoloniality as a tool to deradicalise students' minds against radical and antisocial activism and protests in the university system. The study further argues the need for universities to battle the radical and antisocial activism that has been on the rise in many campuses by helping deradicalise their minds and shift their focus from violence and aggressive opposition towards furthering their understanding of marginalised and oppressed identities. The study further responds to the following question: How can student unrest be deradicalised using decoloniality as a tool?

3. Methodology

This study is based on argumentative analysis. The basis for the argument relies on decoloniality which is presented as a means by which student unrest could be deradicalised in the university system. The argumentative analysis focuses on decoloniality, and the result is a comprehensive overview of how to address them in an evidence-based, practical manner. However, this study is lensed within the transformative paradigm because the study intends to transform social unrest in the university as means to join transformative discourse in South African universities.

This worldview is pertinent to the current study because it brazenly identifies the responsibility of universities in interrogating and creating ameliorative approaches that foster social restructuring (Hurtado, 2015). It seeks to unify university stakeholders, thereby facilitating a process between them which will enable mutual appreciation and recognition through collaborative efforts (Underhill & McDonald, 2010). Such a viewpoint augments the views of Freire (1970), who upholds an idea of praxis – of connecting reality with its transformative possibilities. Additionally, this paradigm reflects tenets of relevance theory, which emphasises the importance of proffering solutions to societal problems rather than mere complaints against these issues (Romm, 2015). By bringing transformative discourse to bear on university social unrest, this study not only stands to revolutionise how we understand

such phenomenon, but also substantially contributes to South Africa's ongoing history of transformation and democracy. The transformative frame is itself relevant in this regard; by examining an issue from a radical angle and thoughtfully addressing it through decoloniality.

To make sense of the argument inherent in the decolonial approach, the study adopted conceptual analysis as a method that is suitable to make sense of the concepts towards meaning-making (Skaggs & Barron, 2006). That is, it is an effective method to make sense of the argument inherent in the decolonial approach. By unpacking and investigating a term's conceptualisation, examining its features, usage within language systems and historical context can elucidate valuable meaning-making capabilities to shape ideas (Risjord, 2009). While unstructured techniques such as collecting anecdotes can be used, it may not offer a comprehensive understanding of terms since the argumentative approach lacks a bedrock to verify accuracy or saturation. Furthermore, the conceptual analysis allowed for this complex set of ideas to be analysed and explained in a comprehensive and organised fashion (Ch, 2019) while still paying attention to the nuanced language and terminology that form the basis of decolonial discourse.

The study is further structured to explain the concept of decoloniality, its assumptions and how the assumptions can be made to respond to student unrest towards deradicalisation. The findings, conclusion and recommendations were also discussed.

4. Presentation of decolonial concept

Decoloniality is a discourse that has emerged from postcolonial theory over the past few decades. It seeks to challenge and subvert colonial structures and dynamics embedded in contemporary society, politics, culture and knowledge production (Dei, 2017; Dei, *et al.*, 2022). Decoloniality advocates for liberation from these oppressive systems by examining their impacts on marginalised groups and challenging existing power imbalances (Pashby & Sund, 2020; Naylor & Thayer, 2022). Decoloniality also calls for an acknowledgement of different ways of knowing, understanding, and living within our shared world by valuing diverse traditional knowledge and perspectives (Akena, 2012). In this way, it strives towards equitable empowerment of those subjugated by colonialism across the globe. Decolonial discourse, therefore, seeks to create a more just and equitable future.

Decoloniality, as defined by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Achille Mbembe, and Frantz Fanon, extends beyond theoretical critique to address the political, and revolutionary dimensions of dismantling colonial systems. Ngũgĩ (1986) argues for decolonising the mind by reclaiming indigenous languages and cultural practices to resist mental domination, while Mbembe (2001) critiques modern power structures through his concept of necropolitics, highlighting the continued exploitation of marginalised populations under capitalist and state control. Fanon (1963), in contrast, calls for a radical rupture from colonialism, advocating for revolutionary action to dismantle both material and psychological colonial legacies. Together, these theorists emphasise that true decolonisation requires not only intellectual and cultural shifts but also a fundamental challenge to enduring colonial power dynamics (Ngũgĩ, 1986; Mbembe, 2001; Fanon, 1963).

On another notion, decoloniality is closely linked to de-Westernisation and provides an expansive theory that goes beyond the binary of coloniser/colonise (Kho, 2018). It considers multiple factors, such as gender, sexuality, class and religion, which shape power dynamics

in different contexts. This creates a holistic view for analysis and understanding, which can then be harnessed to address issues of oppression in a comprehensive manner (Trisos *et al.*, 2021). In this way, a decolonial discourse has the potential to open new possibilities for social transformation by disrupting entrenched colonial structures and opening space for challenging oppressive systems that deny rights and resources from certain groups (Zembylas, 2021). Ultimately, one can argue that decoloniality provides a route to greater social justice and equitable empowerment.

Decolonial discourse has wide-reaching implications for both the global South and North, challenging hegemonic paradigms which benefit Western powers and denying them their monopoly on knowledge production (Dei, 2012; Dimou, 2021). It draws attention to the power dynamics that exist between different actors in the international arena, allowing us to see how structural inequalities have been perpetuated through colonialism. Decoloniality also offers an approach to addressing the effects of this inequality by highlighting how existing power structures can be challenged and potentially dismantled. As such, it is an important tool for those seeking to combat oppression and promote social justice across the world. By creating a platform from which alternative perspectives can be heard and understood, decoloniality can help build a more equitable society for all.

This study focuses on the decolonisation of the mind to combat the colonial beliefs and knowledge passed from generation to generation (Grosz-Ngaté, 2020). This is to challenge the knowledge and systematic coloniality promoted among the assumed powerless and underprivileged. Decolonising the mind is a crucial process to counteract the lingering effects of colonialism and its insidious imposition of beliefs on a generation that has been deemed powerless and inferior (Barker, 2018). The systematic coloniality imposed by colonisers was designed to keep them subjugated while they were robbed of their dignity, identity, culture, language, and heritage. Striving for ideological and intellectual autonomy is a way in which this harmful legacy can be reversed. By challenging this colonial-driven understanding, we can shatter the systems that keep those considered powerless and underprivileged subjugated. This calls for a critical evaluation of existing knowledge structures and their power dynamics, both on an individual level and on a larger scale. By embracing the decolonisation of the mind, one can move toward a more equitable future. The decolonisation of the mind, however, requires reeducation that acknowledges Indigenous perspectives and works to question inherited structures, paradigms, and systems to disrupt existing entanglements of power dynamics (Lopez, 2020). Only then will it be possible to break away from traditional and oppressive colonial ideologies and mindsets that continue to shape people's lives and destinies.

5. The assumptions of decoloniality in relation to mindset

Based on the above presentation of the decoloniality concept, it was deduced that four assumptions or factors contribute to the decoloniality of the minds. They are disrupting colonial ideologies, knowledge reclamation, changing discourse structures, and decolonising practices. These are discussed below.

- **Disrupting colonial ideologies:** From the above concept of decoloniality, one can argue that to decolonise the minds, the ideology of the colonisers must be disrupted. This involves questioning the ideologies that have been historically entrenched within colonial contexts (Thaman, 2003). These hegemonic ideas often shape how people think, live, and navigate their socio-political experiences without being aware of the implications of

these influences. An important aspect of decolonisation seeks to interrupt this fostering of colonial ideologies by challenging existing understandings about race, knowledge production, cultural heritage and individual or collective identity. This process requires a fundamental rethinking of communal structures and the theories supporting them to create a more balanced and equitable perspective between globalised societies. By disrupting colonial ideologies, the limitations posed by imposed systems can be mitigated, thereby allowing for alternative modes of engagement with one another. Succeeding in this endeavour would lead to tangible changes that contribute to reducing inequalities on various fronts, ultimately leading to greater social inclusion.

- **Knowledge reclamation:** The notion of knowledge reclamation as an assumption to decolonising the minds holds great significance. The ability to reclaim that which has been denied or made invisible offers a pathway for re-envisioning, redefining and reimagining our individual, collective and social identities (Mashau, 2018). The importance of knowledge reclamation in decolonising the minds of colonised individuals is often overlooked. In many cases, this form of relearning has been an integral practice for restoring identity and creating a sense of evidenced knowledge within vulnerable populations. By increasing their understanding of cultural heritage and engaging with aspects such as customs, languages, music and stories, communities have reclaimed their autonomy while also acknowledging a lack of institutionalised colonial presence. The power dynamics involved in reclaiming previously maligned knowledge have opened up discourse concerning issues such as historical amnesia, political oppression, and whitewashed versions of history. In this way, it can be argued that assuming responsibility for the mental conditioning caused by colonisation is integral to effectively dismantling oppressive structures. Ultimately, intentional knowledge reclamation holds immense potential to empower those affected by colonialism in a meaningful way.

- **Changing discourse structures:** Based on the concept of decoloniality, one can argue that decolonising the mind is an essential step in the direction of equitable and liberating societies. An underlying assumption of this process is that changing discourse structures is fundamental for rejecting oppressive colonial narratives and power dynamics (Mitchell *et al.*, 2018). To achieve this, attention needs to be paid to diverse ideas, practices and perspectives outside the colonial framework to permit previously unseen connections with one another, new possibilities for collective action, and a broader outlook towards what constitutes meaningful knowledge production. Efforts towards rethinking existing systems of representation, distribution and communication are necessary to reimagine alternative ways of engaging with historical legacies while adhering to enduring truths. This ultimately allows people to unpack how colonisation affects our conversations, enact meaningful changes in both structural and individualised spheres, and work collaboratively towards inexorable change.

  While rethinking discourse structures alone is not enough to decolonise the minds, it remains a critical tool for beginning the work of social transformation. Deconstructing power structures within a language can then open new possibilities for understanding people's diverse realities and engaging in conversations about injustice and oppression.

- **Decolonising practices:** Decolonising practices are essential for achieving decolonisation of the minds and for the true liberation of post-colonised societies. Through such practices, people from postcolonial nations must recognise and reassess their position in neo-colonial world order. This is achieved by actively engaging with and critiquing oppressive frameworks imposed upon them due to centuries of colonialism and imperialism. Such practice involves elements such as reclaiming traditional knowledge systems, reevaluating history from new perspectives, recognising cultural diversity and contributing to the

dialogue about justice for all affected communities (Garcia & Shirley, 2012). Moreover, within these processes, true decolonisation occurs through the restructuring of institutions and the active redefinition of identities. In this way, decolonising practices can ultimately help create a more holistic understanding of how to build a strong social fabric to legitimise collective cultural agency and provide more equitable pathways to resources in society.

6. Decolonial assumptions and the deradicalisation of student unrest

This section discusses the assumptions of decoloniality of the minds and its correlational impact on how students' minds can be decolonised towards the deradicalisation of student unrest in universities. This is done by addressing the assumptions side by side with its potential to derail student unrest. They are disrupting colonial ideologies and deradicalisation of student unrest, knowledge reclamation and deradicalisation of student unrest, changing discourse structure and deradicalisation of student unrest, and decolonising practice and deradicalisation of student unrest.

7. Disrupting colonial ideologies and deradicalisation of student unrest

Disrupting colonial ideologies may require a shift in curricula content and pedagogy within the university environment. This may involve introducing new dialogue and conversations that can challenge existing norms and preconceptions amongst students, as well as reexamining past events from a critical perspective of analysis. Furthermore, deconstructing historical structures can enable a transformation of attitudes towards student unrest, leading to deradicalising students' mindsets. For instance, recognising the long-term effects of European colonisation across the globe can provide an initial platform to unpack accountabilities related to student sentiment and its implications for broader societies. One can argue that providing such disruption in terms of ideological perspectives can have a significant impact on reconceptualising how present-day universities perceive student unrest in various contexts.

Through a systemic approach focused on disrupting colonial ideologies, universities can actively attempt to deradicalise students' mindsets and reduce the possibility of student unrest. This can be achieved through various means, such as examining student behaviour within the context of their wider socioeconomic backgrounds and assessing how inequalities may play a role in shaping student conduct. Universities could also implement programmes that promote community development, encourage positive cross-cultural dialogue, and provide platforms for students to engage in meaningful conversations about racism. By taking these steps, universities can create an environment that challenges oppressive narratives and works to decrease the risk of disruptive behaviour from occurring on campus.

Empirical evidence suggests that disrupting colonial ideologies within university curricula can significantly influence student attitudes towards unrest. For instance, Shahjahan *et al.* (2021) found that integrating decolonial pedagogies fostered critical thinking among students and challenged entrenched colonial narratives, ultimately leading to a more inclusive campus environment. Similarly, Jansen (2019) argues that by addressing the historical and socioeconomic inequalities that shape student behaviour, universities can reduce the likelihood of unrest. Both studies demonstrate that reimagining curricula to confront colonial legacies not only deradicalizes student mindsets but also promotes a more harmonious and equitable university culture.

8. Knowledge reclamation and deradicalisation of student unrest

Knowledge reclamation and deradicalisation of student unrest present an interesting juncture within the university system. Student activists, often closely affiliated with revolutionary movements, present a passionate but often ill-informed call for change that can prove disruptive to academic progress. Universities must strive to find a balance between these divergent interests and work towards an outcome where students develop a more nuanced understanding of their causes and recognise the long-term implications of proposed solutions. University officials should engage with student activism to further research by looking for ways in which learning outcomes are enhanced through innovative approaches to navigating contemporary issues. By creating spaces for discussion and dialogue, universities will have a unique chance to facilitate knowledge reclamation – retaining existing forms of knowledge and helping foster new ones. In doing so, universities may be able to better exploit the passion of students while channeling their energy towards long-term advancement rather than destructive short-term disruption.

Through these initiatives, administrators aim to enhance understanding amongst stake-holders while properly equipping students with the necessary tools to engage in civility without sacrificing their passionate commitment towards greater social justice. Ultimately, it can be argued that knowledge reclamation and deradicalisation are essential components in main-taining a healthy learning environment for all members of the university system. Empirical studies suggest that knowledge reclamation and deradicalization efforts in universities can effectively mitigate student unrest by fostering informed activism. For example, Stuurman (2018) highlights how engaging students in structured dialogues about historical injustices and current social issues allows for a deeper understanding of their movements, reducing the likelihood of disruptive behaviour. Similarly, Omodan (2024) demonstrates that universities that provide platforms for students to critically engage with their grievances tend to channel student activism towards constructive, rather than radical, outcomes. These findings emphasise that reclaiming knowledge through critical discussions can empower students to pursue social justice while maintaining a balanced academic environment

9. Changing discourse structure and deradicalisation of student unrest

Over the years, the discourse structure of coloniality has often been used as a tool to oppress student unrest. Most colonialist regimes in Africa position student voices and their chosen methods of protest as unruly or radical (Akintola, 2010). However, it is increasingly evident that reshaping our understanding of student unrest can foster alternative avenues for politics and sociopolitical mobilisation. To achieve this, a shift in tone is needed to provide more value in recognising and respecting students' perspectives on matters that affect them directly. We must strive to move away from the oppressive rhetoric of traditional colonial discourse and toward a narrative that incorporates alternative approaches such as inclusion, nonviolent resistance, de-escalation strategies, safe spaces, and similar tactics that enable powerful coalitions among various parties within a conflict situation. Doing this will encourage discussions around complex political issues in the classroom. By reframing how we look at student agitation through deradicalising approaches like these, there is hope for both sides of an argument to be authentically heard and understood within educational contexts.

Additionally, by interrogating colonialist structures of power through more collaborative discursive methods – such as circle dialogues – educators can help mitigate and prevent students from acting out of frustration stemming from colonial oppression. Ultimately, transforming the discourse structure around colonialism has the potential to unlock powerful solutions for healing social divides created through imperialist histories. Empirical research supports the idea that changing discourse structures around colonialism can play a critical role in the deradicalization of student unrest. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) argues that shifting from oppressive, colonialist narratives to more inclusive and dialogical approaches can foster a greater understanding of student grievances, leading to more peaceful forms of sociopolitical mobilization. Similarly, Mattes and Luescher (2020) found that incorporating nonviolent resistance strategies and collaborative dialogues in educational settings allows for the creation of safe spaces where student voices are heard and respected, thus reducing frustration and the likelihood of radical protest. These approaches demonstrate that rethinking colonial discourse in educational contexts can mitigate unrest by promoting constructive, inclusive engagement.

10. Decolonising practice and deradicalisation of student unrest

Decolonising colonial practices have been identified as a primary contributor to peaceful mindsets among students resulting in the deradicalisation of student unrest in universities. By decolonising, the punitive power structure resulting from colonial projects can be dismantled and replaced by a system that respects human rights and incorporates the community's current values and common goals. Furthermore, decolonising is expected to foster greater inclusion of indigenous ideas, languages and cultures within the university system. This allows for conversations between students embracing an understanding of multiple perspectives and accepting differences. This process involves dismantling visions of and structures of domination, oppression, and inequality between different groups, seeking instead to develop relationships between all members of the university community which foster respect for different cultures and backgrounds. It creates a collective value system where all voices matter, creating an atmosphere where heated dialogue between differing opinions can still occur peacefully. As a result, universities can move away from traditional forms of punishment to approaches which focus on resolving issues collaboratively and respectfully, leading to greater stability among its student population. Ultimately, this kind of radical reshaping is essential for achieving long-term peace in universities and allowing for meaningful debate about key issues without the fear of violence or discrimination.

Empirical studies suggest that decolonizing practices within universities play a crucial role in the deradicalization of student unrest by fostering inclusive and peaceful mindsets. For example, Zembylas (2021) highlights that incorporating indigenous knowledge, languages, and cultural values into university curricula helps dismantle colonial power structures, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect among students. Similarly, Mbembe (2016) argues that decolonizing educational institutions can lead to the creation of spaces where diverse perspectives are acknowledged and valued, reducing the likelihood of unrest. These findings suggest that replacing punitive structures with collaborative approaches rooted in inclusivity and respect can significantly contribute to a more stable and peaceful university environment.

11. Discussion of findings

The findings of this study are based on the four assumptions discussed above. That is, the finding of the study is premised on disrupting colonial ideologies, knowledge reclamation, changing discourse structures, and decolonising practices. Each paragraph below contains one finding.

The study finds out that disrupting colonial ideologies is one of the approaches that enhance the decolonisation of students' minds towards deradicalising student unrest in universities. The finding generated from the study affirms Spivak's (1991) explorations on how dismantling colonial ideologies in universities is a valuable approach towards achieving decolonisation of student thought that can potentially de-escalate student dissent. The study indicates a significant value in further research exploring various techniques and modalities for working with colonial power structures and creating spaces in universities for a better understanding of decolonisation theories and practices. This finding is consistent with the work of Wasonga and Makahamadze (2020) which suggested that most campus-related issues arise from regressive policies rooted in oppressive, outdated ideas and ethics. These inequalities must be addressed and dismantled through progressive educational reform to fuel real social progress. Therefore, restructuring the educational curriculum around equitable principles and implementing teaching strategies that deconstruct oppressive frames of mind can help to reshape a more positive, inclusive culture on college campuses. Targeting campuses' structural deficiencies surrounding colonialism and inequality within higher education institutions may make true decolonisation and deradicalisation possible.

Secondly, the study revealed that knowledge reclamation is one of the ways in which student minds can be decolonised towards radicalisation of student unrest in the university. This suggests that by engaging in such knowledge recuperation, students tend to be more aware of their locational condition and thus are better able to address injustices facing them and revolutionise their thinking and political stance. Moreover, this process of regaining control over knowledge production also helps students become familiar with existing social structures and histories, providing them with a better understanding of how power dynamics have shaped our society today (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). In short, through knowledge reclamation, students can develop insight into creating meaningful progressive actions to address inequalities to bring about liberation.

The study also confirmed that changing discourse structures is one of the fundamental tools to decolonise students' mindset towards deradicalising student unrest in universities. This finding confirms earlier scholarly theories which found that shifting dialogue structures is a critical component of decolonising students' mindsets, helping to relieve student unrest in universities (McLean *et al.*, 2019). It reinforces previously established conclusions from various studies—including findings surrounding the disciplines of education, sociology, and anthropology—which point to discourse as an effective means for migration towards a more equitable educational system. In particular, the research highlights the importance of taking the time to understand complex terms related to power dynamics, such as 'postcolonialism' and 'decolonisation', to be able to shift previous entrenched conversations on colonialism effectively.

Lastly, the decolonising practices are also found as a tool to decolonise students' mindset towards the deradicalisation of student unrest in the university system. This finding relates to the results of other scholars and demonstrates that any efforts made to mitigate unrest through decolonisation must involve looking beyond traditional top-down approaches (Petrus, 2021). Such approaches should include investigations into how global currents have shaped colonial legacies and techniques which focus on implementing equal recognition through changes in institutional policies, practices, and culture. Additionally, research has highlighted the important role that student participation can play in initiating these changes at a university level. Such research provides invaluable insight into what further efforts could be taken to achieve lasting positive change in the university system.

12. Conclusion and recommendations

The study presents the proponents of decoloniality as a tool to deradicalise students' minds against radical student activism and protests in the university system and answers the question of how to deradicalise student unrest using decoloniality as a tool in South African universities. Based on this, it can be concluded that to effectively deradicalise student unrest in South African universities and promote peace and tranquility within the university system, there needs to be disruption of colonial ideologies, reclamation of knowledge, changing discourse structures, and decolonising colonial practices. These are the dimensions presented by proponents of decoloniality as a tool to deradicalise student minds against radical student activism and protests. Relevant stakeholders, such as higher education institutions, may want to consider employing transformative paradigm principles for deradicalisation methodologies. The various strategies needed for successful decolonisation to attain the desired result could significantly help create an environment conducive to learning. As this study has indicated, a holistic approach is essential when attempting to navigate how decoloniality may be used as a tool for the deradicalisation of South African university students.

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