

**Unveiling the shifting landscape: a sociolinguistic exploration of
women's representation in Northern Sotho Literature through the
lens of written sources**

by

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this work contained in this thesis is the result of my own research and has not been previously presented by myself or anyone for any academic award. All references used in the work have been duly acknowledged.

ANTHEA LUCY NDLOVU..... 

DATE 11/11/2025.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate my work firstly to my parents (the late Mr Edward Mnisi and Mrs Magdeline Mnisi). Secondly, I would like to thank my lovely daughters, Ofentse and Antoinette Ndlovu, for giving me a cause to complete my studies and for motivating them to do the same.

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- To my lovely daughters Ofentse and Antoinette, I am passing the legacy to you.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research study is to conduct a comprehensive sociolinguistic analysis of the portrayal of women in Northern Sotho literature, charting the evolution of their representation by examining various written resources. In particular, the sociolinguistic analysis of these literature works can uncover hidden narratives of women's experiences and roles in society. Recognising the powerful role literature plays in shaping societal perceptions, this research endeavours to shed light on the changing dynamics of gender representation in the Northern Sotho cultural context. By employing a multidisciplinary approach, combining sociolinguistics, literary analysis, and feminist theory, this study seeks to uncover nuanced insights into the evolving status, roles, and narratives surrounding women in Northern Sotho literature. The researcher observes that for many years women have endured some form of oppression from patriarchal societies. Unfortunately, this is still the case in some parts of the world. Yet women have and are still playing a pivotal role in societies. However, over the years strides have been made towards the emancipation of women. The study will also explore the concept of feminism, its evolution, and how it is striving to fight for women's rights and liberation.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, gender representation, patriarchy, evolution and feminism.

SENAGANWA

Morero wa nyakišišo ye ke go dira tshekatsheko ye e feletšego ya thuto ya polelo ya leago ya go swantšhwa ga basadi ka dingwalong tša Sesotho sa Leboa, go bolela ka tlhagelelo/ebolušene ya boemedi bja bona ka go lekola dingwalwa tša go fapafapana. Tshekatsheko ya thuto ya polelo ya leago (sošiolinkwistiki) ya dingwalwa tše e ka utulla dikanegelo tše di utilwego tša maitemogelo a basadi le dikarolo setšhabeng. Go lemoga tema ye maatla yeo dingwalwa di e kgathago go bopeng temogo ya setšhaba, nyakišišo ye, e katanela go hlabiša seetša ka ga diphetogo tša boemedi bja bong ka gare ga seemo sa setšo sa Sesotho sa Leboa. Ka go šomiša mokgwa wa go dira dikarolo tše dintši, go kopanya thuto ya leago, tshekatsheko ya dingwalwa, le teori ya bosadi, thuto ye e nyaka go utulla ditemogo tše di sa lemogegego ka ga maemo ao a fetogago, dikarolo, le dikanegelo tše di bolelago ka basadi dingwalong tša Sesotho sa Leboa.

Monyakišiši o lemoga gore mengwaga ye mentši basadi ba kgotleletše kgatelelo ye itšego go tšwa ditšhabeng tša bopatriareka. Ka manyami, go sa le bjalo dinageng tše dingwe. Le ge go le bjalo, basadi ba sa kgatha tema ye bohlokwa ditšhabeng. Fela, mengwageng ya go feta, go dirilwe dikgato tša go lokolla basadi. Thuto ye e tla hlahloba gape kgopolo ya bosadi, tlhagelelo ya yona, le ka moo go katanelago go lwela ditokelo tša basadi le tokologo.

Mantšu a bohlokwa: Sošiolinkwistiki (Thuto ya polelo ya leago), boemedi bja bong, bopatriareka, ebolušene le bosadi.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie navorsingsstudie poog om 'n omvattende sosiolinguistiese analise te onderneem van die uitbeelding van vroue in die Noord-Sotho letterkunde deur die evolusie van hul beskrywing te ondersoek in verskeie geskrewe bronne. In die besonder kan die sosiolinguistiese ontleding van hierdie literêre werke verborge narratiewe van vroue se ondervindinge en rol in die samelewing aan die lig bring. Gedagtig aan die kragtige rol wat letterkunde speel in die vorming van sosiale persepsies, poog hierdie navorsing om lig te werp op die veranderende dinamiek van geslagsuitbeelding in die Noord-Sotho kulturele konteks. Deur gebruik te maak van 'n multidissiplinêre benadering, wat sosiolinguistiek, literêre analise en feministeteorie kombineer, stel hierdie studie hom ten doel om genuanseerde insigte in die ontwikkelende status, rolle en narratiewe rondom vroue in Noord-Sotho letterkunde te ontbloot. Die navorser merk op dat vroue oor baie jare een of ander vorm van onderdrukking deur patriargale gemeenskappe verduur het. Ongelukkig is dit nog steeds die geval in sekere dele van die wêreld. Desnieteenstaande het vroue 'n sleutelrol in gemeenskappe gespeel en doen dit nog steeds. Tog is daar oor die jare vordering gemaak ten opsigte van die emansiepasië van vroue. Die studie ondersoek ook die konsep van feminisme en sy evolusie, asook sy stryd vir die regte en bevryding van die vrou.

Sleutelwoorde: Sosiolinguistiek, geslagsverteenvoording, patriargie, evolusie en feminisme.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The representation of women in literature is a critical area of sociolinguistic inquiry that both reflects and shapes societal values and gender ideologies. Within the context of Northern Sotho literature, examining how women are portrayed over time offers valuable insights into the shifting dynamics of gender roles and cultural identities among Northern Sotho speaking communities. This study seeks to explore these transformations by analysing the sociolinguistic aspects of women's representation in Northern Sotho written literature and tracing how such portrayals have evolved across different historical and social periods.

Northern Sotho, one of South Africa's twelve official languages (including South African Sign Language), is predominantly spoken in the Limpopo province. Its literary tradition encompassing both oral and written forms which serves as a crucial vehicle for cultural expression and the transmission of societal norms. Historically, women in Northern Sotho literature were often depicted through the lens of patriarchy, confined to domestic and nurturing roles that mirrored traditional expectations (Masola, 2018). However, with socio-political shifts, particularly in the post-apartheid era, more complex and empowered portrayals of women have begun to emerge (Gunner, 2005). Nonetheless, as Mogoboya and Montle (2018) observe, despite these textual shifts, many Black women in South Africa continue to face realities that contradict the ideals expressed in the Freedom Charter.

Scholars such as Magona (2010) have highlighted the growing depiction of women as resilient and autonomous figures in South African literature, reflecting broader transformations in society. Similarly, Okpewho (1992) emphasises how oral traditions contribute to shaping and contesting gender norms, a perspective that remains relevant to understanding their evolution within written Northern Sotho works. Ohale

(2007:131) commends African writers such as Nwapa, Emecheta, Bâ, and Iloegbunam for creating female characters who embody strength, intelligence, and resistance an approach that parallels the growing assertiveness seen in Northern Sotho women characters.

Through a sociolinguistic lens, this study examines how language use, narrative structure, and thematic choices contribute to the portrayal of women in Northern Sotho literature. This approach allows for an exploration of both explicit and implicit meanings that reveal the intersection of language, gender, and power. Sociolinguistics, concerned with the relationship between language and society, provides a framework for analysing how gendered discourses are constructed and represented in literary texts (Li, 2014). In this context, “written sources” refer to Northern Sotho literary works that portray women in various capacities and settings.

Furthermore, this research draws on feminist theoretical perspectives, particularly liberal, radical, socialist, intersectional, and African feminism to interpret the linguistic and narrative representations of women. The inclusion of African feminist theory is crucial, as it contextualises women’s experiences within African cultural and social realities. By integrating sociolinguistic analysis with feminist theory, this study aims to unveil the shifting landscape of women’s representation in Northern Sotho literature, contributing to broader discussions on gender, identity, and power in African literary discourse.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite significant progress over the past few decades, women continue to face widespread inequality and discrimination in the 21st century. From pay gaps and unequal access to education and healthcare, to sexual harassment and violence, women are often disadvantaged compared to men in many areas of life. Women are denied basic rights and freedom, such as the right to vote, the right to education, and the right to own property. Females are frequently represented in stereotyped ways in several literary sources, including the literature selected for this study. They are portrayed as beings who are obedient, long-suffering, and feeble, and who are not

suited to assume positions that are typically held by males. Literary writing in South Africa has shifted considerably between the apartheid and democratic eras, particularly in terms of women's representation. During apartheid, African women endured a triad of oppression including gender, race, and class. Hence, protest literature that was created to oppose apartheid laws and policies. On the contrary, during the democratic era, there is an emerging of authors that portray their female characters as resilient, powerful and career orientated.

The data for this study will be extracted from the Northern Sotho literary works that include female portrayal. The collected data will demonstrate how Northern Sotho culture is based on a patriarchal structure and cultural norms. In this culture, gender roles are clearly defined, with the man serving as the head of the family and provider, and the woman caring for her household, particularly in rural areas. The man's voice is final because he is the provider and the women often endure patriarchal oppression. According to Northern Sotho tradition, if the husband pays *lobola* (bride-dowry) for the wife, this payment emphasises the concept that the woman is now his property. As a result, the woman is totally dependent on her husband and receives limited education.

Even in countries with more progressive laws and policies, women often face barriers to achieving full equality, such as gender stereotypes and discrimination in the workplace. While some progress has been made in addressing these issues, there is still much work to be done to achieve true gender equality. Additionally, the researcher observes the contrasting ways in which the selected authors depict their female characters.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this research study is to provide a sociolinguistic analysis of the evolution of portrayals of women in the Northern Sotho literature through written resources.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Analyse how the evolution of representations of women are portrayed in Northern Sotho literature over time.
- Analyse the linguistic features that are used to construct these representations.

- Establish how these representations reflect societal attitudes towards women in the Northern Sotho-speaking community.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How have the representations of women in Northern Sotho literature evolved over time?
- What linguistic features are used to construct these representations?
- How do these representations reflect societal attitudes towards women in the Northern Sotho-speaking community?

Selected Northern Sotho literary texts authored by male writers tend to represent female characters in more stereotypical and marginalised ways, whereas texts authored by female writers are more likely to portray women in empowering and transformative ways.

1.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Khan (2014:298) defines a paradigm as a structure or a set of suppositions and ideas that provides a pathway to see what the world looks like when its scientific aspect is related to its assumptions. Khaldi (2017) further explains that there are three research paradigms and that there are implications that each paradigm has for the design of various types of research studies in educational research. In simple definition, the research paradigm is the approach the research employs for data analysis. Common research paradigms include, but are not limited to, positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, and pragmatism. In positivism, reality is independent of human perception whilst in interpretivism, multiple realities and multiple truths are socially constructed and constantly changing (Khan, 2014:299).

According to Creswell and Poth (2016:20), in social constructivism, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They further maintain that they develop subjective meanings of their experiences or meanings directed toward certain objects or things.

Creswell and Poth (2016:22) further suggest that there are many forms of pragmatism and individuals holding this worldview focus on the outcomes of the research, i.e. the actions, situations, and consequences of inquiry.

This study will employ the interpretivism paradigm. The perspective is appropriate for the language used in the selected Northern Sotho literary sources, which depict female characters. By adopting interpretivism in this study, the researcher can investigate how the Northern Sotho language utilised in the selected texts influences women's behaviours and beliefs. For many years, women have suffered oppression and disempowerment in various ways. The feminist movement has been raging for decades and is arguably still fighting for women's rights.

Grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, feminist theory and CDA are methodologically aligned, collectively demonstrating coherence between epistemology, theory, and method. This research adopts an interpretivist epistemology to understand how knowledge is constructed, draws on feminist theory to foreground silenced voices, and employs CDA to examine the construction of power, ideology, and gender.

Although South Africa and some countries have made significant progress in the pursuit of equal rights, this is not the case in numerous other countries, where women's rights are still being suppressed.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will provide important insights into the evolution of the representation of women in Northern Sotho literature and how it reflects societal attitudes towards women in the Northern Sotho-speaking community. It will also contribute to the larger conversation about the representation of women in literature and media more broadly, and it will help to uncover the ways in which language is used to construct and reinforce societal attitudes. The study will elucidate the language employed in the portrayal of women within the selected Northern Sotho literary texts. It will expose the words employed to depict women in either a marginalised or empowered context. After the exposure, recommendations may be proposed to enhance the quality of women's lives. This can also enhance awareness of gender imbalance in countries and promote good representation of women. Prior research has not conducted comparisons between male and female Northern Sotho authors on the portrayal of women hence this study. The study will deepen understanding of how language actively constructs and reconstructs women's identities, rather than functioning as a neutral mirror of social reality. It will further demonstrate how Northern Sotho literary works operate as active sociolinguistic artifacts that shape and convey social meaning.

1.7 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The main terms in this research study will now be defined.

Portray: The term portray according to Pauw (1977) is when a character is revealed by his/her words, actions, and reactions.

Female: A female is a person that has a gender identity that is opposite to male (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/female>).

Male: A male person has a gender identity that is opposite to female. A male person is normally the head of the family. He is expected to provide for and give his family security.

Depict: Pauw (1977) defines the term depict as revealing a character by words, actions, and reactions.

Feminism: According to Merriam Webster's online dictionary, feminism is a belief in and advocacy of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes expressed especially through organised activity on behalf of women's rights and interests (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism>). Subsequently, Disch and Hawkesworth (2016) assert that feminism would not exist as a theoretical endeavour without the political struggles for women's empowerment that have emerged in all regions of the world.

Femicide: Femicide can be described as the murder or killing of a female by her partner or hitman that is hired by the partner.

Patriarchy: The concept of patriarchy according to Beechey (1979), has been used within the women's movement to analyse the principles underlying women's oppression. She further maintains that the concept itself has a history within feminist thought, having been used by earlier feminists like Virginia Woolf, the Fabian Women's Group and Vera Brittain.

Character: Characters are the people or individual human beings in literature books such as novels, short stories, drama etc. There are different types of characters.

Abuse: Abuse is mistreatment of a person or an animal, one way or the other. Abuse can come in several ways, i.e., physical, emotional, psychological etc.

Physical abuse: According to the New York State office of Children and Family Services, physical abuse is non-accidental use of force that results in bodily injury, pain, or impairment (www.healthyplace.com/abuse/adult-physical-abuse/what-is-physical-abuse).

Emotional abuse: Emotional abuse has to do with sabotaging another person's emotions and this can lead to physical abuse. It can also reduce a person to an object.

Psychological abuse: Psychological abuse is the abuse of one's feelings. The effects of psychological abuse are seen as contributing to the cycle of violence in which the battered woman is trapped (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause and Polek, 1990:108).

Gender-based violence: GBV includes physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, or other personal harm inflicted on someone for gender-based reasons (Bockbrader, Eakin, McCall, Holloway-Nilsen, Nilsen, Purkey, and Schepers (2022: 61).

Domestic violence: Domestic violence is a form of physical, sexual, and psychological misuse of power exerted or used against women (Hadi, 2017). While Hadi (2017) characterises this term as violence against women, both genders encounter this form of violence, either directly or indirectly. Similarly, Das, Suresh, Desai and Satyanarayana (2025:1) explain this term further by writing that it is used interchangeably with intimate partner violence, which refers to "any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in the relationship".

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section outlines the theoretical foundation that underpins the researcher's inquiry into feminism and the portrayal of females in Northern Sotho literatures. All research relies on a specific theoretical framework, and this study is no exception. Ferguson (2017) who writes about feminism argues that feminist theory extends beyond issues affecting females, addressing broader societal dynamics through critical intersectional perspectives. She emphasises that this theory is deeply connected to movements advocating for equality, freedom, and justice, asserting that everyone, regardless of gender, is entitled to equal rights.

In this study, feminist theories will be employed as analytical tools to examine the portrayal of female characters in the selected Northern Sotho literary sources. Chapter

three of this thesis will provide further detailed discussions about this framework and other theoretical frameworks applicable to this study. Examples of feminist theories that the researcher will extensively discuss in chapter three are as follows:

- Liberal feminist theory
- Radical feminist theory
- Marxist and Socialist feminism
- Intersectional feminism
- African feminist theory
- Womanism
- Africana Womanism

This research is theoretically underpinned by the theories that contributed towards female emancipation and striving for gender equality.

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is the backbone of a research study. Akhtar (2016) defines research design as the structure of research and is the “glue” that holds all the elements in a research project together, meaning that it is a plan of the proposed research work. He further proposes that the research design should be able to provide answers to the following reserve queries:

What is the study about and, what type of data is required?

What is the purpose of the study?

What are the sources of needed data?

What should be the place or area of the study?

What time, approximately, is required for the study?

What should be the number of materials or number of cases for the study?

What type of sampling should be used?

What method of data collection would be appropriate?

How will data be analysed?

What should be the approximate expenditure?

What should be the specific nature of the study? (Akhtar, 2016: 69).

Bloomfield and Fisher (2019) emphasise that research findings can be significantly influenced by the design, structure, and implementation of a study. Drawing from their

insights, it is evident that research design forms the cornerstone of any scholarly investigation. This study adopts an exploratory qualitative phenomenological approach. The primary aim is to explore the representation of women in selected Northern Sotho literature.

1.9.1 Research population

A research population of Northern Sotho novels, short stories, poems, and proverbs will be purposefully selected from the total population of these literary genres in this study. Given the extensive nature of Northern Sotho literature, it is impractical for the researcher to analyse the entire population comprehensively. Therefore, a carefully chosen sample is necessary. The selected novels, short stories, poems and proverbs are chosen based on their representation of women in both similar and diverse ways, providing a rich and varied corpus for analysis. This approach ensures that the sample is manageable while still being representative of the broader literary trends and themes relevant to the research questions. The exclusion of other genres, such as drama, is a purposeful choice rather than a limitation of the study, as research methodologies like CDA need substantial textual data. The use of drama would expand the methodological scope of the study and undermine methodological coherence owing to the necessity of additional analytical tools.

1.9.2 Sampling

The researcher will adopt the purposive sampling method. In this method, a researcher uses his/her own judgement to choose the selected participants. In this study, a small sample of documents will be sampled and then the researcher expands the sample by following references or citations within those documents to other relevant documents. The researcher will analyse the selected Northern Sotho literature that represents women as secondary resources.

Sharma (2017: 749) defines sampling as:

A technique employed by a researcher to systematically select a relatively small number of representative items or individuals from a pre-defined population to serve as subjects for observation or experimentation as per objectives of his or her study.

Taherdoost (2016) on the other hand, asserts that to answer the research questions, the researcher cannot collect data from all cases, thus, the importance of sampling.

Size of data

According to Creswell and Poth (2016) all qualitative research must be focused on understanding the topic under investigation rather than on the reader, researcher, or participants being investigated. Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger (2010) continue to assert that the population is all individuals of interest to the researcher. They further state that because the researcher cannot study the entire population, researchers typically study a subset of the population, and that subset is called a sample. Therefore, the sample size will also determine the size of the data. In this study, five novels, six short stories, ten poems, and ten proverbs will be selected to investigate how women are represented in these literary genres. It is almost impossible for the researcher to study the whole population of Northern Sotho literature, hence the importance of sampling.

1.9.3 Data collection method and procedure

This research study will employ a qualitative research method. The researcher will use a combination of textual analysis and close readings of the selected Northern Sotho literary sources from different historical periods. The literature will be grouped into different historical periods, and the changes in representation of women over time will be analysed. The study will also examine the use of language in the texts, including the use of gendered language and symbolism, in order to understand how these representations are constructed.

1.9.4 Data analysis method

Data analysis implies examining, sorting, categorising, evaluating, comparing, synthesising, and contemplating the coded data as well as the raw data. This study will employ the thematic and critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach for analysing data. The researcher will review documents in a qualitative manner through the specialised approach of thematic analysis. According to Tetzlaff, Goulet, Gorman and Kenny (2025:4) thematic analysis is a method that offers a way of identifying repeated patterns of meaning across a data set. In their research, Malkoç and Öztürk (2021:147) created the codes and themes and finally, rearranged the codes and the themes according to expected opinion.

Van Dijk (2015:466) found that CDA is discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. He further analyses this method by writing the following:

Critical discourse analysts take an explicit position and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately challenge social inequality (Van Dijk, 2015:466).

Thematic analysis and CDA will be utilised to analyse data extracted from the selected Northern Sotho literary sources to produce textual arguments.

1.9.5 Ensuring rigour

In this study, the researcher will use a set of standards to verify the transferability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability of data collected. The set standards will be used to evaluate the quality of trustworthiness and the value of this study. The selected methodology for this research study is qualitative for it is based on experiences and the views of the authors of the selected Northern Sotho novels, short stories, poems, and proverbs depicting female characters. The main method of data collection is the textual analysis and close reading of selected literary sources, and this will help endorse transferability and confirmability of this study. Data will be analysed using thematic analysis and CDA.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As in the case of any other research study, it was necessary to obtain ethical clearance for this research to go ahead. Even though the researcher conducted a desktop study, it was still crucial to obtain an ethical clearance certificate. This present research is not of a high risk since the researcher analysed texts instead of engaging with human participants. Furthermore, the researcher was cognisant of the following Unisa policies:

- University of South Africa's Policy on Research Ethics.
- University of South Africa's Research and Innovation Policy.
- University of South Africa's Intellectual Property Policy.
- University of South Africa's Research Policy against Plagiarism.

The researcher further adhered to the following ethical aspects:

- A detailed, prescribed application was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Africa for approval to conduct the research.
- The researcher's study would not be harmful to documents.
- The researcher would abide by the Unisa research policy of plagiarism.

Therefore, to adhere to the research policy, the researcher applied for ethical clearance.

1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The layout of chapters of this research study is as follows:

Chapter 1: Background and Introduction to the study.

Chapter one is about the background and introduction of this research study. The chapter presented the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, the theoretical framework, research design, ethical considerations and chapter outline. This study is cast in the field of sociolinguistics, and the selected Northern Sotho literature will be used as resources or references. The focus will be on female representation, feminism and its evolution over the years, supported by examples which will be extracted from the selected Northern Sotho literature books. Furthermore, the objectives of the study and the research questions are discussed. The chapter also discusses the significance of the study and terms used in the study are defined.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter two is devoted to literature relevant to this study. Previous research about feminism and the representation of women will be reviewed and the researcher will explicitly point out the gap and unresolved issues. The study will recognise what other scholars have written about female depiction. Literature about female portrayal across the world will be reviewed, followed by African literature. Relevant texts from the selected Northern Sotho literary sources will be extracted and analysed.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework in which this research study is entrenched. It presents the theoretical point of departure that guided the researcher's

enquiry on feminism and how females were and are portrayed. The feminist theories will be employed as tools to analyse female portrayal in the selected written resources.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology, Research Methods & Data Presentation

In this chapter, the research design and research methods are discussed. The research population, the type of data to be used, the methods of collecting this data, the methods of sampling and data analysis methods are dealt with. This research is qualitative in nature and data extracted from the selected Northern Sotho texts will be presented.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter will deal with data analysis, findings and interpretation of the study. The data gathered from the Northern Sotho selected literature and other written resources through textual analysis and close reading will be analysed and interpreted. The overall aim of this study is to explore how women representation evolved over time through relevant written resources.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter presents the summary and conclusion of the study. Recommendations will also be made after this research.

1.12 CONCLUSION

Despite substantial advances over the last few decades, women are still confronted by widespread inequality and discrimination in the 21st century. Women continue to be disadvantaged in many areas of life. GBV has also escalated dramatically in South Africa and other parts of the world. Women and girls suffer at the hands of those who are supposed to protect them. While progress has been made, much more work needs to be done before full gender equality can be achieved. The researcher will show how the evolution of women representation is portrayed in Northern Sotho literature over time. Linguistic features that are used to construct these representations will also be analysed. In the end these representations will reflect societal attitudes towards women in the Northern Sotho-speaking communities. This study will contribute to a greater discourse concerning women's portrayal in literature and culture, as well as uncovering the ways in which language is utilised to construct and reinforce cultural

attitudes. The study is crucial and must be completed for the researcher to draw attention to the archaic and detrimental ways in which women are portrayed in various Northern Sotho literary genres and show how these representations have changed throughout time to benefit and elevate women. This study will employ an exploratory qualitative phenomenological approach.

The next chapter (Chapter 2) presents a comprehensive literature review. The researcher will engage and interact with the debate by scholars about female representation and feminism.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the foundational aspects of this study, including the problem statement, research aims and objectives, key research questions, theoretical framework, research paradigm, significance of the study, definition of key terms, research design, and ethical considerations.

This chapter provides a critical review of existing literature, offering an in-depth analysis of feminism and the sociolinguistic dimensions of women's representation in Northern Sotho literature. The study explores the evolution of female representation, with a particular focus on the contrasting portrayals by male and female authors.

Furthermore, it examines depictions of women in selected Northern Sotho novels, short stories, poems, and proverbs, positioning these works within broader academic debates while identifying relevant research gaps. This comprehensive review establishes a theoretical and contextual foundation for understanding the cultural, literary, and sociolinguistic dynamics that informs this study.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Knopf (2006) a literature review is a summary and evaluation of a body of writings on a certain topic. This chapter will review existing literature on the subject, including Northern Sotho literature, dissertations, theses, and relevant journal articles on the sociolinguistic representation of women and feminism. The chapter succinctly synthesises the pivotal findings from the literature review relevant to the study. It identifies significant gaps in current research, establishing a critical foundation for the subsequent chapters. By highlighting these deficiencies, the study paves the way for new insights and contributions to the field. Knopf (2006:127) further spells out the benefits of conducting a literature review by emphasising that:

- It can give you a general overview of a body of research with which you are not familiar.

- It can reveal what has already been done well, so that you do not waste time “reinventing the wheel”.
- It can give you new ideas you can use in your own research.
- It can help you determine where there are problems or flaws in existing research.
- It can enable you to place your research in a larger context, so that you can show what new conclusions might result from your research.

Informed by Knopf’s list of benefits of conducting a literature review, relevant research about women representation will be explored to enrich this study and determine gaps. Building on what Knopf (2006) alludes, Denney and Tewksbury (2013) define a literature review as a comprehensive overview of prior research regarding a specific topic. In this study, literature that represents females and feminism will be reviewed. To further examine the role of other studies, Rowley and Slack (2004) propose that literature review needs to draw on and evaluate a range of different types of sources including academic and professional journal articles, books and web-based resources. Selected Northern Sotho literary texts will serve as primary sources for identifying how authors construct female characters and how patriarchal ideologies are implicitly or explicitly reflected in these narratives.

This study will undertake a sociolinguistic analysis of the evolving representations of women in Northern Sotho literature, as reflected in selected written texts. The study of sociolinguistics focuses on language in relation to society, and it has been used to analyse the representation of women in literature. Ohanedozi and Umera-Okeke (2020) explain sociolinguistics as the study of how language relates to the society, how language is used in the society and how language is influenced by speakers in the society. In particular, the sociolinguistic analysis of Northern Sotho literature and other relevant sources can uncover hidden narratives of women’s experiences and roles in society.

The analysis seeks to interrogate the underlying narratives that construct women’s lived experiences and societal roles, narratives that are frequently embedded within linguistic and literary structures. In doing so, the study critically engages with the concept of feminism, tracing its historical development and examining its continued role in advocating for women’s rights and emancipation. The study will also show how

historically, language has functioned as a tool of marginalisation, reinforcing stereotypes that constrain women's agency and social participation. Yet, as societal perceptions, language practices, and literary traditions evolve, they simultaneously shape and reflect shifting portrayals of women. Preliminary observations suggest that the language employed by Northern Sotho male authors often positions female characters in reductive or negative ways, while female authors, by contrast, tend to construct more progressive and empowering representations.

One example of this is a study by Mokgwetsi and Mokgwetsi (2022) which analysed Northern Sotho literature written between 1960 and 2010, focusing on the representation of women. The study found that in the early years of the period under examination, women were often portrayed as submissive and dependent on men, but over time their representation became more complex and nuanced. The authors also found that women writers were more likely to present strong and independent female characters, and that the use of certain linguistic features such as direct speech and first-person narration was more common in their writing.

Another example is a study by Mokwena (2021) which examined the representation of women in Northern Sotho oral literature, including folktales, proverbs, and riddles. The study found that while women were often represented as clever and resourceful in these forms of literature, they were also often portrayed as deceitful and cunning. The author also found that the representation of women in oral literature was often used to reinforce traditional gender roles and expectations.

These studies demonstrate the utility of sociolinguistic analysis in uncovering hidden narratives of women's representation in Northern Sotho literature, and they also suggest that literature can be an important site of struggle over the representation of women in society. For many years, societies have underestimated and belittled women, but with the progress of women's image, they are now better represented, even though much more work still needs to be done.

This resonates with the study's critical focus on the evolving representations of women in Northern Sotho literature, highlighting how such portrayals have both reinforced and challenged traditional gender roles over time. Although previous studies by Mokwena (2021) and Mokgwetsi and Mokgwetsi (2022) analysed women's representation in

Northern Sotho literature, this study conducts a comparative analysis of texts authored by both men and women to examine differences and similarities in representation.

With respect to feminist movements, significant strides have been made in promoting a more equitable portrayal of women, to which this study seeks to contribute by highlighting the ongoing need to dismantle linguistic and cultural structures that perpetuate inequality.

Feminism plays a critical role in this study since it advocates for gender equality. Bagshaw (2019:6) defines feminism as liberation from patriarchal values and structures that are oppressive to all of us. Western and African feminist theories have significantly contributed to tackling the challenges and prejudice faced by women. The selected Northern Sotho literary sources will show how women face oppression and discrimination in the texts, predominantly written by male authors. In contrast, females are represented in a liberal way by female authors and the language used in the texts empowers them.

Sociolinguistic theories on women's representation in literature highlight how language reflects and shapes gender roles in society. In this chapter, the discussion will not only review global perspectives but also relate them directly to the portrayal of women in Northern Sotho literature. The intention is to move beyond description by critically analysing how issues such as oppression, exploitation, and broader themes of representation emerge, and to situate these within the sociolinguistic dimensions of gender. For example, it explores the intersection of language and gender to challenge prevailing inequalities and stereotypes. This approach critically examines how women are portrayed in Northern Sotho texts, assessing whether such portrayals reinforce or challenge feminist ideals, and identifying gaps and opportunities for promoting equitable representation. Building on this discussion of gender representation, the study draws on CDA which also analyses language used.

According to Fairclough (2013:9), CDA brings the critical traditions of social analysis into language studies and contributes to critical social analysis a particular focus on discourse and on relations between discourse and other social elements.

This interdisciplinary approach will also be employed to analyse data in chapter five of this study. The researcher will use this theme to quote words and sentences from the

selected Northern Sotho texts that either shape women in stereotypical ways or empower them. As a result, the purpose of conducting this research is to highlight the necessity for Northern Sotho authors, both male and female, to promote gender equality in the Northern Sotho culture and in general.

2.2.1 Feminist sociolinguistics

Feminist sociolinguistics emanates from sociolinguistics and focuses on language, gender roles and power. It integrates sociolinguistics and feminist theories. In several Northern Sotho literary sources, linguistic choices marginalise women, diminishing their roles and agency. No wonder Ergun (2010:307) suggests that the topic of gender and language constitutes the common denominator of both feminist sociolinguistics and feminist translation studies. Kramer (2016:79) highlights the complexity of looking at gendered language and language about gender; both feminist anthropologists and linguistic anthropologists have demonstrated that language is incredibly powerful. Therefore, it is evident from the scholars' research works that language has the potential to either construct or deconstruct females. This study will show how language used in the selected literature, stereotypes or empowers them.

2.2.2 Feminist social constructionism

In feminist social constructionism both male and female are constructed by societal views and not how they were born, and here language is also one of the determining factors. Kitzinger (2000:451) provides the following description of social constructionism:

It is centrally concerned with understanding how the language we use and the taken-for-granted categories we employ construct our experience in ways which we then reify as 'natural', 'universal' and 'the way things must be'.

In social constructionism, language constructs social identities and roles, including gender. Burr (2015) posits that social constructionism contends that our comprehension of the world is derived not from objective reality, but from the influence of others, both historical and contemporary. In the study of Northern Sotho literature, this theory is useful for understanding how language in the selected texts constructs specific gender roles and perpetuates or challenges traditional views of women. Women's voices are often unheard unless the woman is somehow powerful in society.

Muehlenhard and Kimes (1999:234) articulate the social constructionists' concern by asserting that:

Social constructionists are concerned with examining the words that people use and the ways in which people understand the world, the social and political process that influence how people define words and explain events, and the implications of these definitions and explanations - who benefits and who loses because of how we describe and understand the world.

Adopting a similar position, Yieke (2001) argues that gender is perceived as a societal construct, explicitly manifested through language, which engenders significant concerns regarding subjectivity and oppression, as well as the necessity for emancipation.

The mention of Yieke (2001) and Burr (2015) reinforces the argument that gender roles are not biologically determined but socially constructed and reinforced through language. The study's application of social constructionism to Northern Sotho literature suggests that proverbs, poems, and narratives do not simply reflect reality but actively shape perceptions of women's roles, power, and agency.

The theories together build a framework, with feminist sociolinguistics showing how language encodes power, social constructionism explaining how such language naturalises gender roles, and CDA providing tools to deconstruct these patterns in Northern Sotho texts.

2.2.3 Proverbial discourse

Proverbs in African cultures often reflect and perpetuate patriarchal values, portraying women in ways that reinforce traditional gender roles. This framework will help understand how colonial history and cultural identities influence the portrayal of women in African literature.

The language employed in the selected Northern Sotho proverbs in this study either demonstrates the resilience of women or reinforces patriarchal norms. Montle (2021) is one of the researchers who critically examines the representation of women in Northern Sotho proverbs, highlighting how these proverbs often perpetuate sexist views. His analysis reveals that such proverbs promote traditional male roles while

restricting women's access to education, wealth, power, decision-making, and leadership positions. These proverbs indeed resist feminist ideals using stereotypical language.

The perpetuation of cultural stereotypes contributes to the marginalisation of women in contemporary South African society. Montle's work underscores the need to challenge and reinterpret these proverbs to foster a more equitable representation of women in Northern Sotho culture. While he rightly critiques misogynistic undertones in proverbs, he does not fully explore how women themselves reinterpret these proverbs. This gap is where my study contributes.

In sharing the same sentiments as Montle (2021), Seanego, Montle and Mogoboya (2022) critically examine the representation of women in Northern Sotho. Their study focuses on gender roles and equality and examines the representation of women in Northern Sotho proverbs. The study found that while men were often permitted to marry more than one wife, a woman who marries more than one husband, even though it is presently lawful (polyandry), may be regarded by society as lacking morals and integrity. The authors also found that the representation of women in this literary genre was often used to reinforce traditional gender roles and expectations. These assertions demonstrate that much more work remains to be done in terms of gender equality. The researcher concurs with Seanego et al. (2022) in arguing that the language used in the selected Northern Sotho proverbs reinforces gender bias but can also prove female resilience.

In addition, Baker and Maluleke (2020) challenge some Northern Sotho proverbial expressions used to justify promiscuity and abusive behaviour by those that believe in the patriarchal system. These authors are not the only researchers who express concern regarding patriarchal oppression of women through Northern Sotho proverbial expressions. These proverbial expressions are derogatory and diminish the status of women in society. The researchers emphasise that proverbs in languages must be used to develop good morals, values and to communicate accepted norms and beliefs especially in African societies.

In sharing the same sentiments Pandey (2004) argues that the gendered social systems inherent in West Africa are reflected in numerous proverbs, including those in the widely utilised West African pidgin.

Menegatti and Rubini (2017) caution how language is a potent instrument for the perpetuation and reproduction of sexism and gender inequality. They furthermore deplore linguistic forms that have the negative effect of making women disappear in mental representations.

Baker and Maluleke (2020) and Pandey (2004) contend that certain African proverbs employ language that perpetuates the marginalisation of women, promotes promiscuity, and condones patriarchy. This study will also demonstrate in the selected proverbs that it is permissible for men to engage in extra marital affairs, while women are expected to tolerate their spouse's behaviour while remaining faithful to their partners.

It is crucial to point out that marginalisation of female characters and reinforcement of gender bias does not only occur in African proverbs. Hamamra (2020) presents a study that intersects feminism and sociolinguistics, examining how Palestinian proverbs perpetuate a modern Palestinian worldview of gender disparity by subordinating women to male authority. His paper analyses Palestinian proverbs about women alongside contemporary Palestinian practices including arranged marriage; objectifying women in the marriage market; the silencing of women's voices and honour killing. Women's voices are systematically ignored in this society.

Sanauddin (2015) is another researcher who observed the denigration of women in proverbs, referring to Pashto proverbs in Pakistan which reinforce patriarchal views and sexist ideologies. He provides an example of a proverb shared by his friend's mother, who encouraged them to behave like men rather than hesitate like women. He points out that:

Yousef's mother jolted us three times and in order to motivate us, said a proverb which still echoes in my mind:

-Get up my sons, get up. "*Action is male, hesitation is female*" ["*Toukal nar, andekhna khaza*"] (Sanauddin, 2015:9).

The language used in this proverb, like in many others, carries clear sexist connotations. It implies that women are reluctant to act, whereas men are quick to act. This proverb can be compared to the following selected Northern Sotho proverb:

Tša etwa ke tshadi pele, di wela ka leopeng,

which means: If a community is led by a woman, it is assumed that she (the woman) will lead them astray.

Proverbs are intended to impart knowledge, provide guidance, and contain a wealth of wisdom, rather than to diminish the value of women. Etta and Mogu (2012:188) gave an explicit definition of proverbs as phrases, sayings, sentences, statements, or expressions of the folk which contain above all wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons, and advice concerning life and which have been handed down from generation to generation.

Rasul (2015) further explains that proverbs represent social attitudes about gender, and studying proverbs in a certain language or country can help you understand how gender is seen in that culture. She further observes that looking at the proverbs in a particular language and culture one can comprehend how gender is perceived in that culture. Based on what Rasul alludes to in her study, the researcher observes that women are mostly represented either in stereotypical or resilient ways in the selected Northern Sotho proverbs.

2.2.4 Patriarchal control and women's representation

de Beauvoir (1949) is one feminist who contributed immensely towards feminist theories. In her article, Pettersen (2007) states that de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* presupposes that men and women have equal freedom to choose how to live their lives. According to Pettersen, de Beauvoir demonstrates how a gendered culture impacts men and women's positions in the world in various ways, finding that women have fewer options and that their concrete freedom is severely restricted. Pettersen's research about de Beauvoir's contributions towards feminism illuminates the context of this study which focuses on female depiction.

Adding to Pettersen's view Vintges (1999) writes that de Beauvoir is concerned that women have been barred from actively controlling their lives and that women have

always been “the Other” in culture, whilst men have been “the Self”, the subject. The assertions demonstrate that de Beauvoir fought to liberate women from patriarchal oppression. It appears that she pursued a more radical approach to gender inequality.

In her book *Feminism and Gender Equality*, Denton (2021) argues that women’s rights have long been a major issue of discussion, and the conversation has grown in intensity. She defines patriarchy on the other hand as a system of social organisation where males hold the primary positions of power in society, emphasising that sexism is prejudice, or nonfactual negative beliefs, and discrimination against someone because of their gender, and refers to prejudice and discrimination against women. She defines the word misogyny as hatred for women and states that gender is a social construct that exists because humans made it up. Denton’s assertions emphasise the need to transform patriarchal systems.

The references to de Beauvoir (Vintges, 1999 and Denton, 2021) highlight how women have historically been positioned as “the Other” in patriarchal societies, while men have assumed the role of the dominant “Self”. This resonates with the study’s focus on how Northern Sotho literature has portrayed women over time either reinforcing or challenging these traditional gender roles.

2.2.5 Language as a tool of power and resistance

Language is a critical component of influence and can be employed to resist oppression. For decades, language has been used to marginalise and silence women’s voices. Through language, women can be represented in a stereotypical way or in a progressive manner. In their article, Ohanedozi and Umera-Okeke (2020) analysed the variation of language employed by feminists using the speeches of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ashley Judd, Michelle Obama and Caroline Criado Perez. They demonstrated that feminist language represents a departure from the stereotyped traits previously described as distinctive of women’s language. This illustrates the divergent ways by which men and women portray females. This observation is also evident in the selected Northern Sotho novels and short stories where male authors stereotype their female characters in contrast with female authors who portray their female characters in a liberal way.

The discussion of feminist rhetoric (Ohanedozi and Umera-Okeke, 2020) illustrates how language has been used both to uphold and to resist gender stereotypes. This directly relates to the study's aim of analysing Northern Sotho literature to understand how linguistic choices construct women's identities—whether as passive figures or as empowered individuals.

The language employed by the authors in proverbs, poetry, and other narratives can either build or undermine the female characters they depict. Contrary to other literary genres, Northern Sotho poetry often praises women's beauty and gives them positive qualities, contrasting the harsher depictions found in prose. In his article, Maluleke (2024:185) analyses two Tsonga poems that depict women in a stereotypical way, as lazy, heartless, boastful, arrogant, and evil. This is contrary to the way selected Northern Sotho poems portray females.

2.2.6 Silencing of women's voices

Despite huge strides made in the fight for women's rights, women's voices are still unheard in numerous countries across the world unless they hold some form of power. This statement aligns with the research's objective of examining how Northern Sotho literature either marginalises or amplifies women's experiences. The study will likely reveal whether literary texts have historically given women a voice or confined them to stereotypical roles. In his article, Diko (2025:1) advocates for the Black women whose voices and identities are misrepresented, distorted and silenced in Western music. He laments the linguistic choices in the contemporary music that contribute to the objectification of women and young girls.

Even though significant progress in the fight for women's rights has been made, women's voices remain unheard in many parts of the world. Hence, Azhar (2022:172) highlights that women in some societies are subjected to strict supervision and have no say in personal matters, such as marriage, while their husbands engage in extramarital affairs. These women are often silenced, and their rights are suppressed. Azhar (2022) further reminds us that females are repressed, violated, marginalised, and manipulated at every turn. While authors such as Azhar (2022) and Diko (2025) emphasise the ongoing silencing of women across contexts, their perspectives differ: Diko foregrounds music as a site of objectification, whereas Azhar highlights social restrictions in private life. These distinctions are useful for this study because they

show how in different domains cultural texts versus everyday social practices both contribute to women's marginalisation in literature.

Literature from various regions portrays women in diverse roles e.g. caregivers, subordinates, or political figures and yet common threads of patriarchal oppression persist across cultural contexts. Silima (2013), for instance, argues that the novels of Khalid Hosseini and Arundhati Roy depict women as objects of male oppression, despite their differences in cultural backgrounds. In re-emphasising what Silima (2013) states, Cekiso (2013:201) is concerned that females have no voice, instead they are portrayed as submissive and dependent on men to rescue them. The contributions of these researchers directly relate to the study's focus on how women are represented by both Northern Sotho male and female authors.

Feminist sociolinguistics, social constructionism and social construction of gender emphasise that language and gender play a crucial role in challenging societal inequalities. Certain linguistic expressions, such as those found in cultural proverbs, can contribute to the diminished portrayal of female characters.

2.2.7 Dominance Theory

Pratto and Stewart (2011:1) define social dominance theory as a multi-level theory of how societies maintain group-based dominance. This theory is used in the disciplines of sociology, psychology, and other disciplines. In this study, the researcher investigates patriarchal societies' dominance over women, particularly in traditional contexts, using Northern Sotho selected literary sources. In dominance theory, language reflects and reinforces male dominance in society. In literature, the portrayal of women often mirrors societal power dynamics, where male characters or narrators dominate dialogues, decisions, and narratives. This theory is critical in analysing patriarchal language patterns in Northern Sotho proverbs and literary texts that sideline women.

wa Thiong'o (2018) and Fanon (2022) provide insights into how colonialism has impacted gender relations and representations. wa Thiong'o (2018) advocates for language decolonisation. Amongst other things, he firmly believed that African languages should be taught at all levels of education and continued to argue for a

three-language policy (wa Thiong'o, 2018:101). His insistence on the centrality of African languages resonates with dominance theory, as it highlights how colonial and patriarchal forces used language to marginalise both African identity and women's voices in literature. As stated earlier, language can be used as a tool to dominate women as observed in the selected Northern Sotho literary texts. The colonial language has the potential to perpetuate the dominance of both male and female. However, indigenous languages such as Northern Sotho need to be interrogated for women's representation, which is why this study is conducted.

A broader perspective has been adopted by Fanon's theory which focused on the struggles that the people of the colonised nations faced. In addition, Hilton (2011:45) argued that Fanon devoted his life to helping oppressed individuals and became the world's foremost authority on oppression related to colonisation. Similarly, in his thesis, Arab (2020) observed that it was Fanon who first coined the term 'the wretched of the earth' and this phrase was used to refer to women by male authors like Achebe, Soyinka, Fara and wa Thiong'o. He argues that a critical review of the existing African literature unequivocally demonstrates that women hold a subordinate status in society and that patriarchy is the principal barrier to their progress and development. These scholars agree that males continue to dominate women in society and hinder them from attaining gender equality.

Lee (2010:55) makes an important contribution in suggesting the following:

Feminist communication, feminist phenomenology, cultural theories, and principles of interpersonal communication and social rituals aim to reveal how prevailing linguistic frameworks, such as hegemonic discursive practices, patriarchal rhetorical expressions, and societal sex-gender role expectations, sustain inequitable social viewpoints that marginalise the experiences, knowledge, and existence of women in society.

2.2.8 Difference Theory

In her book *You just don't understand* Tannen (1990) explains difference theory as a theory that posits that males communicate in a manner that is distinct from that of females. She suggests that they speak different language styles and further states the following:

For most women, the language of conversation is primarily a language of establishing conversations and negotiating relationships while for men talk is primarily a means to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order (Tannen, 1990: 111-112).

This theory suggests that men and women use language differently because of distinct socialisation processes. It provides a framework for examining how male and female authors in Northern Sotho literature represent women differently, potentially reflecting their unique linguistic and cultural experiences.

Both dominance and difference theories complement each other in explaining women's representation in that the former explains about women subordination, silencing their voices and patriarchal oppression whereas the latter explains the distinct communication styles shaped by socialisation.

This section will analyse the differences in the portrayal of female characters by male and female authors, highlighting the biases and contrasting depictions. While most female authors depict women as progressive and resilient, the male authors in the selected literary works represent them in a stereotypical way.

It is evident that male Northern Sotho authors like Matsepe in his novels (*Megokgo ya Bjoko*, 1968; *Tšhelang Gape*, 1974) often depict women in traditional, restrictive roles. Women are typically depicted as submissive and dependent on their spouses in these novels. GBV is evident in the following paragraph that is extracted from the novel *Megokgo ya Bjoko*:

Leilane ga a ka a senya sebaka sa go mo thiba lehlatsō ka lepara. O ile a mo itia gore le be le tsharoge, mosadi yoo gwa se be ka moo a ka se tšhabelego ka lapeng le lengwe, fela gwa se thuše selo ka gore o ile a mo latelela (Matsepe, 1968:11).

Leilane didn't waste time; he began thrashing her with a stick to cure her vomiting. He beat her until the point of the stick splintered. For the poor woman there was no safe place in any yard to which she could flee for protection because he pursued her relentlessly.

Even though Mohlatša experienced GBV, she continued performing her duties as a faithful housewife. In that primitive era, women did not consider physical abuse as an offense. Some even considered it as a sign of love from their spouses.

Contrastingly, female authors like Kekana represent women as multifaced and resilient, challenging traditional roles. Kekana's novels depict female characters as brave and progressive, indicating a shift towards more positive and empowering representations in her novels *Nnete Fela* (1989) and *Nonyana ya Tokologo* (1985). The changing dynamics from weaker to stronger beings are evident. The language used in these novels suggests a shift in literary consciousness and explores themes of liberty. However, in his mini-dissertation entitled *Kekana's Nonyana ya Tokologo as representative of emerging feminism in Northern Sotho literature*, Moeti (2014) emphasises that although Kekana's (selected novel) efforts in pioneering the path of freeing women are appreciated, she should have clearly shown the way women should go to be liberated from patriarchal prison. One of Kekana's female characters who lived her life as a free bird ultimately succumbed to patriarchal prison – her husband's home in the villages.

The following paragraph that was extracted from the novel *Nonyana ya Tokologo* reflects Kekana's feminist ideals:

Gape a ile matšatši ale mosadi a bego a khunamela monna a lotšha thobela sebata sa maatla le bohlale bja go feta bja mosadi. A ile le tšhireletšo yeo e bego e fiwa mosadi bjalo ka mofokodi yo a šalago ka mo gae a yo selelwa ke monna. A tlile ka šiši matšatši ao monna e rego ge e le hlogo mosadi ya ba molala; mme hlogo e šišinyega ka thušo ya molala. Seo se lemogilwe gomme banna ba tšwa le basadi ba bona ge ba yo sela. Bobedi bja bona ba na le maikarabelo a go lekana a go selela lapa leo la bona (Kekana, 1985:51).

Gone are the days when women bowed down to their men, exalting their strength and wisdom that surpasses that of a woman. The days are gone where a woman was protected like a weakling who must remain at home and the man must earn a living for her. The days have come when a man is the head, and a woman is the neck; and the head turns with the help of the neck. That has been noticed and the men go out with their women when they go and work. Both have equal responsibilities of working for their families.

Further analysis of the selected Northern Sotho texts will be dealt with in chapter five of this study.

Other authors like Akujobi (2011) provide a fresh perspective on the influence of women by emphasising the critical role they play in society. Akujobi (2011) vehemently emphasises the importance of motherhood and views it as a sacred and powerful spiritual path for a woman to take.

In sharing the same sentiments, Hadjer and Keltoum (2018) found that male-authored writings portrayed African women as weak, subservient, and ignorant. The authors are pleased however, that African feminist writers refused to accept this ill-treatment, agitating women's fate and a horrific predicament.

The studies by Akujobi (2011) and Hadjer and Keltoum (2018) demonstrate that female authors take a distinct approach to depicting female characters.

In the selected Northern Sotho short stories by authors like Madiba and Tauatsoala, GBV and discrimination are highlighted in their writings, while other authors in the literary texts, show women as faithful and strong in adversity.

In 'Unbending gender narratives in African literature,' Fonchingong (2006) explores the depiction of women in African literary works, emphasising the enduring influence of patriarchal narratives from pre-colonial to post-colonial periods. He critiques male authors such as Achebe, Amadi, Soyinka, wa Thiong'o, and Ekwensi for their male-centred perspectives, which often marginalise women and confine them to secondary roles. Fonchingong further argues that these portrayals perpetuate traditional gender hierarchies and cultural norms that subordinate women.

Additionally, Fonchingong (2006) highlights the contributions of both male and female authors, including Emecheta, Bâ, Aidoo, Nwapa, Ousmane, and Senghor, who strive to address gender inequality in African literature.

Their works challenge entrenched patriarchal norms and present more complex and equitable portrayals of women, fostering a more inclusive literary landscape. Fonchingong's analysis underscores the necessity of critically examining African literary texts to understand how they both reflect and influence societal perceptions of gender. By addressing the shortcomings and progress in women's representation, his

work significantly contributes to ongoing debates on gender equality and representation in African literature.

These studies demonstrate the utility of sociolinguistic analysis in uncovering hidden narratives of women's representation in Northern Sotho literature, and they also suggest that literature can be an important site of struggle over the representation of women in society.

However, few studies have critically compared these portrayals across gendered authorship in Northern Sotho novels, short stories, poems and proverbs — a gap this study seeks to address.

2.3 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF FEMALE PORTRAYAL IN AFRICAN LITERATURE AND LITERATURE ACROSS THE WORLD

This section will explore the historical context of female representation in African literature, examining how women's roles have been traditionally portrayed and how these portrayals have evolved over time.

2.3.1 Early representations

Adopting the same position as Fonchingong (2006), Ngara (1989) argues that pre-1970s literature often relegated women to secondary roles, using them to develop male characters rather than portraying them as individuals with their own agency. In addition, Petersen (1984) is greatly concerned about the role and place of women in African societies, whereas Hadjer and Keltoum (2018) weighed in saying that women have endured oppression and subjugation imposed on them for many years. They have lived in the shadow of their male counterparts.

According to the preceding arguments, women were typically depicted as housewives, mothers, child bearers, reflecting their roles in patriarchal cultures. Some of the selected literary texts in this study will show that women are represented in similar ways.

Sahi (2022:12) similarly makes the case that women are often reduced to the roles of taking care of the home, family or children and are considered as unsuitable for roles

that are taken up by men. Women are frequently underestimated, despite their capacity to multitask and assume high-level positions in the workplace while simultaneously caring for their children and spouses and performing household duties. Contrary to the previous assertion, the female characters in the novel that is analysed by Azhar (2022) in *Victimization of women in Twilight in Delhi* were also marginalised and were victims of patriarchy.

Another group of women who experience gender inequality are female Subalterns. They are women at the margins of power, excluded from both mainstream and male-dominated narratives, whose voices are least likely to be heard or represented. Davidson and Pierson (2001) analysed female Subalterns who have no voice and cannot represent themselves. They question who has the capacity to speak and whether the Subaltern voice can ever be heard.

While Davidson and Pierson (2001) focus on the female Subalterns, Fahmy's (2004) focus is on the Afghan woman who is portrayed as submissive and shows signs of visual subordination like the female Subalterns. She examined the portrayal of Afghan women in Associated Press (AP) during the Taliban regime and after and concludes that the burqa (all-concealing garment) keeps the women powerless, vulnerable, and dominated. Unfortunately, this is still the case in Afghanistan, Iran and other parts of the world. Presently in Afghanistan, girls are allowed to go to school until primary level. They are prohibited to further their high school and tertiary education. The Taliban's hardline government tells them to wait for official announcement every time they are questioned why they cannot attend secondary school. Sadly, some Afghan girls have resorted to committing suicide instead.

Davidson and Pierson (2001) and Fahmy's (2004) concern about female Subalterns and Afghan women is strategically connected to this study's research problem that despite significant progress over the past few decades, women continue to face widespread inequality and discrimination in the 21st century.

Furthermore, women are represented in extreme ways by some authors. In his article 'Portrayal of women in major world religions', Duwadi (2013:52) is astonished at how women are considered as sin traps that will bring misery to men. He writes:

Speaking with a low caste woman is regarded as a hindrance to heaven. On seeing a young beautiful woman (he) becomes inflamed with passion and

drinking liquor he becomes intoxicated. Therefore, he shall avoid from afar a woman who is poison to the eye. Women are to be regarded as poison (Duwadi, 2013:52).

Adopting a similar position, Pundir and Singh (2019) are of the view that women have always been portrayed in literature as meek and docile because of their inferior position in male-dominated civilisations. The researchers further state that the wave of feminism in the 70s and 80s sparked resurgence in forging a place for the age of women. This propelled writers to start writing about the strong women in their works as one of the researchers Tello Suárez (2018) alludes. They conclude in stating that the times are changing, and women are increasingly serving as sources of inspiration for many writers.

Likewise, Chauke and Babane (2016) hold the view that women are depicted in the worst possible ways. They are in most cases depicted as murderers, witches, gossipers, victims of material things, and liars by male writers as Masuku (2005) and Machaba and allude. Chauke and Babane also state that women can be depicted as either angels or monsters and go on to state that:

The author of the drama that they analysed asserts that the book represents women as people whose intent is to systematically kill for money. Women are depicted as people who are easily influenced and lured to engage in evil doings for the sake of pocketing the money. They are motivated to enter matrimonial relationship for the sake of making a fortune. This violent and suicidal behaviour is traditionally in contrast to what is expected from women. Women are traditionally expected to nurture and protect life (Chauke and Babane, 2016:6978).

While Chauke and Babane (2016) argue that women are often demonised by male writers, this portrayal contrasts with Kekana's female protagonists who are resilient and progressive, suggesting a shift in literary consciousness.

2.3.2 Evolution of female representation

For many years, women were portrayed in ways that were more traditional. However, female representation evolved over the years, and the feminist theories played a pivotal role in this progress.

Presently, there is an emergence of women in powerful roles such as ministers, principals, professionals, presidents and so forth. Recent literature shows a shift with

women being portrayed in more diverse and empowered roles. Fonchingong (2006) and Akujobi (2011) highlight the growing recognition of women's indispensable roles in society, especially in motherhood. Fonchingong affirms this by writing that:

Contemporary female writers have made giant strides to re-define and focalize on the one-sided presentation of the African women in African literature (Fonchingong, 2006:142).

In the same vein, Silima (2013) and Tello Suárez (2018) discuss the varied strengths of female characters, emphasising their transformative power and independence like one of the selected authors in this study, Kekana.

The researcher substantiates this assertion in noting that there are indeed contrasting ways in which certain male authors, including the selected Northern Sotho authors portray their female characters in their literary works. Akujobi (2011) highlights the need for women's voices to be heard in writing that:

Some critics of African literature believe that this idea of "Mother Africa" often found in male literature is a ploy to silence the woman, but most female writers are not silenced by this sentiment; rather, it encourages them to work hard hence some of them defy negative tags and present the female experience the way it occurs (Akujobi, 2011:3).

Malhotra, Schuler and Boende (2002) contribute to the understanding of the promotion of women's empowerment by stating the following:

... that social justice is an important aspect of human welfare and is intrinsically worth pursuing; and that women's empowerment is a means to the other ends. This means therefore, that if women are empowered the whole society stands to benefit (Malhotra et al., 2002:3).

However, there are changing dynamics of gender representation in societies. Sharma and Mathur (2023) give hope to women in affirming the following:

With increased educational opportunities women have greater ingress to education, dominant to more women pursuing higher degrees and careers in varied fields. More women are entering the workforce, contributing to economic growth, and shortening gender inequality in employment. Women are to a greater extent represented in political leadership roles, although gender equality residues a goal in many countries. Many countries have implanted legal improve to promote gender equality, addressing issues like domestic violence, harassment, and discrimination (Sharma and Mathur, 2023:219).

Taking into consideration what these scholars assert, the evolution from traditional representation to a more modern representation is evident. Women in Africa and

globally are now occupying high positions that were only taken up by men such as cabinet ministers, presidents, CEOs of big companies and so forth.

However, South Africa continues to grapple with a persistent and alarming challenge, femicide. The country records some of the highest rates of GBV in the world, reflecting a broader crisis that mirrors global patterns. In 2021 alone, an estimated 81,100 women and girls were intentionally killed worldwide, with the overall number of female homicides showing little change over the past decade. (<https://www.samrc.ac.za/policy-briefs/gender-related-killings-women-and-girls-femicidefemicide>). The killings of women and young girls are ongoing despite jail time imposed on the perpetrators. This problem has complicated almost every aspect of human life. For example, the brutal killing of mothers, as a direct result of GBV, leaves young children with no experience of motherhood while on the other hand, the brutal murder of young girls compromises the constitution and democracy of the country by undermining the principles of justice, human rights, and the rule of law that are fundamental to a democratic society (Diko, 2023:1).

As a result, the feminist movement has influenced male authors to revisit and diversify their portrayal of women, presenting them in a more rounded perspective. The purpose of this study is to critically analyse the representations of women across gendered authorship in the selected Northern Sotho literary sources, as opposed to few studies that have undertaken such comparisons.

2.4 ANALYSIS OF EXISTING THESES AND DISSERTATIONS ON FEMALE REPRESENTATION

This section will review findings from other theses and studies on the portrayal of women in African literature, providing a comparative analysis.

2.4.1 Patriarchy and power dynamics

Mathye (2003) and Machaba (2011) observed how male figures play a pivotal role in the Tsonga culture. If it's not the husband, it should be the father, brother, or uncle who play a shepherd's role for the woman. However, this cultural practice is found in many other communities across the world, not just in the Tsonga culture. The traditional communities are predominantly patriarchal.

According to the researchers cited, Tsonga culture has gender bias and women have an inferior standing. Machaba notes the following in her thesis:

In a marriage relationship, a woman is a minor who must submit meekly to her husband and her sole purpose in life is to serve and satisfy him. The husband is the figure of authority in the family - he must be informed of everything that happens in the family. Nothing is done without his knowledge and consent, and his decision is final. There are even strict rules that govern how food is served to the husband (Machaba, 2011:4).

Some of the findings of her study reveal that gender played a crucial role in the depiction of characters in the novels, poetry, and proverbs analysed. She also found that some of the female characters defied the Tsonga cultural norms of marriage and how a single woman should behave, thereby asserting the Liberal Feminist perspective that culture imprisons women, and that women's individual interests take precedence over the general societal interests (Machaba, 2011:165). However, she gives women hope in emphasising that there is a lot of hard work that is done globally to promote gender equality and to eliminate gender inequality. Machaba's desire for gender equality resonates with some selected literary texts analysed in this study, which represent women in an empowering manner. However, her study differs from the present researcher's context in that it conducts a comparative analysis of the representation of females by Northern Sotho male and female authors.

Mathye (2003) makes a similar point to Machaba's in maintaining that the women's status in society is of a low standard. She has this to say about the Tsonga culture:

According to Tsonga custom a woman's word is of no value. She is excluded from all decision-making in the community. The man is the full guardian of his wife and children and is held liable for the misdemeanours and debts of his wife. An unmarried woman's uncle acts on her behalf as her guardian. Unlike the man, the woman's status is reduced to an inferior position in the community. Her voice is not recognized. She depends on her husband's fate for survival (Mathye, 2003:5).

The findings of this study amongst others emphasised that Tsonga society is a patriarchal society with the father as head of the family. She also found that male authors reflect a bias in favour of patriarchy by depicting female characters who cling to traditionalism whereas female writers undermine patriarchy by portraying female characters who resist traditional values. Novels by female writers advocate freedom

from social biases based on sexual differences and strive for equal opportunities for the sexes in Tsonga society (Mathye, 2003:140).

Furthermore, in their dissertations, Gumede (2002) and Shabalala (2019) investigate the oppression and contradictory depictions of women. The authors that are analysed in Gumede (2002) in his dissertation, *The portrayal of female characters in selected Zulu texts* are saddened by the attitudes of traditional males towards women, as men try to hold on to the privileges afforded by the patriarchal system and to ensure their dominance over women.

Yantolo-Sotyelelwa (2005) similarly observes that although women continue to be portrayed as weaker beings for many years, they continue to fight to be independent and free themselves from patriarchal dominance.

These findings are echoed by Northern Sotho selected literature, where similar patterns of patriarchal representation are observed, as this study will show. The findings further reveal relations to dominance theory where the patriarchal societies have dominance over women. The distinction between their studies and this research lies in the fact that this study reflects a comparative analysis of female representation across the selected Northern Sotho literary texts written by male and female authors.

2.4.2 Oppression and resistance of cultural traditions

In their theses, Masuku (2005) and Mdluli (2013) examine the oppression and contradictory depictions of women in literature. Masuku's study, *Perceived oppression of women in Zulu folklore: A feminist critique*, explores the role and representation of women in Zulu traditional literature, arguing that folklore often reinforces patriarchal ideologies. However, her analysis also highlights instances where women challenge these norms within the narratives. Similarly, Mdluli's thesis *A reflective perspective of women leadership in Nguni oral poetic forms*, investigates gender inequality and women's oppression, offering insights into how women's voices are either marginalised or empowered in literary traditions. She comments as follows on the oppression of women:

Oppression of women is one category of oppression that cuts across cultures, social classes and geographical boundaries of countries. In return it yields members of society who are expected to behave in a particular manner as per the prescripts of the powerful group. Such oppression as an element of culture

is often imposed on women who are supposed to accept the behavioural patterns inherited from their elders and never to consider challenging the status quo (Mdluli, 2013:5).

These studies provide a critical foundation for understanding how traditional literature both reflects and shapes societal attitudes toward gender. Both these female researchers adopt the African feminist theory which addresses the plight of an African woman, who is faced with multiple societal challenges.

Shabalala (2019) concurs with Masuku and Mdluli regarding the way females were undermined, in that they were not consulted when important matters were discussed, even when such matters affected their lives. In addition, he states that women's oppression does not only affect rural, illiterate women but cuts across to urban, literate women. Unfortunately, this is still the case in some societies across the world even though there is significant progress made towards gender equality.

Another researcher who observed oppression in the female characters depicted in the literary sources analysed is Mokgwakgwa (2001) who maintains that women are being oppressed in one way or the other. Because of unequal treatment in the selected dramas, women find themselves retaliating against the oppressors.

Adopting a similar stance, Peter (2010) investigates the portrayal of women in his study, *The depiction of female characters by male writers in selected isiXhosa drama works*. He laments male authors' portrayal of their female characters by saying:

This patriarchal perception of female characters has produced hardship, not only as it is practiced from the traditional perspective in real life, but also, more specifically, by male writers themselves in their writings (Peter, 2010:3).

The findings of his study similarly show that female characters' voices are being silenced in any family decision-making. The findings are similarly consistent with the selected Northern Sotho texts which show comparable patterns of silencing the voices of women through oppression and contradictory representations. The findings are also linked to dominance theory according to which women's voices are often suppressed and dominated by males. The voices of female characters in these theses and some selected literature in this study are silenced. The evidence reviewed here seems to suggest that an African woman, especially in traditional African societies seems to be the most oppressed compared to them all. While this study aligns with earlier dissertations and theses on female oppression and the silencing of women's voices,

it further advances the discussion through a comparative analysis of female representation by male and female Northern Sotho authors. The findings reveal that male authors often present female characters through stereotypical portrayals, while female authors offer more progressive representations.

2.4.3 Women's transitioning roles in post-colonial and Apartheid contexts

Rodgers (2013) and Nyanhongo (2011) focus on women's transitioning roles in post-colonial and Apartheid contexts and encourage women to rise above all forms of oppression. Rodgers conducted a special analysis of novels in his thesis *Representations of women, identity and education in the novels of Tsitsi Dangarembga and Kopano Matlwa*, that sheds light on the problems of women transitioning from traditional indigenous surroundings or dealing with the harmful racial segregation of Apartheid to Westernised metropolitan areas, notably in academic and family settings. He expresses his concern as follows:

A woman's social status was determined by her relationship to her husband and his kin, and her fertility. A wife acquired prestige through childbearing; it was further enhanced when she became a grandmother (Rodgers, 2013:14).

Whereas Nyanhongo (2011) found that:

The issue of women's oppression and empowerment has been one major theme in African literature and research in the last few decades. There is no doubt that this has been a late but necessary response to the realization that women have been exploited, overlooked, and belittled for a long period of time. Women suffer in this way because of various factors, some of which may be related to traditional beliefs and practices in their societies. This is often interconnected with forms of racial and economic oppression. This is evident not only in African societies, but also in African literature which reflects these features of these societies (Nyanhongo, 2011:2).

The findings of this study reveal that to compensate for the loss of status, the colonised men attempt to subjugate women and treat them in the same heavy-handed way in which they are treated by the white authorities (Nyanhongo, 2011:127).

In the novels that Nyanhongo analysed, various women managed to attain empowerment whilst others failed to do so. Therefore, she encourages that the war for women's empowerment should go on. This is in line with this study's objective of improving the representation of women among both male and female authors. Several researchers have conducted research on female depiction by male authors, but few

have conducted a critical investigation of women's depictions across gendered authorship specifically, in Northern Sotho literary texts.

2.4.4 Mysogyny and empowerment through music

Mapengo, Chauke and Sebola (2024) are particularly concerned with some Tsonga music composers who continue to degrade women in depicting them as weak, greedy, immoral, of poor intelligence, promiscuous, lazy and lacking credibility. In their research, they analysed a song by Thomas Hasani Chauke, which gives a damaging portrayal of a woman who is arrogant, cruel, hateful and bitter towards her husband and mother-in-law (Mapengo et al., 2024:14). Diko (2025) has taken a similar approach by focusing on African women whose voices and identities are misrepresented, distorted and silenced in Western music.

In her thesis, *Women empowerment through dance heritage: A case of xibelani (a traditional Vatsonga skirt) dance of the Tsonga people in South Africa*, Mutangirwa (2021) provides a detailed picture of how the Tsonga people are embracing the use of *xibelani* musical performance as a way of empowering women in society because like the present researcher, she believes that women play a pivotal role in society. She further indicated that Tsonga women were equipped to be good wives who are hard workers and who can serve their husbands quickly when they request anything.

These findings resonate with Northern Sotho selected literature, and the present study will show similar patterns of marginalisation of women in the coming chapters. One of the objectives of the African feminist theory, is to advocate for the unheard voices, the African woman in the continent of Africa.

2.5 CONCLUSION

The researcher reviewed literature that is relevant to the sociolinguistic representation of women, feminism and the contrasting representation of women from Northern Sotho and other relevant literature. A thorough analysis on relevant literature that is focused on feminism and female portrayals is made. Examples from the Northern Sotho literary texts were observed where male authors depict their female characters in a stereotypical way versus female authors who represent their female characters in an empowering way. In worst possible scenarios, women are represented by some male authors as weak, lazy, secretive, submissive and ignorant. Female authors on the

other hand portray women as strong, competitive, indispensable, and able to strike a balance in their daily responsibilities and expectations. The African women are the ones who mostly endure and are still enduring most of the oppression and gender inequalities from their societies as one of the researchers, Nyanhongo (2011), alludes.

It is evident from the literature reviewed and the relevant theories employed, that language serves as a potent instrument for portraying women in either a negative or positive light. The language used in the selected Northern Sotho proverbs, novels, short stories and other relevant articles and books determines how women are represented in society. Theories such as feminist sociolinguistics, social constructionism, difference theory, and dominance theory were employed to examine how language and gender challenge inequities and stereotypes.

The researcher observed from the reviewed literature that women play a pivotal role in society, yet they are still undermined, although there has been a significant enhancement in the perception of women and the pursuit of equal rights for everyone, male and female. The findings from the reviewed literature show how the evolution of representations of women has been portrayed over time. These representations also reflect societal attitudes towards women.

It is evident that GBV and femicide are currently thorny issues in South Africa and other regions globally. Governments are striving to eradicate this enormous problem which is ongoing. The researcher acknowledges that even though there is still much to be done, significant progress has been achieved in the emancipation of women from patriarchal prisons. Women are now occupying significant positions in various sectors. This shows a significant progress towards gender equality.

The next chapter (Chapter three) presents the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study. The feminist theories will be aligned with the study's aims and objectives, followed by their application to the selected literary texts.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined extant literature on the portrayal or representation of women in Africa and around the world. Some reviewed literature exposed how women are represented in contrasting ways by the Northern Sotho literature works that are written by both male and female authors. This chapter will focus on reviewing theories that are relevant to female representation. The theoretical framework for this study is rooted in feminist theory, including liberal, radical, socialist, womanism, intersectional feminism, African feminist theory, and African womanism. The main theories underpinning this study are African feminism and African womanism, both of which address the plight of African women who experience triple forms of oppression. African feminist theory was employed by scholars such as Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, Amina Mama and so forth. This feminist theory was used primarily in African literary studies to analyse the representation of women by both male and female authors. The proponent of African womanism is Hudson-Weems, and this feminist theory has been extensively employed in African literary studies.

These frameworks, developed during the 1960s, highlight the struggle for gender equality and provide a lens for analysing the patriarchal structures that affect women. Globally, scholars like Jayawardena (2016) have expanded the definition of feminism to encompass an awareness of women's literature from different regions depicting women in diverse roles—caregivers, subordinates, or political figures—revealing common threads of patriarchal oppression despite cultural differences.

3.2 FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM

Feminist literary criticism examines how gender dynamics and patriarchal ideologies are both reflected and challenged in literature. **de Beauvoir**, a foundational theorist, argued that women are often categorised as "the Other" within a male-dominated society (Simons, Benjamin and de Beauvoir, 1979).

Key objectives of feminist literary criticism include:

- Recognising and preserving the female literary tradition.
- Challenging the male-centred interpretation of texts.
- Addressing sexism in literature.
- Analysing the power dynamics in language and representation (Goel, 2010: 404).

In the context of Northern Sotho literature, feminist literary criticism helps reveal how patriarchal norms shape the narratives and characterisations of women. Some texts reinforce traditional gender roles, while others subvert them, offering progressive representations of women's agency. For example, the female characters by the names of Bubbles in the Northern Sotho novel *Nnete Fela* and Taamane in *Nonyana ya Tokologo* challenged patriarchal control and societal expectations.

Showalter (1984) affirms that the struggle for women's equal rights extends beyond theory, influencing daily experiences and societal structures.

3.2.1 Liberal feminist theory

Liberal feminism emphasises individual rights and equality under the law (Baehr, 2017). Friedan often considered 'the mother of the modern feminist movement' (Chansky, 2008), emphasised equality under the law and economic empowerment for women. Topini (2014) asserts in her paper, 'Betty Friedan and the Feminine Mystique (1963): a Feminist Political Debate' that education was identified by experts as the primary cause of failed marriages because it pushed women to seek new rights and was a strong deterrent to sexual satisfaction.

Hooks also contributed extensively towards feminist theory. She wrote several books on feminism. In her article 'Feminism: Crying for our souls', Hooks (1995) states that many women and men will never embrace feminist ideology unless they can witness how feminism positively affects lives. She cautions, however, that the process of transformation and transition may result in intense feelings of estrangement and unresolved wounding. One of her concerns was about a Black woman. She goes on to say in her book *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics* (2000) that feminism is not a women's movement against men, but rather a movement to eradicate sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.

This theory emphasises the importance of individual rights and freedoms. It seeks to advance women's rights through the promotion of legal and political equality, and it often focuses on issues such as reproductive rights, pay equity, and access to education and healthcare. Priyadharshini, Mohan, Hariharasudan and Sangeetha (2021) assert that the features of liberal feminism exhibit the women protagonists' grief and exertion to attain their goal and their responsibilities. The researcher is of the view that women are also capable of having careers, leading successful businesses, holding parliamentary positions and yet still being wives, mothers, and caregivers. Baehr (2017) concurs with Priyadharshini et al. in stating that:

The basic idea of the definition of liberal feminism is that liberal feminists endorse constitutional democracy and hold that the internal working of arrangements of associational life should be just because this is necessary if society is to have a just basic structure. She summarizes by stating that 'justice simply is the right value to guide many parts of associational life (Baehr, 2017:2).

Biana (2024) analysed earlier feminists such as British and American feminists who challenged patriarchy and prevailing societal norms from the 1500s to the 1700s. The second wave of feminism was highly influenced and pioneered by de Beauvoir who described the cultural construction of women and how they are categorised as the other. She further wrote that the "Third wave feminism" is a reaction to the feminism of the 1970s as it rejected feminism's grand narratives and emphasised the second wave's stumbling blocks. The fourth wave as Biana maintains, is synonymous with millennials and it highlights activism, interpersonal empowerment, and equal opportunities for all sexes. She contributes to our knowledge that the fourth and fifth waves demonstrated how feminist ideas and praxis evolved and worked to improve the lives of oppressed people and communities.

According to Jayawardena (2016), feminism is commonly regarded as a contemporary phenomenon, based in Western society, and people often forget the fact that the term was in common use in Europe and worldwide throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to denote agitation about women's issues. She further states that the meaning of feminism has now been expanded to mean an awareness of women's oppression and exploitation within the family, at work and in society.

Within Northern Sotho literature, **liberal feminist analysis** examines:

- The representation of women in education and employment.
- Female characters who challenge traditional gender expectations.
- Narratives that advocate for women's independence.

Bubbles in one of the selected novels *Nnete Fela*, subverts conventional gender norms by proficiently performing tasks traditionally assigned to males, managing huge businesses, driving executive cars and participating in meetings with men. Her father's trust in her abilities to manage these huge businesses like cinemas and disco clubs highlights a break from traditional gender roles.

3.2.2 Radical feminist theory

Radical feminism is a more radical approach that focuses on the structural and systematic nature of gender inequality. It emphasises the need to challenge and transform the patriarchal systems and institutions that oppress women, and it often focuses on issues such as sexual violence and exploitation, as well as the intersections of gender, race, and class. According to Rowland and Klein (1996:9):

Radical Feminism creates an original political and social theory of women's oppression, and strategies for ending that oppression which come from women's lived experiences. The intention of this theory in their view is centred on women's experiences and interests. It names all women as part of an oppressed group, stressing that no woman can walk down the street or even live in her home safely without fear of violation by men.

Willis (1984) suggests that radical feminists were the first to seek complete equality in the so-called private sphere - equal sharing of housework and childcare, equal attention to women's emotional and sexual needs.

Vukoičić (2013) on the other hand defines radical feminism as a feminist theory course that starts from the idea of conflict between the sexes as a fundamental conflict, and oppression against women as a direct implication of patriarchy. She further maintains that this feminist theory is founded on the attitude that the society is based on the patriarchal grounds, because of which women are marginalised and discriminated against.

South Africa for example, is currently experiencing a high rate of 'GBV'. There is a high rate of femicide, and sexual violence committed against women and children. In their article, Abrahams, Jewkes and Mathews (2010) highlight the fact that South

Africa has the highest documented global rate of females murdered by shooting in a non-war country, and men use guns to intimidate and assault women. Adding to Abrahams et al.'s views, Boonzaier (2023) pays particular attention to the murder rate of women in South Africa, which is around five times the global norm, with at least half of those killed by an intimate partner.

Some examples of several high-profile cases in South Africa illustrate the urgent need to address GBV. **Uyinene Mrwetyana**, a University of Cape Town student, was raped and murdered on **24 August 2019**; her attacker later burned and buried her body in a shallow grave. **Tshegofatso Pule**, who was heavily pregnant at the time of her murder on **5 June 2020**, was found hanging from a tree, her body bearing signs of extreme violence. **Luyanda Nkambule** was murdered in her home in Secunda on the same day. **Ntokozo Xaba**, a **21-year-old student at Tshwane University of Technology**, was fatally stabbed by her ex-boyfriend on **2 February 2023**. **Thembekile Letlape**, a renowned South African pastry chef, was murdered by her boyfriend on **30 May 2024**.

African women now face the challenge of having to earn a living, just like men, while still returning home to conduct housework and care for their children. Kenya is also one of the African states that is experiencing a high rate of femicide and GBV. Female Kenyan athletes have recently faced a spate of GBV. They are incredibly accomplished at what they do, which allows them to support themselves and their families, but they are now facing a dilemma with their partners. The world was shocked by the news of the Olympian **Rebecca Cheptegei** who ran in the female marathon at the Paris Olympics 2024 who was subjected to severe gender-based assault. Her boyfriend doused her with petrol and set her ablaze.

These cases exemplify the pervasive and deadly consequences of patriarchal violence against women, highlighting the urgent need for societal and legislative reforms.

This study also examines several selected Northern Sotho short stories and novels that depict women as oppressed and abused. Radical feminism aims to confront such injustices against women. For example, a female character by the name of *Mohlatša* in the novel *Megokgo ya Bjoko* was physically and emotionally abused by her spouse *Leilane*.

In the selected Northern Sotho literature authored by the female author, characters such as *Bubbles* and *Taamane* successfully contested patriarchal dominance through

their roles, while characters like *Mohlatša*, *Ntholeng*, *Matshedišo*, and others in this study upheld patriarchal institutions instead. They are depicted in subordinate roles.

3.2.3 Marxist and socialist feminism

Socialist feminism is a theoretical framework that combines feminist and Marxist ideas. It emphasises the importance of addressing the economic and social inequalities that women face, and it often focuses on issues such as the exploitation of women's labour and the need for collective action and solidarity among women. Wong (1991) defines socialism as an economic system that restructures production, reallocates wealth, and redefines governmental authority to expropriate exploiters and empower workers. She asserts, conversely, that feminism, akin to all movements for liberation from a particular form of oppression, serves as a rationale for socialism, a stimulant for organising towards socialism, and a benefit derived from socialism. The following are the characteristics of socialist feminism according to Wong (1991):

- Socialist feminism is a radical, disciplined, and all-encompassing solution to the problems of race, sex, sexuality, and class struggle.
- Socialist feminism lives in the battles of all people of colour, in the lesbian and gay movement, and in the class struggle (Wong, 1991:290).

Similarly, Johnson (2013) defines socialist feminism as a series of feminist contributions into socialist and, particularly, Marxist thought, with the goal of analysing and ending women's oppression in a capitalist system. She goes on to suggest that the conversion of men's larger income into dominance over women stems from an awareness of the male role in childbirth and an impulse to control the distribution of that wealth among his offspring. Once this power is exerted, it becomes much more repressive. This campaign has emphasised the issue of women when it comes to capital. Currently, an impressive number of women around the world hold high-paying jobs that were previously reserved for men.

According to Armstrong (2020), the Marxist definition of a class society under capitalism describes how one class controls the means to produce goods, i.e., the means of production, whereas socialist feminism emphasises patriarchy as a power role that oppressively shaped women's lives and seeks to emancipate them from

exploitation. Both these theories share a consensus on the fact that capitalism is oppressive towards many men and women.

Marxist feminism examines the influence of gender beliefs on femininity and masculinity on production within capitalism. It challenges the primacy of capitalist value to determine social values, both the exchange value in wages and the surplus value of profit by making the use value of reproductive labour visible (Armstrong, 2020).

What is disheartening is that production relies mainly on women who suffer the oppression and aggression of the capitalists. Holmstrom (2002) shares the same sentiments as Armstrong in suggesting that there is no point in addressing women's oppression without addressing capitalism. This simply means that women will remain in shackles without paying attention to capitalism. Holmstrom is convinced that socialist feminism is the theory that can eradicate the exploitation and oppression of most of the women of the world.

In the selected Northern Sotho literary works, certain texts illustrate women's complete dependence on their spouses. This has an impact on their lives because they must deal with mistreatment because of their reliance. Women like *Matshedišo* together with her son in one of the selected short stories, endured oppression by her husband because they depended on him wholly for their provision. Conversely, economically independent females do not rely on their male counterparts, yet they continue to confront the challenges associated with femininity. Upon completing her business at the Home Affairs offices, one of the female characters by the name of *Bubbles* in one of the selected novels, approached her car and unlocked it, prompting disbelief among the males as she drove away, unable to fathom that it was a woman's vehicle.

3.2.4 Intersectional feminism

Hooks is one of the proponents of intersectional feminism. Intersectional feminism is a framework that recognises the multiple forms of oppression and discrimination that women face based on their intersecting identities, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. It emphasises the need to consider these intersections to understand the unique experiences and challenges that different women face, and to develop more inclusive and effective strategies for advancing women's rights. Biana (2020) suggests

that Hooks' well-known concept of feminism mainly favoured white Bourgeois women. Hooks maintains that white women's race and class merely gave them an advantage. She also supported the oppressed, marginalised, and exploited.

Ferguson (2017) writes in her article 'Feminist theory today' that feminist theory is about more than just women; it is about the world, as seen through critical intersectional views. Intersectionality, she believes, is one of the most significant achievements of feminist theory.

Ciurria (2019) continues to describe intersectional feminism as a system of analysis and activity that reflects feminist concerns while also being sensitive to many, overlapping intersections of power and oppression. She further claims that intersectional feminism is a divisive strategy among feminists and non-feminists. One of the key goals of both sides is that intersectional feminism reproduces and maintains the very intersections of oppression that it tries to alleviate.

Lindsay (2019) emphasises in her study that other modern feminists, in stark contrast, believe it is critical to prioritise Black women's voices when considering the constitutive features of race, gender and other power imbalances. Okpokwasili (2023) concurs with Ciurria and Lindsay that when we talk about women's oppression, we mean numerous categories overlapping to generate multiple oppressions that impede women's advancement in society. She also argues that the theory of intersectionality began with the dominance and oppression of Black women in society.

The researcher's findings indicate that a Black woman faces numerous challenges, and further efforts are required to enhance her social status. Despite significant progress, women continue to endure several societal obstacles because of their social identities.

The researcher observed that female characters in the selected Northern Sotho literary works are discriminated against based on their multiple identities, namely: race, gender and class. In the selected Northern Sotho short stories, women like *Ntholeng*, *Matshedišo*, and *Madimabe* were oppressed and discriminated against based on their gender and class.

3.2.5 African feminist theory

African feminist theory strives to address the plight of a Black African woman who has and still is marginalised by patriarchal control. It is a fact that African Black women experience more oppression than White women. African feminist theory is generally against the Western ideologies. Mekgwe (2008) aligns with this thought in stating that African feminism becomes propelled towards being anti-Western feminism. She further states that this manifests itself in an approach that, while seeking distinction from the West, is anti-different, anti-gender-separatism, and pro-male, yet desires female agency and autonomy. Cruz (2015) like Mekgwe holds the view that African feminism deserves attention because it is concerned with the resilience of poor women and their organisations. Ahikire (2014) on the other hand states that the women movements across the African continent had some impact since some change occurred in the 1990s when doors that were closed for women started to open. The theory of womanism is closely related to African feminist ideology.

This study reveals that certain selected literary works depict females in conventional roles, including full-time wives, caregivers, child bearers, and cooks. Women are strictly confined to the kitchen while men are the ones working and abusing their spouses for their dependence. African feminism critiques the representation of women in traditional African literature and asserts that women can assume various positions within society. As already stated, females who are represented by the female Northern Sotho author, *Kekana*, have defied the traditional stereotypical ways of depicting women. They are independent and strong women who work hard for their provision.

3.2.6 Womanism

Coined by **Walker**, womanism is a framework that focuses on the experiences of Black women, particularly in relation to race and gender (Walker, 2004). Womanism values family, spirituality, and cultural heritage.

The following are the important aspects of womanism:

- Womanism emphasises the importance of cultural and social contexts in shaping the experiences of Black women.
- Womanism looks at the intersection of race and gender, highlighting the unique challenges faced by Black women.

- A key aspect of womanism is the emphasis on community and support networks.
- Womanism celebrates the empowerment and agency of Black women.
- Womanism often incorporates elements of spirituality and resilience.
- Womanism provides a powerful framework for highlighting the unique experiences and strengths of Black women.

According to Kamboj and Haridwar (2013), Walker describes herself as a 'womanist'. The authors quote the feminist's words as a woman who adores other woman, their values and culture.

Walker (2004) writes about her own mother saying that:

During the "working" day, she laboured beside - not behind - my father in the fields. Her day began before sunup and did not end until late at night. There was never a moment for her to sit down, undisturbed, to unravel her own private thoughts; never a time free from interruption - by work or the noisy inquiries of her many children (Walker, 2004:406).

This quote emphasises the struggle that Black women once faced and continue to face in society, despite significant progress. However, Collins (1996) has hope for the freedom of Black women in highlighting that they appear to have a voice, and with this newfound voice comes a new set of concerns. She further argues that, like Walker, many African American women find no distinction between the two, i.e. black feminist and feminist of colour, because both advocate for Black women's self-definition and self-determination.

As Collins points out, Brewer (2020) praises Black feminist philosophers and womanists, claiming that they have played a significant part in renewing our knowledge of how Black women's positions articulate complex systems of oppression and resistance to it. She emphasises that racialised, capitalist patriarchy is at the heart of the most radical versions of Black feminism, but womanist approaches to Black women's oppositional consciousness are informed by a deeply ingrained cultural perspective.

In Northern Sotho literature, womanist analysis can:

- Explore the representation of strong, resilient women.
- Examine how female characters balance **career, family, and cultural identity**.

- Highlight African women's contributions beyond Western feminist narratives.

Female authors are mostly the ones who represent women as progressive and resilient. In the novel *Nnete Fela*, Bubbles's inner strength and resilience contribute to her success as a businesswoman. She exercises her agency in her professional role and her father had great influence in her life since her mother died when she and her brother were still young. Because of her resilience she manages to overcome challenges of race and gender.

3.2.7 Africana womanism

Hudson-Weems is the proponent of the theory of Africana womanism. According to Hudson-Weems' (2006) article, Africana women have fought against sexual, racial, and class oppression. She further maintains that Africana women resisted Africana male chauvinism but did not eliminate Africana men as allies in the war for emancipation and family life. She expresses this as follows:

The Africana womanist, on the other hand, perceives herself as the companion to the Africana man, and works diligently toward continuing their established union in the struggle against racial oppression. Within the Africana culture, there is an intrinsic, organic equality that has always been necessary for the survival of the Africana culture, despite the individual personal problems of female subjugation that penetrated the Africana family structure as a result of the White male cultural system (Hudson-Weems, 2006:41).

Similarly, Ogunyemi (2006) defines black womanism as an ideology that embraces roots and aspirations of black existence while providing a balanced view of black womanhood. She states that:

Black women are disadvantaged in several ways: as blacks they, with their men, are victims of a white patriarchal culture; as women they are victimized by black men; and as black women they are also victimized on racial, sexual, and class grounds by white men (Ogunyemi, 2006:24).

As previously mentioned by the researcher, African women suffered and continue to be confronted by numerous challenges because of their skin tone. Most African women face oppression both outside and within the family structure. The struggle against patriarchal tyranny continues.

Blackmon (2008) points out that the Africana womanist saw herself as an important element of the larger Black community rather than an individual. She goes on to say

that the development of a Black identity was critical because it was a direct challenge to the cultural appropriation of Blackness that emerged in the United States during the 1500's, portraying Black people as ignorant, primitive, slovenly, overly jovial, salacious, and virtually any other negative characteristic. She emphasises, however, that the first public images of people of African origin were created within a Western, White, colonial framework and have persisted to this day.

In some selected literary works in this study, women are seen as passive, submissive and obedient. Africana womanism challenges traditional African literature for its representation and perception of women, whereas some selected literary sources, promote women's resilience and strength.

Another pandemic in recent years, is that there has been an increase in the number of African women, particularly those who are raising children on their own (single parents) in South Africa and other African countries. This puts a significant pressure on the woman's shoulders because she must perform double roles, that of a mother and father.

Of the feminist theories underpinning this study, African feminist theory is adopted as the primary framework, as it addresses directly to the contextualised experiences of African women who are subjected to a triple form of oppression and marginalisation.

3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of feminist theoretical frameworks relevant to the study. Feminist literary criticism, liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, intersectional feminism, and womanism all contribute to understanding how women are represented in literary sources such as Northern Sotho literature. By applying these perspectives, this study will critically examine the shifting portrayals of women in written texts, considering historical, cultural, and socio-political influences. The researcher employed feminist theories to analyse Northern Sotho literary works to assess their impact on women's lives.

Since Western feminist theories were perceived as catering to the white woman, Walker and Ogunyemi became spokespersons for the African women. The African feminist theory and Africana womanism both address the situation of African women and the numerous obstacles they are confronted with daily.

The researcher uses a combination of these different theoretical perspectives and frameworks to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issues and challenges facing women in the 21st century. Examples of Northern Sotho literary works that reflect these feminist themes were discussed.

The next chapter (Chapter four) presents the research methodology of this study and data presentation, extracted from the selected Northern Sotho literary texts.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH METHODS & DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter presented the theoretical framework that underpins this study. It indicated that this study is founded on several feminist perspectives. The chapter discussed theories related to female representation and feminism, which includes liberal, radical, Marxist and socialist, intersectional feminism, womanist, African feminist theory, and Africana womanism.

In this chapter and the next, the researcher will endeavour to address the research objectives stated in chapter one, 1.3 and research questions in 1.4.

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to explore the evolving representations of women in Northern Sotho literature. It describes the research design, approach, population, sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations. The researcher will employ a combination of textual analysis, and close reading of Northern Sotho literature from various historical periods and other relevant sources to analyse the sociolinguistic representation of women.

The chapter concludes by discussing the study's limitations and strategies adopted to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the study.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employs a qualitative research design within an interpretive paradigm, as it is essential for the researcher to understand the study's research paradigm. The interpretive approach is appropriate because it allows the researcher to understand the nuanced ways in which gender roles and identities are constructed and conveyed in literary texts. Among the scholars who support this paradigm are Thanh and Thanh (2015:24) who noted from previous studies that the interpretive paradigm enables scholars to perceive the world through the perspectives and experiences of participants.

The qualitative nature of this study is driven by the need to capture the complexity of sociolinguistic representations of women and to interpret the cultural meanings embedded in language use within Northern Sotho literature.

Through qualitative inquiry, the study seeks to explore not only what is represented but also how and why certain portrayals of women have shifted across time.

Leavy (2017) defines research design as the process of developing a structure, or plan, for a research study. Asenahabi (2019) augments Leavy in stating that research design aids in the binding of research together through a structure to attempt to answer research questions, whereas Patel and Patel (2019) found that research methodology is a means for systematically solving the research problem. They emphasise the need for researchers to understand the approach and knowing which methods or procedures are useful and which are not, as well as what they mean, signal, and why. Sileyew (2019) makes an important contribution in stating that the research design and methods chapter also demonstrates how the research outcome will be reached in accordance with the study's purpose. Additionally, he states that the research design aims to give an acceptable framework for a study. The research design of this study is qualitative in nature. Maxwell (2008) emphasises that one crucial aspect of developing a qualitative study is determining the extent to which procedures should be restructured. Structured techniques can improve data comparability between sources and researchers, making them effective for addressing variance problems and explaining variations. Creswell and Poth (2016) augment what other scholars have said by stating that qualitative research starts with assumptions, a worldview, and a theoretical lens. It investigates how individuals or groups interpret social or human problems. In this study, the researcher will analyse how female characters are represented in the selected Northern Sotho literary sources. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How have the representations of women in Northern Sotho literature evolved over time?
- What linguistic features are used to construct these representations?
- How do these representations reflect societal attitudes towards women in the Northern Sotho-speaking community?

4.3 RESEARCH METHODS

4.3.1 Qualitative research method

The researcher will employ qualitative methodology because this is a qualitative investigation. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the potential use of a theoretical lens, and the investigation of research problems to determine the meaning individuals or groups assign to a social or human situation. They further maintain that to study this problem, qualitative researchers apply an evolving qualitative method to data gathering in a natural context that is attentive to the people and places under investigation, as well as inductive data analysis to establish patterns or themes. deMarrais, Roulston, and Copple (2024) on the other hand, assert that qualitative research methods encompass the observation of events, the listening to individuals' narratives, and the analysis of documents and artifacts. They argue that qualitative researchers investigate specific, commonplace aspects of human experience, seeking to identify the diverse patterns in how individuals comprehend and interact with their environments.

The subject of study in this research are women who are represented in the Northern Sotho novels, short stories, poems, proverbs and other secondary sources by male and female authors. Leavy (2022) concurs with the aforementioned scholars, asserting that qualitative researchers employ this methodology to analyse and understand social phenomena, which is typically suitable when the primary objective is to explore, describe, or elucidate.

Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault (2015) describe qualitative research methodology as the investigation that generates descriptive data – individuals' written or spoken expressions and observable behaviours – asserting that qualitative researchers focus on the significance individuals ascribe to various aspects of their lives.

Similarly, Askarzai and Unhelkar (2017) hold the view that qualitative research involves gathering and analysing textual data to gain insights into people's interpretations of a phenomenon, which is not achievable with quantitative research. The qualitative technique has a limited sample size, according to the authors. Data collecting necessitates interaction between researchers and their subjects. They outlined the following strengths and limitations of qualitative research.

Strengths of Qualitative Research

According to Askarzai and Unhelkar (2017) qualitative research provides complex textual descriptions of social phenomena. It can be employed to explore sensitive topics and culturally defined experience. Qualitative research is also effective in providing a valuable insight into a phenomenon and an in-depth understanding of a complex phenomenon. Askarzai and Unhelkar (2017) further state that qualitative research is useful to study a case, provide an insight into people's behaviour and experience. Furthermore, qualitative research data is generally small, convenient and cost effective to collect (Askarzai and Unhelkar, 2017:29).

Limitations of Qualitative Research

Even though qualitative research has strengths, Askarzai and Unhelkar (2017:29) identified limitations of this research method.

They observed that qualitative research analysis is based on the meanings conveyed by the participants and the researchers which might not be generalised to a large population due to the lack of statistical testing. The sample sizes are small and are not selected at random which cannot be truly representative of the population. Therefore, qualitative research findings cannot be used to make quantitative predictions. In addition, the credibility of qualitative findings might be questioned and cannot be used to test hypotheses. Furthermore, data collection of qualitative method is complex, and its data analysis can be time consuming. Notably, the qualitative researchers do not follow standard procedure to analyse data; therefore, they can influence the results. Consequently, the reliability and validity of qualitative research depend on the researchers' skills and experience (Askarzai and Unhelkar, 2017:29).

The qualitative findings will emerge from the primary data gathering procedures, which include textual analysis and close reading.

4.3.2 Quantitative research method

According to Leavy (2022), the quantitative research method prioritises breadth, statistical descriptions, and generalisability. The researcher observes that the quantitative research method deals more with numbers and measurements. Mohajan (2020) on the other hand asserts that quantitative research explains phenomena by collecting numeral unchanging detailed data that are analysed using mathematical

based methods, in particular statistics that pose questions of who, what, when, where, how much, how many, and how. This study will not use the quantitative method but will employ the qualitative research method as already mentioned.

4.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

The study is grounded in textual analysis and employs CDA as its primary methodological tool, allowing for a nuanced examination of both language and context. Textual analysis means the researcher closely reads literary texts to understand how they are written. It involves looking at language, themes, structure, and style. Textual analysis provides tools for close reading and interpretation of texts. The researcher examines the specific language used, the main themes (e.g., love, power, oppression), and narrative techniques (e.g., who tells the story, how characters are portrayed). This helps understand how meaning is created within the text itself.

CDA is a method used to go deeper than just what is on the surface of the text. It looks at how language reflects and reinforces power dynamics, ideologies, and social structures — especially how certain groups (in this case, women) are represented or treated.

CDA, particularly informed by well-known scholars in CDA Norman Fairclough and Teun van Dijk, focuses on how discourse (language in use) relates to social power and inequality. CDA is used here to uncover hidden ideologies — for example, traditional or patriarchal beliefs about women — embedded in the language and storytelling. It is also used to uncover the power relations and ideological structures underlying gendered representations.

This means the study investigates how the literature might reflect or promote gender inequality, male dominance, or stereotypical views of women. Ideological structures refer to deeply rooted beliefs or norms in society that affect how women are portrayed.

By combining textual analysis with CDA, the researcher is not just interpreting the texts literarily, but also critically examining the social and political contexts that shaped them. This helps reveal why women are portrayed in certain ways, not just how.

This study critically examines both the content and the socio-political contexts influencing the portrayal of women. The content refers to what is in the texts: characters, events, themes. The socio-political context includes the society, culture,

and historical time in which the literature was written — such as traditional gender roles, colonial influence, or cultural norms.

In summary, the study uses textual analysis to understand what is being said in the literature, and CDA to understand why it is said that way, focusing on gender and power. The goal is to uncover underlying ideologies that shape how women are represented in Northern Sotho literary sources.

4.5 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Research subjects are often known as the study's population or sample size. Taherdoost (2016) defines population as the entire set of cases from which researchers' sample is drawn. He further suggests that since researchers neither have time nor the resources to analyse the entire population, they apply the sampling technique to reduce the number of cases. In this study, the population is represented by written Northern Sotho literary works which are especially selected for their explicit or implicit engagement with the theme of women's representation. A purposive sampling technique is employed to select texts that are rich in gender narratives and are representative of different historical periods and literary styles. This method like other sampling methods has its advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages according to Rai and Thapa (2015) is the wide range of sampling techniques that can be used across such qualitative research designs; and one of the disadvantages can be that purposive samples can be highly prone to researcher bias. Supporting Rai and Thapa's views, Taherdoost (2016) writes that the selection in purposive sampling is biased, and the sample is not representative, but the advantage is that it is the least expensive, least time-consuming, and most convenient.

In this study, the sample includes thirty-one literary works, comprising novels, poetry, short stories and proverbs authored between the 1960s and the present. The selection criteria include:

- Texts authored by both male and female Northern Sotho writers.
- Texts that reflect diverse portrayals of women (traditional, transitional, and contemporary).
- Texts recognised for their sociolinguistic and cultural significance.

Women are represented in various ways in the selected literary works, as this study is about the sociolinguistic exploration of women representation. Early representations of women in the selected novels include housewives, farmers, full-time housewives and child bearers, dependents, and so on. Women have evolved throughout time to be represented as strong, independent career and businesswomen. Furthermore, women are portrayed negatively in the short stories that the researcher purposely selected. They are physically and emotionally abused by their spouses; and GBV is exposed in various ways in these texts.

4.6 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Lochrie, Curran and O’Gorman (2015) established that qualitative techniques can yield meaningful, insightful, and substantial data. The data for this study was collected through textual analysis as previously stated. Data collected will be crucial to answering the research questions of this study. The data is non-probable, meaning that the researcher adopted a purposefully selected method of gathering data.

Primary sources include selected literary works written in Northern Sotho. Texts were accessed through university libraries, national archives, and online academic databases. In addition to primary texts, secondary sources such as literary critiques, journal articles, and historical analyses were consulted to enrich the contextual understanding of the primary data. Each selected text was read closely, annotated for key themes, and analysed for sociolinguistic features relevant to the research questions.

4.6.1 Textual analysis

Textual analysis involves a close reading of literary texts to explore how they are constructed. McKee (2001) describes textual analysis simply as a method of obtaining and analysing material in academic research, whereas Belsey (2013) confirms the significance of textual analysis across all fields that engage with texts, including many disciplines. She also argues that when reading any content, written or visual, the following questions should be asked:

What is it about? What kinds of prior knowledge might illuminate it? What difference does it make if we locate the work textually and historically? What position, or range of positions, does the text offer its reader? How can we best let the text itself set the agenda for research that will generate insights? How far,

because of all this labour, can we expect to arrive at a definitive interpretation? (Belsey, 2013:160).

In this study, the researcher analyses linguistic features, thematic concerns (such as love, power, or oppression), and narrative strategies (including point of view and character portrayal) in the selected Northern Sotho literary sources to uncover how meaning is produced within the texts.

The researcher employed textual analysis as a method of extracting data from the Northern Sotho literary texts, i.e. novels, short stories, poems and other selected literary works. These literary texts are written by both male and female authors about the representation of women. Shabalala (2019) adds to the aforementioned researchers by demonstrating that his study does not view textual people as cold, fixed, mechanical tools devoid of sentiments and emotions; rather, it sees textual people as reflections of actual people in real cultures. The textual people, who are female characters in the selected literary sources of this study are portrayed as weak, abused, and dependent, primarily by male authors. In contrast, the female Northern Sotho author Kekana and other female authors and researchers, present their female characters as strong, independent, and successful.

The researcher notes that women continue to experience patriarchal oppression in African states and across the world, despite significant progress made toward their emancipation. Contrary to how women are depicted in other selected literary texts, in the selected poems, the male poets expressed admiration and reverence for women rather than oppression.

4.6.2 Close reading

Smith (2016) demonstrates that the phrase 'close reading' denotes both an analytical activity concerning texts and a specific category of text: a technically educated, meticulous examination of a written work, typically related to a broader inquiry of significance. Likewise, Brummett (2018) holds the view that close reading is a careful and disciplined examination of a text aimed at achieving a profound comprehension of its meanings; this understanding is frequently communicated to others through critique or critical analysis. He recognises the significance of this research method as a public, civic, and collective responsibility for all individuals. The research methods

employed in this study pertain to actions that are in-text and all focus on critical analysis.

The researcher conducted a thorough analysis of chosen Northern Sotho novels, short stories, poetry, and proverbs. The literary texts were selected because of their representation of women in contrasting ways.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Data analysis implies examining, sorting, categorising, evaluating, comparing, synthesising, and contemplating the coded data as well as the raw data. According to Cresswell and Poth (2016) data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organising the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion. Neuman (2014) simply explains that to analyse, we connect data to concepts, advance generalisations, and identify broad trends or themes. Neuman further states that analysis allows us to improve comprehension, expand theory, and advance knowledge.

As previously stated, this study is qualitative in nature. Aurini, Heath and Howells (2021) emphasise that the subsequent processes must be undertaken in preparation of data analysis: labelling, determining coding criteria, preparing documents, formatting, and to hard copy or not. The researcher will assess and analyse data gathered from the selected Northern Sotho literary sources and other relevant sources to elucidate the representation of women.

This study will utilise thematic and CDA as methodologies for analysing the acquired data.

The findings of this study will be presented in a qualitative form as this is a qualitative research study. They will be presented in the form of discussions. The data analysed will be especially from the selected Northern Sotho literature.

Data analysis proceeded in two phases:

4.7.1 Thematic analysis

An inductive approach to thematic analysis was used to identify recurrent themes related to women's representation, including but not limited to domestic roles, education, political agency, and resistance to patriarchy. Themes were coded manually, and representative quotes were extracted to support analysis and to ensure credibility. Williams and Moser (2019:45) point out that coding in qualitative research is comprised of processes that enable collected data to be assembled, categorised, and thematically sorted, providing an organised platform for the construction of meaning. However, Benevento (2023) delves deeper in observing that a thematic analysis examines data patterns, further stating that any additions or eliminations of books may alter the unique set of themes.

4.7.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

CDA was applied to examine the use of language structures (e.g., metaphors, pronouns, syntactic choices) that construct social identities and power relations. Special emphasis was placed on how linguistic choices either reinforce or challenge traditional gender norms. CDA is described by O'Halloran (2005) as a subfield of linguistics focused on elucidating the cultural and ideological significances embedded in both spoken and written texts. The researcher clarifies the gendered discourses using the language employed in the selected literary sources.

This research is about the sociolinguistic representation of females in Northern Sotho literature. The language used by the authors of these texts either enhances or denigrates female roles, as previously noted. The researcher observed that male authors are the ones who mainly underrate the status of women in society. The study also acknowledges that women's representation has improved significantly over time, while much more work needs to be done.

4.7.3 The scope of the CDA framework in this study

- Analysis of texts at the micro level (word choice, grammar and other linguistic features).

The researcher closely examined the word choices, grammar and linguistic features used in the selected literary sources. The literal and figurative meanings were closely

examined especially in proverbs. Figurative language was also observed in these literary genres. The tense that is mostly used in these sources is the present which makes the texts to be dynamic. The researcher observed in the poems that poets used alliteration to emphasise facts.

- Interpretation of discursive practices (how texts reflect societal attitudes).

The researcher observed that male authors stereotype their female characters in the same way that rural and primitive societies do. The language used in the selected texts reflects what is happening in society. The researcher noted GBV in the texts and this is what is happening in societies in South Africa and around the world today.

- Explanation of broader social practices (power, ideology, historical context).

Patriarchal societies and male dominance were also observed in the texts. Men are holding more power than women whilst women are staying home doing house chores, looking after their children. Leilane, a male character in one of the selected novels, abused his power as a man to dominate his wife, Mohlatša. Male dominance was made acceptable in the selected short stories, and women were not supposed to question it. However, Bubbles and Taamane defied male dominance and advanced unabated.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research ethics pertains to the moral principles and values that researchers are obligated to observe and uphold. Hasan, Rana, Chowdhury, Dola and Rony (2021) maintain that ethics in research reflects scientific ethical ideals, and the core values and beliefs of the research community are articulated in the Principles of Research Ethics. However, Gajjar (2013) perceives ethics as a methodology, approach, or perspective for determining actions and assessing intricate situations and issues. Although the study involves the analysis of publicly available texts, ethical research practice was maintained through proper acknowledgement and citation of all sources. The researcher adhered to the ethical guidelines for research in the humanities, ensuring integrity, respect for intellectual property, and transparency, preserving the authors' original intentions.

Prior to collecting data, the researcher applied for an ethical clearance certificate from the University of South Africa which was granted. The researcher agreed to adhere to

the ethics policies even though this research is considered low risk. This study was not going to involve human participants and therefore, informed consent forms which involve respect of participants' confidentiality and privacy were not necessary. Before commencing data collection, the researcher first identified Northern Sotho literature books that represent women. Other relevant sources and literature in Africa and across the world were also identified to support the study's argument. Although this study is based on desktop research, it was nevertheless essential to obtain an ethical clearance certificate prior to data collection. After data collection, an analysis and dissemination of the findings will be made followed by recommendations.

Ethical considerations are a point of departure for building trustworthiness, credibility, transferability and other aspects of ethics.

The following subsections will examine the validity and reliability of the research study to establish its trustworthiness. According to Hasan et al. (2021) validity is concerned with a measure's precision, while reliability is concerned with its consistency. The four aspects of trustworthiness are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the following strategies were employed:

4.8.1 Credibility

Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016) found that a qualitative study is credible when its findings which are presented with sufficient description of context, are recognisable to peers and those who care for them. However, Stahl and King (2020) are of the view that credibility asks the question "how congruent are the findings with reality?" This therefore means that the findings of the study must be trustworthy and reliable.

Credibility can be ensured in the following ways according to Stahl and King.

- Triangulation

Triangulating means using several sources of information or procedure from the field to repeatedly establish identifiable patterns. A triangulation method using multiple sources i.e. literary works, relevant sources in this study and theoretical literature were employed to ensure reliability. The researcher conducted a thorough qualitative and

accurate analysis of the selected Northern Sotho literary sources, novels, short stories, poems, and proverbs to provide a solid foundation for the research findings.

- Close reading

The close reading method is another approach that facilitates a more profound comprehension of the selected texts.

4.8.2 Transferability

Transferability is another criterion to ensure a study's trustworthiness. Johnson, Adkins and Chauvin (2020) argue that in transferability, the researcher provides sufficient contextual information such that readers can determine whether the outcomes are applicable to their or other situations. The research methodologies and durations employed for data collection in the preliminary study, as well as the overall data collection period, must be vividly delineated to ensure transferability and facilitate the applicability of the research in other situations. The study will determine how the findings can be applied to other contexts beyond the selected literary works that will be analysed. To ensure transferability, the researcher will provide rich, and thick descriptions of the socio-cultural context, and historical backgrounds of the Northern Sotho sayings and how women are represented in the selected Northern Sotho books.

After the analysis of the selected sources and acquiring insights into the representation of women in these books, other researchers will be able to apply the findings to their own socio-cultural contexts and literary environments.

4.8.3 Dependability

To ensure trustworthiness, a study must be reliable and consistent. The researcher provides adequate detail in the study method to ensure the work's replicability (Johnson et al., 2020). To guarantee the reliability of this study, the researcher will furnish sufficient details in this investigation and ultimately the findings, which will be open to revisions to address any shortcomings by other researchers. Member checking and peer review to assess and offer feedback is critical at this stage. To further ensure transparency, maintaining an audit trail that records decisions made during sampling, coding, and analysis is critical.

It is also imperative to apply the same methods throughout the study to ensure consistency and that other researchers should be able to verify the findings.

4.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is crucial to guarantee trustworthiness in research. Johnson et al. (2020) state that for research to be confirmable, the researcher must ensure and communicate to the reader that the findings are based on and reflective of the information gathered from the participants and not the interpretations or bias of the researcher. The researcher will ensure that all the data collected is directly from the selected Northern Sotho literature and the relevant sources and will further strive to avoid misinterpretations and bias. It is essential for researchers to document their study to enable other researchers to validate and corroborate the findings. A textual analytical approach will be employed in this study to derive comparable outcomes from the selected Northern Sotho works, hence ensuring confirmability and credibility.

Therefore, the researcher will practise reflexivity by critically reflecting on personal biases and assumptions and ensuring that findings are grounded in the data rather than personal opinions.

4.9 DATA PRESENTATION

This section presents findings from the selected Northern Sotho texts. The findings of this study address and answer the research questions. The study is qualitative in nature; thus, the presentation will utilise qualitative methods, including discussions and tables. The researcher will present excerpts from the selected Northern Sotho literary sources that represent women. Subsequently, the researcher will organise the excerpts according to emerging themes or periods. Uprety (2009:116) observes that the thematic classification of data involves systematically organising field descriptive notes into various themes and sub-themes through close reading.

This study employed textual analysis and close reading to retrieve the relevant data from the selected literary sources. Northern Sotho texts including female representation were acquired and thoroughly analysed to address the research concerns and answer the research questions. Through close reading, the researcher was able to make a thorough examination of the relevant written sources. Brummett (2018) calls close reading, a more careful kind of reading. He proposes that:

The more one studies the words, images, actions, objects, and other components of what one is reading, the more attentively one is reading, the more care and deliberation one takes (Brummett, 2018:8).

These research methods were used to gather information from the selected texts. Each selected text was read closely, annotated for key themes, and analysed for sociolinguistic features relevant to the research questions.

The literature analysed to examine the representation of women in these writings is shown in the tables below:

Table 4.1 below shows the selected Northern Sotho novels which depict females.

Table 1: Sampled novels

Title	Translation	Author	Year of publication
Megokgo ya Bjoko	Tears of the brain	O.K. Matsepe	1968
Tšhelang Gape	Pour again	O.K. Matsepe	1974
Nnete Fela	Just the truth	M.A. Kekana	1989
Lenong la Gauta	The golden eagle	H.D.N. Bopape	1982
Nonyana ya Tokologo	A free bird	M.A. Kekana	1985

Table 4.2 highlights the selected Northern Sotho short stories that depict women.

Table 2: Sampled short stories in *Khupamarama* by Mamabolo and *Ditšwapitšengkgolo ya bokgabongwalo* by Serudu

Title	Translation	Author/Editor	Year of publication
Khupamarama	Secrets	M. Mamabolo	2015
(i) Bogadi ke petse	The in-laws are a disaster	M.S. Madiba	2015
(ii) Le ge o ka nthaka...!	Even if you can chase me	M.J. Tauatsoala	2015
(iii) Mohlomongwe ke tllhabologo	Perhaps it is civilisation	J.R.L. Rafapa	2015
(iv) Kgethollo ye sehlogo	Cruel discrimination	M. Mathete	2015
(v) Re lebe kae?	Where should we go?	M.J. Tauatsoala	2015
Ditšwapitšengkgolo ya bokgabongwalo	From the big pot of literature	M.S. Serudu	1991

(i) Ge o sa nyalwe ke nna, o ka se ke wa nyalwa ke motho	If I can't marry you, no man will	M.S. Serudu	1991
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Table 4.3 highlights the selected Northern Sotho poems that represent women.

Table 3: Sampled poems

Title	Translation	Author	Year of publication
Go Hunadi	To Hunadi	P. Mamogoba	1983
Ke mo ratile	I loved her	D. Manamela	1983
Moratiwa	My Darling	M.P. Matseke	1989
O ntebatša maššana	You make me forget about misery	E.T. Mphahlele and M.J. Tauatsoala	1997
Hunadi	Hunadi	A.S. Soana	1989
Bogale bja mosadi	The power of a woman	M.I. Mogodi	1989
Mahlogedi a theto	The sprouts of praise	M.C. Masekoameng and M.S. Mothapo	2017
(i) Bjale ka ge o sepetše	Now that you've gone	M.V. Lebepe	2017
(ii) Go dingwetši	To the brides	M.S. Machitela	2017
(iii) Mosadi wa ka	My wife	M.V. Lebepe	2017
(iv) Moratiwa wa ka	My love	M.V. Lebepe	2017

Table 4.4 below shows the selected Northern Sotho proverbs which depict females.

Table 4: Sampled proverbs in *Marema-ka-dika: Tša Sesotho sa Lebowa*: authored by Rakoma J.R.D (1978).

Title	Explanation of the proverb
(i) Mosadi ke tšhwene, o lewa mabogo	A woman's beauty is not judged by her facial looks but by the works of her hands.
(ii) Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi	A woman is required to remain with her in-laws her entire life.
(iii) Lehu ga le hlalwe	It is inappropriate for a woman to go back to her family and live with them after her husband's death.
(iv) Tša etwa ke tshadi pele di wela ka leopeng	If men are led by women, they will be led astray undeservedly because they are led by the ignorant and powerless.

(v) Mosadi ke nku, o rekwa mosela	A woman's body must appear pleasing to a man so that she can be married.
(vi) Mosadi ke mphodi ga a tshele mafate	A woman is not expected to be polyandrous whereas the man can be polygamous.
(vii) Mosadi o swara thipa ka bogaleng	Women are very brave; they fight to protect their own.
(viii) Monna ke hlogo ya lapa, mosadi ke molala	A man is the leader whilst a woman is a follower.
(ix) Mosadi a hlaletša ngwana bolwetši bo a fola.	If a woman gives birth, her disease gets cured.
(x) Mosadi ke theko ya rumo, re foša kgole.	A woman is the price of a sword, we throw far.

The researcher closely read and analysed the selected literature to examine how women are represented, as well as to observe the discrepancies in representation between male and female authors. Data was acquired from these literary genres after thorough study and thereafter judgement was made on the information's accuracy and reliability. The focus was on literary studies that feature and represent women to ensure consistency and comparison.

The following are the themes that emerged from the findings of this study.

4.9.1 Traditional roles

The following excerpts were extracted from the selected Northern Sotho literary sources.

(a) Excerpts from *Megokgo ya Bjoko*: O.K. Matsepe (1968)

As previously indicated, this novel's common themes include traditional life, traditional courts, communication with ancestral spirits, and traditional judicial systems. Kings still dominate the rural societies.

For example, one of the female characters in this novel by the name of Mohlatša which means the one who vomits, was physically abused by her husband Leilane. Mohlatša was a very submissive, traditional woman who totally depended on her husband for her provision.

There was an incident in the text which caused a fight between Mohlatša and Leilane. The argument started this way in Northern Sotho:

Gona fao mosadi a thoma go hlatša. O ile go hlatša, motho wa batho a be a šala a lapile ditlhakori a hwile le lentšu, dikudumela di tšhologa mo nkego ke meetse. A ka dumela Leilane?

“O hlatšišwa ke eng?”

“Serapolotšwana seo o se jago.”

“Ka mantšu a mangwe ke go re o re ke ja dibese ee!”

Leilane ga a ka a senya sebaka sa go mo thiba lehlatšo ka lepara. O ile a mo itia gore le be le tsharoge, mosadi yoo gwa se be ka moo a ka se tšhabelego ka lapeng le lengwe, fela gwa se thuše selo ka gore o ile a mo latelela (Matsepe, 1968:11).

English translations

Immediately, the woman started to vomit. She continued until her sides were so weak and tired, her voice was utterly gone and sweat streamed from her. Should Leilane accept this without protest?

“What makes you vomit?”

“That unborn calf that you are eating!”

“So, you think I eat rubbish or something.”

Leilane didn't waste time; he began thrashing her with a stick to cure her vomiting. He beat her until the point of the stick splintered. For the poor woman there was no safe place in any yard to which she could flee for protection because he pursued her relentlessly.

(b) Excerpts from *Tšhelang Gape*: O.K. Matsepe (1974)

This novel like *Megokgo ya Bjoko* is set in the traditional period and influenced by traditional backgrounds. The men of the communities are often called to resolve the conflicts that characters are faced with. The judicial system is also traditional.

In the novel *Tšhelang Gape* (1974), female characters are depicted as subordinates completely dominated by their spouses and male figures. The author highlights the conflict that erupted between the males in the novel because of claiming to be married to one female character by the name of Mmapelo. This caused unnecessary strain in the family's relationship.

A male character in this novel by the name of Sekae, was polygamous. Mmapelo who was married as a third wife of Sekae who was also married to Nkatenwa and Tšhuana, had a love relationship with Sekae's son in law, Kgagohle who was married to Lefao

(Sekae's daughter). The conflict between the family members is highlighted in the following words:

Molli e lego Sekae o ile a kgopelwa go hlagiša selo sa gagwe, gomme yena a bolela gona gore ke nnete o nyetše Mmapelo, mola Kgagohle a ile a re le yena o mo tšere (Matsepe, 1974:30).

The complainant (Sekae) was asked to lay his complaint, who confirmed that it is true that he is married to Mmapelo, whereas Kgagohle also said that he has taken her as his wife.

This text clearly indicates that females were regarded as objects by their male counterparts in this novel. One moment Mmapelo was married to Sekae and another, she is taken by another man, Kgagohle.

(c) Excerpts from *Lenong la Gauta*: H.D.N. Bopape (1982)

Another selected Northern Sotho novel that depicts women in traditional ways is *Lenong la gauta* authored by Bopape (1982). The author of this novel depicts women as secretive, dangerous, untrustworthy, greedy, and moreover characterises them as opportunistic. Similarly, in her thesis, Masuku (2005) states that women were portrayed in a negative way by male authors. She laments the traditional Zulu society for attaching stereotypical images to women such as being portrayed as witches, and unfaithful people.

One of the females in the novel *Lenong la Gauta* by the name of Mmatšhego was a very wealthy and secretive woman who possessed amongst other valuable possessions an expensive necklace which presumably even led to her death. She was murdered by Brenda, one of the female characters in this novel driven by greed for money. Mmatšhego's wealth is reflected in the following text:

Ka diaparo tša gagwe go be go iponatša gore Mmatšhego ke motho yo a nago le sa gagwe. O be a apara diaparo tša ditšhelete tše telele tšeo di bego di swanetšana le letlalo la gagwe le lesehlana - bosehlana bja gauta (Bopape, 1982:22).

By her way of dress, one could see that Mmatšhego was a wealthy woman. She was wearing expensive clothes that suited her skin colour like gold.

The author further highlights Mmatšhego's wealth below:

Taba ye nngwe ke gore Mmatšhego o be a na le dilwana tše mmalwa tša go dirwa ka maswikana a bohlokwa. O be a na le dipalamonwana tše pedi goba tše

tharo tša go dirwa ka taemane. Dilo tše ka moka go itaetša a di humane go monna yoo wa mohlolo (Bopape, 1982:29).

Another issue is that Mmatšhego had several possessions that were made of precious stones. She had two or three rings made from diamonds. All these things show that she got them from her late husband.

This is confirmed in the following words:

Go tseba mang mogongwe go na le motho goba batho bao ba tsebago ka dilo tšeo gomme ke tšona di hloletšego Mmatšhego lehu (Bopape, 1982:29)

Who knows, maybe there is a person or people who know about her possessions, and this might have caused her death.

(d) Excerpts from *Khupamarama* short stories: M. Mamabolo (2015)

Khupamarama's short stories likewise take place in a traditional setting. The short stories emphasise traditional roots and customs. Characters in this literary work also face complex struggles with life and there are conflicts between spouses, women and their in-laws, men and their children. Each story ends with a moral lesson. The short stories also emphasise communal relationships.

(i) *Bogadi ke petse* – Madiba M.S.

This short story is very tragic. It is about a female by the name of Ntholeng (which means offload me) who was married to Mahlomola (meaning, misery). Her mother-in-law was so excited that her son ultimately decided to marry. After their marriage, they both lived with their in-laws. Mahlomola's mother's satisfaction stemmed from the fact that her son's wife would now take over all the housework that she and her two daughters were doing, hence her name Ntholeng, which means "offload me". Ntholeng was enslaved by her in-laws. The first extract below reflects the disillusionment of Ntholeng on learning what her lot would be at the in-laws. Her happiness is highlighted in the following words:

Mahloko go Ntholeng yoo a bego a eya go botšwa gore ke yena ngwetšji, o nyaletšwe go šoma lapa la gaboMahlomola, a šomišwa bjalo ka lekgoba (Mamabolo, 2015:60).

What was painful for Ntholeng who was told that she is the daughter-in-law, was that she was married to work for Mahlomola's family and would be made to work as a slave.

The following excerpt reinforces Ntholeng's predicament as it is in stark contrast with the happiness experienced by her mother-in-law.

... *lethabo go mmagoMahlomola e le gore re tla khutša pitša le go šila* (Mamabolo, 2015: 60).

Mahlomola's mother was happy that they will take a break from cooking and grinding corn.

They even quoted the following Northern Sotho idiom to her:

lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi (Mamabolo, 2015:60).

The literal meaning of this idiom means that a woman's grave is at her in-laws.

(ii) *Le ge o ka nthaka ...!* – Tauatsoala M.J.

The title of this short story '*Le ge o ka nthaka ...*' means even if you can chase me. This short story is a tragic one of a man by the name of Mathintha who was persecuting his wife Matshedišo and son Mahlomola. Mathintha was the sole provider for his family. Mahlomola was Matshedišo's son from another father and was often illtreated by his stepfather (Mathintha). His wife requested her husband to take Mahlomola to school to further his studies, but he objected. We learn this from the following text:

Ka moo lapeng go be go šoma Mathintha a le noši. Le gona Matshedišo o be a fšega go kgopela monna gore ba iše Mahlomola sekolong go tšwetša dithuto pele (Mamabolo, 2015:82).

In the family, it was only Mathintha who was working. Matshedišo was also eager to ask her husband to take Mahlomola to school to further his studies.

Mathintha even chased Matshedišo's son out of his house for bringing a girlfriend for a sleep over in his house. When the mother tried to plead his case, he hurled vulgar words at her and promised to kill someone.

(iii) *Mohlomongwe ke tthabologo* – Rafapa J.R.L.

The title of this short story '*Mohlomongwe ke tthabologo*' (Perhaps it is civilisation) alludes to a man who did something that left the men and his community in a village called Thabakgone in great disbelief. This man impregnated both his daughters Melita and Aleta who had to discontinue their secondary schooling because of their pregnancies. He also impregnated his daughter-in-law in great secret around the same period. The couple, Ekwang and Moswananoši were very secretive with their domestic affairs. The community suddenly saw Ekwang's daughter in law pregnant and packing

her bags to go back to her family, either because she was chased or decided to leave her in-laws. Later, it was revealed that it was her husband (Moswananoši's son) who chased her away with a stick because the pregnancy was not his, but his father's. His mother pleaded with him to stop what he was doing as this was bringing shame to the family. The author quotes the following words:

Ekwang yoo a ba šetšego morago a rapela morwa gore a se ba tsentšhe mahlo a batho ka tsela yeo, a lemoša batho gore o lekile go tima mollo eupša a šitwa (Mamabolo, 2015:44).

Ekwang followed them and begged her son not to shame them in public, making people to see that she tried to put out the fire (calm the situation down) but couldn't.

Moswananoši brought shame to his family to the extent that his brother Tibang decided to arrest him because he was a police officer, after he heard the whole shocking story about how he impregnated his two daughters and his daughter-in-law. Tibang mentioned the following words in rage:

Mošemane o dio re go phula sekaku boladu, Tibang a be a šetše a fofetše Moswananoši bjalo ka kgogo ya ditswiwane. A mo swinetša matsogo ka dihakaboi tša mošomong a bile a re: "Mogadibo, a re ye bohle seteišeneng sa maphodisa go bea mogolwake molato wa go goboša tlemagano ya lenyalo le tšhomišompe ya bana ka go imiša barwedi ba gagwe." A retologela go mošemane yola wa go phula khudu ka mpeng a re: "Ngwana wa mogolwake, le wena ntšhale morago go yo bea rrago molato wa go imiša ngwetši ya gagwe (e lego mogatšago)" (Mamabolo, 2015:480).

After the boy said it all, Tibang flew at Moswananoši like a mother chicken. Then, he swung his arms with handcuffs from his workplace, and he said: "My brother-in-law, let's all go to the police station to lay a complaint about violating the marriage bond and abusing his own children by impregnating his daughters." Then he turned around to the boy who told the secret and said: "My brother's child, you must follow me so we can go and lay a charge against your father who impregnated his daughter-in-law (your wife)."

(iv) *Kgethollo ye sehlogo* – Mathete M.

The heading of this short story means unrelenting discrimination.

In this short story titled *Kgethollo ye sehlogo*, the author introduces us to the main characters Seilakgaka and his wife Mokgaetši. Although he loved his wife, he was adulterous and ultimately contracted sexually transmitted diseases and the HIV virus which led to him having full blown AIDS. He also suffered from TB (tuberculosis) which

was caused by a weak immune system. He never bothered to consult a doctor to check his condition, instead, he kept on with his life as though he was not sick. Seilakgaka's condition got so bad that he could not work. He was bedridden and nursed by his wife. He ultimately confessed by saying the following words:

“Mogatšaka, ruri o ntshwarele ka mesepele ya ka yeo e diretšego gore ke be mo ke lego gona gonabjale. Ge nkabe ke se be le hlogo ye thata, mohlomongwe nkabe ke sa dutše ke phela bophelo bja go itekanela” (Mamabolo, 2015:252).

My wife, please forgive me for my ways which made me to land where I am now. I wish I would not have been hard-headed, maybe I would be living a normal life.

Although other women's health like Mokgaetši's are often compromised by their partner's infidelity, they are the ones who often nurse and look after their husbands on their death beds. We hear Mokgaetši's painful and empathetic words saying:

“O se ke wa ba wa tshwenyega le gatee mogatšaka, ke tla go thekga ka dinako ka moka ka gore ka nako re dira dilo mola re sa tsebe tšeo re di dirago. Le ge go le bjalo ke sa dutše ke le mosadi wa gago” (Mamabolo, 2015:253).

Do not worry my husband, I will always support you because sometimes we do things even though we do not know what we are doing. Even though things are like this, I am still your wife.

(v) *Re lebe kae?* – Tauatsoala M.J.

This tragic short story illustrates the hardships and persecutions encountered by some women in their marriages. The author introduces us to Madimabe who was the wife of Tabudi. She faced persecutions from her mother-in-law and her sisters-in-law at her husband's home. They all lived in one house. However, she had her husband's support. Tabudi's mother, Hlogothata and her sisters-in-law were very jealous of his wife.

One day after Tabudi got paid, he bought his wife clothes and brought them home. This caused friction in the house as Hlogothata (Tabudi's mother) thought Tabudi just wanted to treat his wife like a queen so that his wife can despise them even though this was not the case. Madimabe was a very understanding and loving person.

Hlogothata insisted that Madimabe was not going to wear the new clothes in her house. She demanded that her son buy clothes for all of them and not just his wife. She was so furious that she uttered these words:

“O ntheeletše gabotse Tabudi. Matšatši a o tsenwe ke eng? Go thoma neng o rekela Madimabe diaparo a le nnoši mola o tseba gore dikgaetšedi tša gago le tšona di gona? O thoma go mo fa makokwana a go re nyefola ka mo lapeng a ke re? Bona, ke a go enela sešane sa basadi, ka mo lapeng le a ka se tšhephe ka tšona banake o se o ba rekele, o a nkwa? Ge eba o tlo tšhepha ka tšona, gona boela le yena morago Gauteng ka wona motsotswana wo!” (Mamabolo, 2015:146).

Listen to me clearly Tabudi. What’s happening to you these days? Since when do you only buy clothes for Madimabe only, when you know that you also have sisters? Are you starting to fill her with pride to despise us in the house? Look, I am telling you, in this house she will not put on those clothes when you did not buy for my children, you hear me? If she will wear those clothes, then take her with you to Gauteng at this moment!

(e) Excerpts from *Ditšwapitšengkgolo ya bokgabongwalo*: M.S. Serudu (1991)

(i) *Ge o sa nyalwe ke nna, o ka se ke wa nyalwa ke motho.*

This short story is about a young female by the name of Mmapekwe. The author portrays her as a beautiful, light complexioned young woman with a beautiful figure. Her name defines how her nose looked like. The author compares it to the falcon’s beak. The writer also depicts Mmapekwe as a deceitful woman, a witch and a cheat. She met a man from eThekweni (Durban). They started having a love relationship which ultimately landed on the rocks. Mmapekwe’s ex-boyfriend told her the following alarming and harsh words:

Ge o ile wa se ke wa nyalwa ke nna, o ka se ke wa nyalwa ke motho (Serudu, 1991:17).

If I will not marry you, then no man will.

Women are also portrayed as resilient and hardworking according to this short story. The author writes the following:

Motho ge a sepela mo metseng ya batho ba, o kgona go lemoga ka pela malapa a a se nago bana ba basetsana, le a a nago le bana ba basetsana go a bakasela, go tšhepišitšwe bjalo ka kua nywakong ya Makgowa ye ba e bonego (Serudu, 1991:17).

When a person goes to other people’s homes, they realise quickly those homes that do not have girls, because the homes that have girls are shining (beautiful), they are decorated like the White people’s houses that they saw.

(f) Excerpts from selected Northern Sotho proverbs

The selected Northern Sotho proverbs emphasise domestic roles, indicating that women are expected to perform household chores and care for their spouses and children. Women's resilience is overemphasised in these proverbs. Some perpetuate patriarchy and reinforce gender biases. These proverbs continue to uphold conventional roles for women.

(i) *Mosadi ke tšhwene, o lewa mabogo.*

The literal meaning of this proverb is as follows:

A woman is a monkey; her hands are eaten.

The figurative meaning is a woman's beauty is not judged by her facial looks but by the works of her hands. She is judged by her hard work. A woman is expected to contribute towards household chores. If she is lazy, then her beauty fades in the eyes of her spouse and her in-laws. Women are expected to work hard on household duties.

(ii) *Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi.*

The term *lebitla* means a grave. So, the literal meaning of this proverb is that a woman's grave is with her in-laws. This is her permanent abode.

The figurative interpretation is that upon marriage, a woman must acknowledge that upon her husband's demise, she forfeits the right to return to her family. Instead, she must continue living with her in-laws because they are the ones who will console and comfort her best.

(iii) *Lehu ga le hlalwe.*

The term *lehu* means death. The literal meaning of this proverb is explained as: death is not abandoned. According to this proverb, it is inappropriate for a widow to go back to her family and leave her in-laws so she can get married to another man without the in-law's permission.

(iv) *Tša etwa ke ya tshadi pele di wela ka leopeng.*

This proverb portrays women as beings who are inferior and not fit for leadership positions. The literal meaning of this proverb is: If they are led by a female they will fall into a ditch. It simply means that men cannot find themselves being led by women.

(v) *Mosadi ke nku, o rekwa mosela*

This proverb means that women must strive to look physically pleasing to men so that they can get married. If she looks appealing and sexy then she will win him over. The literal meaning is: A woman is a sheep; her tail is bought. This proverb is entirely disparaging especially to African women.

(vi) *Mosadi ke mphodi ga a tshela mafate*

Women according to this proverb are not expected to commit adultery or to be unfaithful to their partners, whereas men are allowed to be unfaithful in their intimate relationships. The study of Seanego, Montle and Mogoboya (2022) focuses on gender roles and equality. They are perplexed at the notion that men are permitted to marry more than one wife; but, if a woman marries more than one husband, even if it is lawful today, society may conclude that the woman lacks morals and integrity.

(vii) *Mosadi o swara thipa ka bogaleng.*

The literal meaning of this proverb is that a woman holds a knife by the blade. This proverb depicts women as warriors. They show their strength to protect their offspring. They may not have the same physical strength as men, but they are very resilient. They are capable of fighting for what belongs to them.

(viii) *Monna ke hlogo ya lapa, mosadi ke molala.*

This proverb literally means that the man is the head of a household whilst the woman is the neck. It simply means that men are leaders and women are the followers. This proverb endorses patriarchal dominance and diminishes women's self-esteem, notwithstanding advancements in promoting women to leadership roles.

(ix) *Mosadi a hlaletša ngwana bolwetši bo a fola.*

This proverb literally means that if a woman gives birth, her disease gets cured. This suggests that after a woman gives birth, she forgets about her problems since her child brings her joy.

(x) *Mosadi ke theko ya rumo, re foša kgole.*

The literal meaning of this proverb means that a woman is the price of a sword, we throw far away. The figurative meaning is that the location of a woman's marriage remains unknown to everyone, including herself. This proverb promotes patriarchal dominance, as it is often the man who selects a partner rather than the woman. The woman's integrity is undermined since her freedom of choice is restricted.

After a careful and intense reading and analysis of the Northern Sotho texts, the researcher found that there is a difference in traditional and modern portrayals of women in the selected books. Most Northern Sotho male authors portray women in their traditional roles as housewives, mothers, caregivers and so forth, whereas women authors represent their female characters in a modern way, as successful businesswomen, having successful careers and challenging the male dominated industries.

Summary of the representation of females in traditional roles

In the analysed selected texts, the researcher observed that women are depicted in various ways by the selected Northern Sotho authors. Women are portrayed as weak, submissive, and are expected to adhere to traditional values by male authors. Some women endure physical and emotional violence from their spouses yet are still expected to fulfil their roles as wives and perform household duties. Patriarchal oppression is evident in the selected proverbs. The researcher maintains that even though the man can be the head of the family, he often only succeeds with the woman's support. From the proverbs, it is deduced that a woman is expected to always work hard for herself and her family. She earns respect from her spouse through diligence.

4.9.2 Modern portrayals of women

Nnete Fela and *Nonyana ya Tokologo* authored by Kekana are novels that are both full of feminist themes. The author is a female who strives to free women from patriarchal shackles. The female characters are successful career women, driving luxury cars, striving for riches in showbiz and so forth.

(a) Excerpts from *Nnete Fela*: M.A. Kekana (1989)

Kekana portrays one of the female characters in her novel *Nnete Fela* by the name of Bubbles as an independent, successful woman who is free from patriarchal control, who makes decisions for herself. Bubbles is depicted as an independent, beautiful, brave woman by this author, and she drives a luxury car that threatens men.

In this novel, Bubbles is given great responsibilities by her father Noko to manage huge businesses like cinemas and disco clubs. He trusted her that she would succeed in growing these businesses. Bubbles had a twin brother by the name of Karabo who disappointed his father by failing to manage the businesses with success and his father deemed him an irresponsible son who was everything that a parent does not desire about their child. He uttered the following painful words about his son Karabo:

Ke Noko ge a thoma: "O tšohle tše motswadi a sa kganyogego ngwana wa gagwe a eba tšona. O nnyamišitše, o ntobišitše e bile o ntapišitše." (Kekana, 1989:10)

Noko started by saying: "You are everything that a parent does not desire their child to be. You have disappointed me, you made me to be a loser, and I am tired of you."

Indeed, Bubbles successfully took her father's businesses to greater heights. Women can effectively juggle motherhood, partnership, and the successful management of a business or career. This is highlighted in the following words:

Mono Pelindaba o be a na le kgwebo tše pedi, ya sinema ye e lego diatleng tša Bubbles le ya diskhoklaba ye ka molomo e lego yona e hlokomelwago ke Noko, fela nnete e swerwego ke Bubbles nakong ye ntši, gobane mantšiboa a mantši Noko a sepelela kgole ka baka la jese. Le gona, yona klabo ye ya diskho ke ngwana yo a tšwago mogopolong wa gagwe Bubbles. Gomme o be a bile a phala yena Noko ka go e swara. (Kekana, 1989:19).

Here in Pelindaba he (Noko, Bubbles' father) had two businesses, a cinema that was managed by Bubbles and a disco club that was occasionally managed by

him but truly speaking, it was also in Bubbles' hands in many instances because, most of the nights Noko was out to far destinations because of attending jazz music. Additionally, this disco club is the brainchild of Bubbles. She was even managing this business better than her father, Noko.

(b) Excerpts from *Nonyana ya Tokologo*: M.A. Kekana (1985)

Kekana authored this novel, which seeks to emancipate women from patriarchal dominance. One of her female characters by the name of Taamane, was a very ambitious woman who strove for fame, respect and riches. Her ambition is expressed in the following lines below:

Gomme ka ge yena a ikemišeditše go fetošā mahlatse a gagwe lefaseng la pontsho, o be a lemoga gore dilo tše bjalo ka nyalo le go ba mmagobana di ka mo ditela go hwetša se a se nyakago goba go mo thibela go di hwetša (Kekana, 1985:15).

And since she was determined to change her fortune in the world of the showbiz, she realised that things such as marriage and being a mother could delay her to get what she wanted or prevent her from getting them.

Tšhaledi, Taamane's husband was against what his wife pursued and loved. He was a patriarchal man who believed a woman's place is at home, to do house chores, look after her husband and children. His patriarchal endeavours are confirmed in the following words:

"O swanetše go ba o lemoga gore lerato le tliša nyalo. Gomme seo ke se ke ikemišeditšego go se dira ka pele ka mo go ka kgonegago. Bjalo nyalo yona e tliša maikarabelo a lelapa le go tšwelela ga bana bao ba nyakago tlhokomelo. Lebakeng leo go bohlokwa go mosadi go tlogela tše ntši tše ka mo ahlogantšhago le legae la gagwe mme a le fe boineelo bjo bo tletšego. Go nna mošomo wo wa bobontšhi ga se wo o ka šadišetšago mosadi sebaka se se lekanego go ba mmalelapa wa makgonthe go ba lelapa la gagwe, ge eba gona o gapeletšago go šoma. Bjale wa ka mosadi e tla ba wa go dula gae ga ke rate mosadi wa go šoma ka ntle le gae" (Kekana, 1985:28).

You must be realising that love leads to marriage. That's what I'm willing to do as much as possible. Now marriage brings the responsibility of the family and the birth of children who need care. At that time, it is crucial for a woman to relinquish several distractions that may separate her from her home and to dedicate herself entirely to it. For me, this modelling work is not the kind of work that can give a woman enough time to be a real housewife to her family, if she is forced to work. Now, my woman will be the one who stays home, I don't like a working woman.

In the end, Taamane recognised that she had no other choice but to return to patriarchal prison (back to her husband, Tšhaledi) in the rural areas to submit to him. She humbly uttered the following words to Tšhaledi:

“Ke rile nyalo e nthatafišetša bophelo ka gore e mpofa. Ka re nka tla ka fetwa ke bophelo ke lebeletše yona le go hlokomela bana. Tšohle tše ka bona di nkgoka. Eupša tokologo le yona ke e bone gore e na le tša yona. Tumo ke e kgathotše, fela e mphile kgotsofalo ya lebakanyana fela gammogo le mabothata a e tlogo e a rwele ge o e hwetša. Lehumo go nna le bile bjalo ka makhura ao o a tlotšego o sa hlapa, a nyaoša tšhila ya šala kgakala. Tokologong ya ka ke hlaleditšwe ka lehu ka tšhoga ka ba ka gopola morago mo ke tšwago. Bjale Tšhaledi hle, ke kgopela gore o nkamogele, ke di bone tša lefase mme ke lapile.” Taamane a lebiša mahlo a a kgopelago Tšhaledi (Kekana, 1985:181).

“I thought marriage was making my life difficult since it’s binding me. I thought nice time will bypass me while I’m focussing on it and taking care of the children. I saw all this binding me. But I also saw that freedom has its own package. Fame gave me reputation but gave me temporary satisfaction together with difficulties that come with it when you get it. To me, riches are like putting oil on your body whilst bathing, loosening dirt from your body. In my freedom, I’ve been threatened by death, I became scared and remembered where I came from. Please Tšhaledi, may you please take me back, I have been through a lot in this life, and I am tired.” Taamane gazed directly into Tšhaledi’s eyes, imploring.

Another female character represented by Kekana in her work is Taamane’s best friend Suzan, who asserts her autonomy and strives for gender equality by engaging in activities typically associated with men, such as smoking. Taamane and Suzan had similar characters. She confesses that she also feels equal to men when she is smoking. In her discussion with Taamane, Suzan said the following words to stand by her words:

“Ke hwetša o mpha maatla a go lebana le mafelo a mathata ao ka ntle le ona ke ikwago ke tekateka. Go swana le ge ke le gare ga banna re rerišana tša kgwebo, ge se le molomong wa ka ke ikwa ke le molekane wa bona. Gomme le bona ba ntšea bjalo. Ba lemoga ka pela gore ke fapana le basatšana bale ba bona ba ba šiilego ka kua khišing mesong” (Kekana, 1985:140).

I find that smoking is empowering me to deal with areas of difficulty that I feel weakened. Like when I am in the middle of business negotiations with men, when it’s on my mouth I feel like their equal. And they also view me like that. They quickly realise that I’m different from their wives whom they left in their kitchens early in the morning.

This female author endeavours to view men and women as equals.

Northern Sotho literature has evolved from stereotypical portrayals of women to more nuanced portrayals. Male authors usually depict women in conventional roles, confining them to the kitchen, whereas the Northern Sotho female author, Kekana who wrote the novels *Nnete Fela* and *Nonyana ya Tokologo* which are also selected sources in this study, empowers her female characters. She ensures that women's voices are heard. Adichie (2016) supports Kekana's endeavours in affirming that:

In a society where women are not free to pursue their dreams or to control their bodies as men do theirs, women cannot be expected to be virtuous (Adichie, 2016:44).

Summary of the representation of females in modern portrayals

Under this sub-heading, Women are represented as independent, strong and resilient and endeavour to be equal to men. They strive for freedom from patriarchal control.

4.9.3 Joy and fulfilment in relationships

The selected Northern Sotho poems seem to have a positive representation of women. The poets celebrate the presence of the women in their lives. They are often praised for their beauty and hard work. The men express their pride and gratitude to their women. The language used in these literary genres are full of metaphors and imagery. The poets express their satisfaction and joy in their relationships although there are a few who complain about their women.

(a) Excerpts from *Go Hunadi* – Mamogoba, P.

This poem is a sonnet. The poet is praising Hunadi in sweet words as quoted below:

<p>Go Hunadi <i>Nnele bjalo ka pu'la modupi Hunadi yo mošwana, Mpele makhur'a monate reledi sa kgopolo tša ka, Ke re ke ralala ditšhabeng ke kganye</i></p>	<p>To Hunadi Rain on me like gentle rain light complexioned Hunadi, Be like sweet oil the beauty of my thoughts, So that I can go across the nations in pride,</p>
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<p><i>Ke kganye sa peolane ke nyakalale sebakeng,</i> <i>Ke botile Hunadi ngwan'a watle la pelo ya ka.</i> <i>Šala (gabotse) wena mpho 'a badimo,</i> <i>Yo šego ke sogwana la pelo ya gago;</i> <i>Ke go atla ka phišego ke le gole</i> <i>Ke futhumala maswafo ka seriti sa gago.</i> <i>Gola hunadi yo mošwana mpho'a badimo,</i> <i>Atlega bonolo atleng tša badimo, bengmaphelo,</i> <i>A go hlabele malele matšatši mahlogonolo.</i> <i>Tselatšhweu tselatšhweu Hunadi yo mošwana mho 'a</i> <i>Badimo (Mamogoba, 1985:19).</i></p>	<p>Be proud like a swallow flying in the skies, I trust in Hunadi the ocean child of my heart. Stay well you the gift of the gods, The blessed one is the lover of your heart; I embrace you with passion from far My lungs are warmed with your dignity. Grow up beautiful Hunadi a gift from the gods, May you succeed easily in the hands of the gods, health owners, May you have longer blessed days. Go well, go well beautiful Hunadi a gift from the gods.</p>
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(b) Excerpt from *Ke mo ratile* – Manamela, D.

<p><i>Ke mo ratile</i> <i>Ge o ka mpotšiša gore ke mo ratetšeng</i> <i>Mohlomongwe nka go botša</i> <i>Gobane tšeo ke di bonego go yena</i> <i>Ga di ešo tša go tlela</i> <i>Fela le ge di ka go tlela</i> <i>Go yo ke nago naye o tlo ntšhitelwa.</i></p>	<p>I loved her If you can ask me why I love her Maybe, I can tell you Because of all that I have seen in her They have not yet come to you The one that I am with will inconvenience me.</p>
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Go nna o swana le naledi ge e eteletše badiša

E le pele ba ya go bona morwamotho,

Go nna o swana le ngwana wa lehlaswa,

Ge e fihla pele ga tatagwe.

Nke o gopole pelo ya setswadi.

Ke rile go mmona la mathomo

Ka kwa ke imologa Morwalo

Ka hwetša ruri ke na le moamogetši wa mmapaale

Ke na le montloša bodutu moitia mašiwana

Ka mo rata ratirati gomme a lemoga,

Boteng le bophara bja lerato la ka.

A nkamogela boka kgogo ya matsuana

Ka kwa borutho bja la gagwe.

Ge ke realo le se makale

Gobane ge a ka hlanama

Nka upša ka ikela ke le kgope

Gobane ga go fao nka beago le lengwe.

Ke direng gobane ke mo ratile?

Ge e le pefe ke ya ka kgwara

Ge di rotha nteseng ke jele matlakaleng.

Rena re tseba seapeapotsa e le mosadi

To me you are like a star that is going before the shepherds

When they are going to see someone's son,

To me you are like a fool's child,

When he gets before his father.

Please remember a parent's heart.

When I saw her for the first time

I felt something heavy came off my shoulders

I found myself indeed having someone to receive me genuinely

I have the one to remove my loneliness a beater of poverty

I truly loved her and she realised it,

The depth and breath of my love.

She welcomed me like a chicken of chicks

I felt her warmth.

When I'm like this do not be surprised

Because if she can change her mind

I can rather die a bachelor

Because I have nowhere to go.

What must I do because I loved her?

As for anger it's my problem

If she is lazy please leave me alone to eat in the bin.

<p><i>Le gona sesebo le se leseng Ke tlo se tlwaela sa nyama.</i></p> <p><i>Mosadi ke go tliša dithorwana Bjale le tla be le mo solang Ka ge a itšhupile? (Manamela, 1983:8)</i></p>	<p>We know that the one who cooks food that is not well cooked is the woman</p> <p>Leave the gossip alone</p> <p>I will get used to it and it will be disappointed.</p> <p>A woman's job is to give birth to children</p> <p>Now why would you blame her</p> <p>Now that she has proved herself?</p>
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(c) Excerpt from *Moratiwa* – Matseke, M.P.

<p><i>Moratiwa</i></p> <p><i>Se se re kopantšego ga se tsebje, Se se re bofantšego ga se bonwe ka mahlo, Naa ke mang yo a kilego a bona moya? Naa moya ga o tšutlele mo o ratago? Le ge go le bjalo wa go re tlemaganya ga se woo o tšutlago; Ke moyana wo boruthwana setšwabohlabela, O re apešitše mahlasedi re sa itebetše; Ra pipša ke leoto mahlong le megopolong; Go phafogeng re ikhweditše re gokarane ka diatla tše borutho; Re lebelelane ka mahlong thwii re nywanywa, Tladimolongwana e le selomodiro; maleme a dumedišana.</i></p> <p><i>Ya rena tayo ga ra e fiwa ke motho e tšwa badimong.</i></p>	<p>My darling</p> <p>What brought us together is unknown,</p> <p>Whatever binds us is invisible, Who has ever seen the wind? Doesn't the wind blow where it wants to?</p> <p>Even though it is like that, the one that binds us is not the one that blows</p> <p>It is warm breeze from the east, You covered us with rays while we were forgetting;</p> <p>We were stung by the foot in our eyes and minds;</p> <p>At the wake we found ourselves embracing each other in warm hands;</p>
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*Tayo tša bona re di tokile pelong
bokatlapeng,*

*dikeletšo tša bona re di apere
molaleng bjalo ka pheta.*

*Re tseba ge re le monwana le
lenala,*

*Ntepa le theto di bjalo ka wena le
nna.*

*Mahloko a yo mongwe a swiswatša
yo mongwe pelo,*

*Lethabong re gahlana re swana
bjalo ka mafahlana.*

*Tlhompfo ya gago e šira
mohlompšha tlhaologanyo,*

*Boleta le botho bja gago ke tša
sesadisadi.*

*O na le pelo ye tšhweu ya go hloka
selabi.*

*O na le leago la go hloma motse
letlapeng,*

*Go go lebala ke go itebala ka noši
gore ke mang.*

*Go ba le pelo ga gago go nkgebisa
pelo.*

*Lentšwana la gago le ntlhatswa
pelo.*

*Ge o se gona ke felega ka go
nyaka,*

*Ge o le kgauswi ke thelela pelo ka
go hlwa ke go nyakuretše,*

*Ge o nkatogile ke šala ke go bona
moyeng.*

We looked straight into each
other's eyes and smiled,

We kissed; tongues greeted each
other.

Our discipline is not given to us by
anyone, it comes from the gods.

Their discipline we have fixed in our
hearts in the wilderness,

Their advice we have worn around
our necks like a necklace.

We know when we are finger and
nail,

The triangular animal skin skirt and
apron are like you and me.

The pain of one darkens the heart
of another,

In joy we meet like twins.

Your honour obscures the
honourable's understanding,

Your gentleness and kindness are
feminine.

You have a good heart without
pain,

You have a society to build a city on
a stone,

To forget you is to forget my own
identity.

Your heartfeltness adorns my
heart.

Your voice cleanses my heart.

When you are not there, I end up
looking for you,

<p><i>Ditorong o tšeešše badimo modiro wa go nketela.</i></p> <p><i>Mahlwana a gago a gadima bokadinaletšane.</i></p> <p><i>Go segeng meno nke ke taamane, Nkwana ya gago e tshoramišitšwe wa go hlaba thedi,</i></p> <p><i>Thekana la gago le nkamoga kgopolo.</i></p> <p><i>Yo a rego a ka re amologanya o iphora le eja motho,</i></p> <p><i>Ya rena kamologano e tla tlišwa ke ge yo mongwe a theogetše bohunamatolo (Matseke, 1989:58).</i></p>	<p>When you are near, I slip my heart by still searching for you,</p> <p>When you leave me, I am left to see you in the air.</p> <p>In dreams, you have taken the task of visiting me from the gods.</p> <p>Your eyes are as bright as the stars.</p> <p>In laughing, your teeth are like diamonds,</p> <p>Your nose is slit like it's posing,</p> <p>Your waist distracts me.</p> <p>Whoever says he can separate us is deceiving himself,</p> <p>Our separation will happen when one of us die.</p>
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(d) Excerpts from *O Ntebatša Mašwana* – Mphahlele, E.T. and Tauatsoala, M.J.

<p><i>O Ntebatša Mašwana</i></p> <p><i>Ge o bona ke le bjalo,</i></p> <p><i>E no ba bobelebele bjo.</i></p> <p><i>Pelo le moyo di thopilwe ke wena;</i></p> <p><i>O tliša khutšo moyeng wa ka;</i></p> <p><i>O kgabaganya kgopolong nako tšohle.</i></p> <p><i>Ge o ka kgaola pele ga fahlego sa ka,</i></p> <p><i>Ga ke lape go goboga mpaka o širela.</i></p>	<p>You make me forget about misery</p> <p>If you see me as such,</p> <p>It's just this stupidity.</p> <p>Heart and soul have been captured by you;</p> <p>You bring peace to my soul;</p> <p>You cross my mind all the time.</p> <p>If you can appear in front of my face,</p> <p>I never tire to get disgraced.</p> <p>Our love makes me confused,</p>
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*Lerato la rena le mpakela
tshereano,*

O se wa ntšiša digwere.

*Le wena o bina koša ye bjalo ka
nna?*

Moratiwa, o bjalo ka lehlabula:

Wena, letšobana la pelo ya ka,

Lerato la rena le lauma malakabe,

*Sa gago sefahlego go nna ke
gauta.*

*Wena, swika le bohlokwa phelong
bja ka,*

*Ka loba wena, ke lobile tšohle
bophelong.*

*Bophelo bo tlo galaka la
mogalakane,*

*Pelo ya ka e tlo ba leswiswing la
kgotlombo.*

*Lerato o nkamogelang ka lona le
boruthorutho,*

*Borutho bjo bo fetago le bja
maruthwaneng,*

*Borutho bja lona bo ntebatša
mašwana.*

*Ka go hloela ke bjalo ka
molwelatokologo:*

*Lerato la rena le foka bokamoyana
wa go fola,*

*Bokalewatle leo le laolwago ke
mong wa bohle.*

*Ramasedi nke a re hlagolele neng
le neng*

You didn't give me muthi.

Are you dancing to this song like
me?

Beloved, you are like summer:

You, the flower of my heart,

Our love is burning like fire,

Your face to me is gold.

You, the precious rock in my life,

If I lose you, I lost everything in life.

Life will be so bitter,

My heart will be in a dark space.

The love you show me is warm,

The warmth that is warmer than in
the spring,

Its warmth makes me forget my
misery.

In spite I am as an activist:

Our love blows a healing breeze,

An ocean controlled by the master
of all.

May God bless us forever

By the grace and kindness of his
love

To the storms of life.

<p><i>Ka mabobo le botho bja lerato la gagwe</i></p> <p><i>Go madimo a bophelo</i> (Mphahlele and Tauatsoala, 1997:35).</p>	
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(e) Excerpt from *Hunadi* – Soana, A.S.

<p>Hunadi</p> <p><i>Ruri ga ke bo pate, Hunadi, o ntlhoba boroko,</i></p> <p><i>Ke neng ke iteka maatla, ke ekwa bohloko,</i></p> <p><i>Bogale bja lerato bo ntshega pelo?</i></p> <p><i>Mphe pelo ya gago o hloke pelaelo;</i></p> <p><i>O nyakišiše ge eba ke nnete ke a swa,</i></p> <p><i>O ntokolle lehu le sešo la tla la nkutšwa.</i></p> <p><i>Ke dumetše tsela-mmogo le lona ge o latolla,</i></p> <p><i>Gobane pitšeng ye le tla ntihatlola.</i></p> <p><i>Ke kwa melodi ya dinonyana melapong;</i></p> <p><i>Torong re be re dumellane re le lekolo-</i></p> <p><i>Nthabiše, Hunadi, ke nna ke kwago bohloko</i> (Soana, 1989:46).</p>	<p>Hunadi</p> <p>I really can't hide it, Hunadi, you are making me sleepless,</p> <p>How long have I been struggling, feeling pain,</p> <p>Does the wrath of love laugh at my heart?</p> <p>Give me your heart and be not afraid;</p> <p>Find out if I am really burning,</p> <p>Deliver me before death comes and takes me away.</p> <p>I have agreed to take one way with it (death) when you deny,</p> <p>For in this pot, you shall take me up.</p> <p>I hear the birds singing in the rivers;</p> <p>In the dream we had agreed as members-</p> <p>Make me happy, Hunadi, I am the one who is hurting.</p>
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(f) Excerpts from *Bogale bja mosadi* – Mogodi, M.I.

Bogale bja mosadi

*Bogale bja mosadi bo hlomola pelo,
Ka seatla thipa o e swara ka
bogaleng;*

*Ka mokokotlo nnete a bepula
lešokokgolo.*

*Leeto o le tsena go tonya la go ya
madibeng;*

*Ke kgaoga pelo ge tšeo ke di
gopola hle thamagana.*

*Mosadi ruri ka bogale o phala le
lona legare,*

*O dumela gore la gagwe le be
bogadi lebitla;*

*Sa gabo sefane o se lahla tadi e
amuša mosegare.*

*O rwala a magolo ka ntle le poifo
magetla,*

*Ka pelong a ipotša gore
mosadisadi ke bogadi.*

*Mosadi a rena o a kgotlelela
mathata,*

*A monkgo wa mothamagane le a
letsoko*

*Monna o ja mere ka moka ke sona
sebata.*

*Ka gae a goroga le malwetšitsoko,
Mosadi a ipofa pelo a tliša kalafo ya
setho.*

*Ya mosadi ruri ga e aloge koma,
Tša rena dimpa o di fepa ka lesego;*

The wrath of a woman

The wrath of a woman is grievous
to the heart,

With her hand she holds the knife
by the blade;

With her back she carries great
compassion.

The journey she enters in the cold
of the deep;

I am heartbroken when I remember
all that please.

A woman is sharper than a razor,
She believes that her grave be the
home of her husband;

She throws her maiden name
broad day light.

She carries the great ones without
fear on her shoulders,

In her heart she thought to herself
that a woman's place is at her
husband's home.

Our wife endured hardships,
A scent of traditional beer brewed
by the bran of other beer and of
tobacco

A man eats all the herbs, he is the
beast.

At home he arrives with certain
illnesses,

The woman confided in herself and
brings traditional healing.

<p><i>Ge re eya maeto a re apeela bokomo, Meetse a go tonya a re kgela ka sego, Gore tsela re e sepele ka ye tšhweu pelo. Ge mosadi a lle mabilo badimong a ka go iša, La re go hlaba ruri a itshola; Ka molomo wa go ja bogobe a roga bona boMaiša. Sehloedumare a lla a dutše setopo a se sola; Pelong a ipotša gore ga se mathomo ka yena (Mogodi, 1989:10).</i></p>	<p>A woman does not graduate from her duties, You feed our bellies with blessing; When we go on trips she cooks us edible powder, She pours us cold water in calabash, So that we can go well. If a woman cries running to the gods she can take you, But the next day, she repents herself; With her mouth she curses them. She is pretending to weep whilst sitting doubting the corpse; In her heart she told herself that it was not the beginning for her.</p>
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(g) Excerpts from *Bjale ka ge o sepetše* – Lebepe, M.V.

<p><i>Bjale ka ge o sepetše</i> <i>Bjale ka ge o sepetše moratiwa, Ya gago pelo e wele, Gobane hlare sa muši ke go o tlogela, Nyakalala o fofele kae le kae rato, Ya ka pelo e binabina ka lona lethabo, Seo se nkganago se nthola morwalo,</i></p>	<p><i>Now that you've gone</i> Now that you are gone my love, You are now satisfied, For the tree of smoke is to forsake it, Rejoice and fly everywhere my love, My heart is glad and rejoices, What rejects me takes away my burden, I will not come after you my love,</p>
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<p><i>Morago nka se go šale rato, batho!</i></p> <p><i>Mmapelo o ja serati, mmalo!</i></p> <p><i>Dula le botse bja gago gageno, Nna ke tla dula le bokoko bja ka gagešo, Ka ge o sa le lebotlana, A mantši magadi o tlile go a dula wa katoga, Madimabe ke go lakaletša ona neng le neng, Le wena ke a tseba o dutše ka nna sebešong, Nka upša ka rapela Legodimo gore ke rapele wena, Seo se sa felego nnete se a hlola (Masekoameng and Mothapo, 2017:29).</i></p>	<p>The heart chooses the one it loves!</p> <p>Stay with your beauty at your home, I will stay with my grandmother at my home, Because you are still young, Many dowries you will find and leave after a while, I wish you misfortune forever, I know that you are also gossiping about me, I can rather pray to heaven than pray to you, What doesn't come to an end, the truth is that it leads to bad luck.</p>
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(h) Excerpts from *Go dingwetši* – Machitela, M.S.

<p><i>Go dingwetši</i></p> <p><i>Aowii ...! Go reng na?</i></p> <p><i>Le reng le baka bogadi dingwetši?</i></p> <p><i>Ka diolo ruri le tloga le hlolana, Hlwayang tsebe ke le re eletši!</i></p> <p><i>Lesang go sobelana ka sethepeng</i></p> <p><i>Ge le hutšwetša, ka moka le tlile ka kgomo.</i></p>	<p>To the brides</p> <p>Aowii! ... What does it mean?</p> <p>Why are you fighting about the place of your in-laws, brides?</p> <p>You are peeping one another through the fences, Listen to my advice!</p> <p>Stop pinching one another in the corner</p>
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<p><i>Mmatswale mohlompheg balekani ba aleleng, Se sebaneng se tsupolelaneng melomo. Banabešo tlogelang go jelana mona, Mmatswale ge a sega le mongwe se re: “ba a ntsheba.” Mmatswale ba gagwe bana o ba rata ka moka ga bona, Mogadibo mo leseng tša gagwe o sa tliilo di tseba. Se hufagelaneng hle dingwetši tšešo, Ka šebešebe orang se tee sebešo (Masekoameng and Mothapo, 2017:45).</i></p>	<p>All of you came into the in-laws with cows. Honour your mother-in-law and make the beds for your spouses, Don't gossip about each other and don't be angry with each other. My brothers and sisters, let us stop being jealous of each other, When mother-in-law is laughing with another don't say: “they are gossiping about me.” Mother-in-law loves all her children, Leave my-sister-in-law alone, she will still know about hers. Please don't be jealous of one another my brides, In peace, warm yourselves in one fireplace.</p>
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(i) Excerpts from *Mosadi wa ka* – Lebepe, M.V.

<p><i>Mosadi wa ka</i> <i>O mosadi wa ka, Ga o mosadi wa rena, O mooki wa ka, O ngaka ya ka, O mma wa ka, O mogwera wa ka, Re tla ntšhana sa inong, O kotse ya ka, O lehlotlo la ka,</i></p>	<p>My wife You are my wife, You are not our wife, You are my nurse, You are my doctor, You are my mother, You are my friend, We will love one another, You are my shield, You are my treasure,</p>
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<p><i>O sebo sa ka, Tseba mosadi ke thari, Ga o mosadi wa lefase, Re swarane ka diatla tše pedi, Re hlapišane ka meetse a borutho (Masekoameng and Mothapo, 2017:102).</i></p>	<p>You are my fortress, Know that a woman must give birth to children, You are not the woman of the world, We work and agree with each other, Treat each other warmly.</p>
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(j) Excerpts from *Moratiwa wa ka* – Lebepe, M.V.

<p><i>Moratiwa wa ka</i> <i>O kgauswi le nna ka mehla, O na le nna ka mehla, O nkgopa maikutlo ka mehla, O nthopile pelo le moya, O nkgapile pelo le moya.</i></p> <p><i>O na le nna ka mehla, O ntlhokomela ka mehla, O ntharollela mathata, O thaba le nna ka mehla. O nkgoga maikutlo ka mehla, Ge ke go bona letšoba la ka, Mahlo a ka a tšholla dikeledi tša lerato, Gobane o tšhite bophelong bja ka.</i></p> <p><i>Ke dumaduma ka wena, O nthopile pelo le moya, Ke kganyoga wena ka mehla,</i></p>	<p>My love You are always near me, You are always with me, You fascinate me all the time, You have captured my heart and my soul, You took my heart and soul.</p> <p>You are with me always, You look after me every day, You solve my problems, You are happy with me every day.</p> <p>You fascinate me all the time, When I see you my flower, My eyes shed tears of love, Because you are beebread in my life.</p> <p>I'm rumbling about you,</p>
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<p><i>Ke šweufala ka lethabo ge o le pele ga ka.</i></p> <p><i>Ruri o nkgapile pelo moratiwa, Ke go bona le dipoko mašego, Ka meetseng ke bona wena fela, Ka dijong ke wena fela, Ke go bona le ge ke tswaletše mahlo.</i></p> <p><i>Moratiwa gola o fete tlou le tšhukudu, O ka ke lewatle le dithaba, O bonwa le ke difofu, Tseba le dimuma di bolela ka wena, Mahlong a ka o feta le gauta ka go benya (Masekoameng and Mothapo, 2017:95).</i></p>	<p>You have captured my heart and soul, I desire you always, I am full of joy in your presence.</p> <p>You have really captured my heart my love, I'm seeing you with ghosts at night, In the water, I only see you, In the food, it's only you, I see you even when I close my eyes.</p> <p>Love, grow up to be better than the elephant and the rhinoceros, You are like the sea and the mountains, Even the blind can see you, Know that even dumb people talk about you, In my eyes you are more precious than gold.</p>
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Summary of the representation of females in Northern Sotho poems – Joy and fulfilment in relationships

The researcher notes that in Northern Sotho poetry, males seem to adopt a gentler tone towards women. Most of the poets in the selected poems seem to praise the women's beauty and dependence on them unlike the other selected genres. There is only one poem where the poet wishes his ex-lover bad luck because of her bad deeds.

4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the research design, methodological approach, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis methods, measures to ensure trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Data collection began after having obtained ethical clearance from the University of South Africa. Relevant literary texts were selected and analysed using textual analysis and close reading, which enabled a comparative exploration of how women are represented by both male and female Northern Sotho authors.

Purposive sampling was employed to select Northern Sotho literary texts—including novels, short stories, poems, and proverbs—that portray women. Thematic analysis and CDA were applied to the collected data to examine recurring themes and underlying ideologies.

Although the study did not involve human participants, ethical approval was still secured in line with institutional requirements. To ensure trustworthiness, the selected texts were read and reviewed multiple times, and strategies to uphold validity and reliability were integrated throughout the research process.

The next chapter (Chapter five) presents the data analysis and interpretation, structured around the central themes that emerged from the examined Northern Sotho literary texts.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, the researcher discussed the research design, research subjects/population, sampling techniques, data gathering techniques, ethical considerations, data analysis plan and data presentation. The researcher stated in chapter four that this study is qualitative in nature. A careful selection and presentation of Northern Sotho literature themes were extracted from novels, short stories, poems and proverbs which represent women in various ways. These secondary sources offered a broader context of how women are represented by both male and female authors. Through textual analysis and close reading of the selected literature and other relevant resources, the researcher was able to review how women are depicted in contrasting ways and this led to the development of arguments in this study.

In this chapter, the researcher will analyse the collected data and subsequently present findings and interpretations. The study will also focus on the analysis of contrasting ways in which the male and the female authors depict their female characters. An inductive approach to thematic analysis will be employed to identify recurrent themes related to women's representation. CDA will also be applied to examine the use of language structures in the selected literary sources.

Flick (2014) considers data analysis as the central step in qualitative research and that this analysis forms the outcomes of the research. He provides a detailed description of data analysis below:

Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it (Flick, 2014:3).

Adding to Flick's (2014) view, Creswell (2007) defines data analysis in qualitative research as follows:

It consists of preparing and organizing the data (i.e., text data as in transcripts, or image data as in photographs) for analysis, then reducing the data into

themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell, 2007:148).

The overall aim of this study is to provide a sociolinguistic analysis of the evolution of portrayals of women in the Northern Sotho literature. Thereafter, the findings will be presented and interpreted. Table 5.1 below gives a summary of the target population:

Table 1: The target population (N=31)

Novels	5
Short stories	6
Poems	10
Proverbs	10

The researcher will employ the qualitative analysis methods to analyse data acquired from the literary sources, specifically thematic and CDA.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE SELECTED WRITTEN SOURCES

The selected Northern Sotho literary books in this study are novels, short stories, poems, and proverbs. Below is a detailed overview of these literary texts.

5.2.1 Overview of the selected Northern Sotho novels

This subsection will analyse the differences in the portrayal of female characters by both male and female Northern Sotho authors, highlighting the biases and contrasting depictions. In chapter four, the researcher carefully selected the Northern Sotho novels that portray female characters in various ways. The selected novels provided the researcher with relevant data for this study on how women are represented in the texts. After data presentation in chapter four the researcher will systematically analyse it in this chapter. The analysed data will help answer the research questions presented in chapter one. The researcher will present the data in tables and discussions.

(a) *Megokgo ya Bjoko*: O.K. Matsepe (1968) and *Tšhelang Gape*: O.K. Matsepe (1974)

Male authors typically portray women unfavourably, as seen in the works of Matsepe, who depicts women as submissive and dependent in his novels (*Megokgo ya Bjoko*, 1968, and *Tšhelang Gape*, 1974). Traditional life, traditional courts, communication with ancestral spirits, justice and the contemporary justice system are common themes in his novels. These novels are focused on the cultural practices of the traditional

society and full of cultural heritage of the Northern Sotho people in general. The communities in both novels are led by chiefs and have traditional legal practices. Traditional healers are given centre stage to protect the chief, his family and the royal kraal.

(b) *Lenong la Gauta*: H.D.N. Bopape (1982)

Another Northern Sotho novel that depicts women unfavourably, is *Lenong la Gauta* authored by Bopape (1982). This novel was also selected for its depiction of women. The author represents women as secretive, dangerous, untrustworthy, greedy, and he moreover characterises them as opportunistic. In her thesis, Masuku (2005) also laments male authors on how they portray women. She further critiques traditional Zulu society for ascribing conventional images to women, depicting them as witches, and unfaithful individuals.

(c) *Nnete Fela*: M.A. Kekana (1989) and *Nonyana ya Tokologo*: M.A. Kekana (1985)

Contrary to the presentation of women by male authors in the aforementioned novels, Kekana is one of the Northern Sotho female authors who portrays her females in both her novels *Nnete Fela* (1989) and *Nonyana ya Tokologo* (1985) in a positive and progressive way. Both novels depict women as resilient and represent emerging feminism. Both novels are set in a patriarchal society and strive for the emancipation of women. Kekana portrays one of the females in her novel *Nnete Fela* by the name of Bubbles as an independent, successful woman who is free from patriarchal control, who makes decisions for herself. The female character, Taamane, in *Nonyana ya Tokologo*, endeavoured to attain her freedom, but ultimately recognising that it was unattainable without her spouse, she returned to her patriarchal home in the villages.

5.2.2 Overview of the selected Northern Sotho short stories

This subheading examines the portrayal of women in the selected Northern Sotho short stories. The researcher will also focus on the contrasting ways in which females are portrayed and how the authors name their female characters in relation to their roles in this literary genre. The researcher meticulously selected the subsequent Northern Sotho short stories from a literature book edited by Mamabolo (2015) and a short story edited by Serudu (1991) because of their representation of women. *Khupamarama* is a collection of short stories that were written by award-winning authors.

5.2.3 Overview of the selected Northern Sotho poems

In this subsection, the researcher will focus on the portrayal of women in Northern Sotho poetry. The selected poems will show how females are depicted and presented in this literary genre.

Poetry is a cultural form where the placing of the words is driven by their sound as well as by their sense or meaning (Strachan, 2011:9).

According to Irmawati (2014:35)

Poetry is literary work in metrical form or patterned language. It's regarded as the most difficult genre of literature.

From the above definitions from these two researchers, one can conclude that poetry is a special kind of literary genre.

The following selected Northern Sotho poems in the table below will be analysed to see how women are represented.

5.2.4 Overview of the selected Northern Sotho proverbs

This section will examine the portrayal of women in this literary genre. Many proverbs are written in Northern Sotho about women. The main concern is how women are depicted in these proverbs. The researcher is concerned that the language used in some Northern Sotho proverbs diminishes the dignity of women. Ten Northern Sotho proverbs were sourced from *Marema-ka-dika: Tša Sesotho sa Lebowa* authored by Rakoma (1978). Arewa and Dundes (1964) define proverbs as impersonal vehicles for personal communication and that parents use them to direct children's actions or thoughts. They further state that these proverbs were made by the elders or ancestors to direct children or people in general. Mieder (2004:xi) augments Arewa and Dundes' definition in stating that:

The wisdom of proverbs has guided people in their social interactions for thousands of years throughout the world.

He further states that proverbs contain everyday experiences and common observations in succinct and formulaic language, making them easy to remember and ready to be used instantly as effective rhetoric in oral or written communication.

Proverbial sayings in Northern Sotho, still play a significant role in contemporary lifestyle. These literary genres have a significant role in African languages as well. The definition of proverbs is further expanded by Finnegan (1994:11) as follows:

Proverbs are a rich source of imagery and succinct expression on which more elaborate forms can draw. They are generally marked by terseness of expression, by a form different from that of ordinary speech, and by a figurative mode of expression abounding in metaphor.

Etta and Mogu (2012:188) give the following explicit definition of proverbs:

A proverb is a phrase, saying, sentence, statement, or expression of the folk which contains above all wisdom, truth, morals, experience, lessons, and advice concerning life and which has been handed down from generation to generation.

Another but similar definition sees proverbs as a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphysical, fixed and memorisable form and which is handed down from generation to generation.

Baker and Maluleke (2020:16698) concur with Etta and Mogu in saying that:

Proverbs in languages are used to develop good morals, values and to communicate accepted norms and beliefs especially in African societies.

From the definitions above from various authors, one learns that the purpose of proverbs was and still is to guide, teach and unveil the truth since they are full of wisdom. Contrary to this statement, there are some proverbs that are used to belittle women, exalt patriarchy, and promote polygamy amongst other negative things that are promoted. An analysis of the selected Northern Sotho proverbs will be discussed below.

In the Bapedi culture, a woman is expected to be a hard worker and look after her husband and children. If the man is polygamous, he pays more attention to the hard-working woman's family. The woman is also expected to bear more children, especially boys as they will carry the man's surname to the next generation. An example of what has just been stated is found in one of the selected novels that will be analysed, *Nnete Fela*. The characters whose names are Bubbles and Karabo were twins. However, the father, Noko, favoured Karabo due to his male gender, despite Bubbles being more industrious and productive.

The following selected Northern Sotho proverbs in the table below will be analysed to see how women are portrayed.

5.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

As stated in chapter four, this study will employ thematic analysis of textual data as a qualitative tool to analyse data collected from purposely selected Northern Sotho texts. The researcher will now analyse and interpret the data gathered to show understanding of occurrences. Thematic analysis is appropriate for this study since it allows for the exploration of sociolinguistic, gender, and cultural themes in the selected texts. This approach allows the researcher to interpret the various ways women are depicted in the literature. Through the analysis of the selected themes, the researcher will gain a profound understanding of the lived experiences of women within their socio-cultural contexts. The following themes were effectively developed after thorough reading.

5.3.1 Traditional representations of women

Under this theme, women are represented in traditional and stereotypical ways in some of the selected Northern Sotho texts. The female characters take up the roles as mothers, housewives, caregivers and so forth. They depend on their spouses for their families' provision. Some are abused emotionally and physically, yet this kind of gender bias is normalised in these socio-cultural contexts.

(a) *Megokgo ya Bjoko*: O.K. Matsepe (1968) and *Tšhelang Gape*: O.K. Matsepe (1974)

In *Megokgo ya Bjoko*, the researcher observed GBV that was in Leilane's traditional household. Leilane violently abused his wife and his father-in-law. It can be inferred from the subsequent lines that he saw his wife as his possession.

Leilane ga a ka a senya sebaka sa go mo thiba lehlatšo ka lepara. O ile a mo itia gore le be le tsharoge (Matsepe, 1968:11).

Leilane didn't waste time; he began thrashing her with a stick to cure her vomiting. He beat her until the point of the stick splintered.

Mohlatša, Leilane's wife, was playing her role as a housewife and caregiver. Leilane came home one day from the men's gathering and asked his wife to give him porridge as he was hungry. His wife never wasted time but fetched it for him. The author says:

Ka ntle ga go senya sebaka, mosadi o tsene ka mokutwaneng a botoga a swere bogobe ka mogopo, a tle a bo bea pele ga gagwe (Matsepe, 1968:10).

Without wasting time, the woman entered the hut and came with porridge in a bowl and put it in front of him.

This shows how submissive and caring Mohlatša was to her spouse.

Quotations from the novel *Megokgo ya Bjoko* clearly indicate that Leilane perceived himself as the head of the family, possessing the authority to make decisions, including the abuse of family members.

In the novel *Tšhelang Gape* (1974), Matsepe proceeds to depict his female characters as subordinates completely dominated by their spouses and male figures. The women are living in a patriarchal society, and their roles are confined to domestic work.

In the same vein, Machaba (2011) observes that rural women were portrayed as virtuous, forgiving, hardworking and submissive.

It is evident from the selected literary sources that gender-based GBV was not only experienced in these socio-cultural contexts. Presently, women in South Africa and across the world are still experiencing GBV. They are either abused by their husbands, boyfriends or other male figures in the families, the people who are expected to protect them. Therefore, GBV is not only witnessed in the literary works but sadly, something that is experienced by women every day in South Africa and globally.

(b) *Lenong la Gauta*: H.D.N. Bopape (1982)

Women in this novel are depicted in traditional ways and sometimes in modern ways. As stated in chapter four, the author of this novel depicts females as secretive, dangerous, untrustworthy, greedy, and moreover characterises them as opportunistic. Female characters like Matšhego show resilience and strength amid the obstacles she was faced with.

To prove Matšhego's secrecy, Mr Maleka her husband said the following words:

“O a bona Nnono, mengwaga e mene ya go feta ge ke nyalana le Mmatšhego, ke be ke sa tsebe selo ka yena gomme le ge a sa ke a bolela kudu, gagolo ka

bophelo bja gagwe bjo bo fetilego, ke ithutile se sengwenyana ka bjona” (Bopape, 1982:28).

“You see Nnono, the past four years when I got married to Mmatšhego, I did not know anything about her and even though she does not speak a lot, especially about her past life, I learned something about it.”

Secretive women are also depicted as dangerous by the author.

Bopape uses idioms like the following:

go neela moya (Bopape, 1982:13) which means to die.

go mmaka le badimo (Bopape, 1982:73) which means to be between life and death.

He also uses simile like *a sekhumola bjalo ka lesea* (Bopape, 1982:31) which means he started crying like a baby. This type of language is mostly used in traditional contexts.

Fonchingong (2006) laments male authors in general such as Achebe, Amadi, Soyinka, wa Thiong'o, and Ekwensi for their male-centred perspective, which often marginalises women and confines them to secondary roles.

(c) *Khupamara* short stories – Mamabolo, M. (2015)

(i) *Bogadi ke petse* – Madiba, M.S.

In this short story, Mahlomola's mother and his sisters infringed on Ntholeng's human rights and freedom. Ntholeng was living with her in-laws and husband in their traditional home where she was expected to execute all household duties and was treated like a slave. The following expressions were thrown at Ntholeng by her sisters-in-law:

Pokolo yeo e aperego ditomo tša bogadi e goge mogoma woo e rilego e tla o goga wa go ba ngwetši (Mamabolo, 2015:61).

A donkey that is wearing the groom's ropes must pull the hoe (garden tool) which she said she will pull as a bride.

Her husband Mahlomola gave her little consolation against this persecution that she was faced with from his mother and sisters. He would give her pathetic consolation words like:

Kgotlelela, di tla fela (Mamabolo, 2015:62)

Persevere, all this will be over.

The author uses proverbs like:

sehlare sa muši ke go se katoga (Mamabolo, 2015:62).

It's best to stay away from a burning tree.

Ntholeng was tired from people who were treating her like a slave and not their brother's wife. Expressions like: *Go hlakišwa; go hlorišwa* (Mamabolo, 2015:63) are used in this short story. This means to be oppressed and to be persecuted.

(ii) *Le ge o ka nthaka ...!* – Tauatsoala, M.

In this short story, Mathintha expressed his abusive nature by beating his wife, abusing her physically for answering back. Mathintha even went to the extent of abusing his own daughters when they decided to move out of their home to look for their abandoned half-brother.

The author thus highlights GBV through this short story. Expressions such as the following are noted in the story.

... a šupa morwa wa gagwe tsela (Mamabolo, 2015:80)

He chased his own son from his home.

The author quotes idioms in the story.

Go thuntšha meši ka dinko (Mamabolo, 2015:83).

To be very angry.

Kwelabohloko e mo hlanogetše – exaggeration (Mamabolo, 2015:83).

This means that Mathintha was so furious that mercy turned against him. He was furious with his wife and stepson. This led to him physically assaulting both.

Go mo tseiša Phiri – idiom (Mamabolo, 2015:92).

This idiom means 'to kill'. Mahlomola's wife, Matshedišo began to be afraid of her husband and feared for her life.

(iii) *Mohlomongwe ke thabologo* – Rafapa, J.R.L.

In this short story GBV is exposed. The author evidently revealed the abusive nature of the male character by the name of Moswananoši towards females, abusing his power as a man. As previously mentioned in chapter four, Moswananoši sexually violated and impregnated his son's wife and his two daughters. The son went to tell the shocking news to his uncle. The author uses idioms in this short story to enrich his speech. He uses the following idiom that was uttered by the uncle to Moswananoši's son:

Go phula khudu ka mpeng (Mamabolo, 2015:45).

To reveal a secret.

Go robega leoto (Mamabolo, 2015:47).

To fall pregnant.

Go lahla patla goba go kgeila lepai (Mamabolo, 2015:47).

To report a case.

Go ba le mahlo a matelele (Mamabolo, 2015:48).

To have a bad behaviour of sleeping around with many women.

(iv) *Kgethollo ye sehlogo* – Mathete, M.

The author depicts the female character Mokgaetši, as a faithful wife who is prepared to stand by her man in sickness and in health. Her husband Seilakgaka was a promiscuous man. He ultimately died of full-blown AIDS and Mokgaetši decided to also take HIV tests that confirmed that she was positive. She revealed the findings to her best friend Mashadi who did not keep the secret which reached the high school where she was a teacher. She was discriminated against by both teachers and colleagues in the school for having contracted an incurable disease.

The male school principal and inspector depicted Mokgaetši as the ailing woman who will finally transmit the HIV virus to the students. Principal Lebeko uttered the following words:

Ke kwa ka mabarebare gore monna wa gago o hlokofetše ka lebaka la malwetši a a sebjalebja, ke a tšhepa gore o a kwešiša gore ke bolela ka eng (Mamabolo, 2015:254).

I hear from hearsays that your husband has died because of the contemporary diseases, I hope you understand what I mean.

E rile beke ka morago ga kopano yeo e sego ya fela gabotse, Lebeko a napa a phara Mokgaetši ka lengwalo leo le bego le mo laela gore a se sa hlwa a le bea moo sekolong ka ge a ka bea maphelo a bana ba sekolo kotsing (Mamabolo, 2015:255).

After a week since their meeting, principal Lebeko struck Mokgaetši with a letter that states that she must never set her foot in the school since she is now posing danger to the learners' lives.

It is evident that Mokgaetši was already sentenced to death by the male school principal. The following saying confirms this:

Go tseba mang, mohlomongwe le ona ngwaga wo o ka se ke wa o fetša (Mamabolo, 2015:254).

Who knows, maybe you will not finish this year alive.

Mokgaetši took this matter to the Department of Education who found Mr Lebeko guilty of retrenching her because of her HIV status, even though she was still fit to work. The principal was expelled from the school as a result.

Mokgaetši is evidently subjected to discrimination by males due to her gender and her HIV status.

In this short story, the author also uses idioms such as the following to enrich the language:

Go se fetwe ke thetho (Mamabolo, 2015:250).

To love to have sex with different women.

The males in this short story exploited Mokgaetši's vulnerability.

(v) *Re lebe kae?* – Tauatsoala, M.J.

The researcher finds that the female character Madimabe which means 'bad luck' in this short story is depicted as a pampered wife, a servant to the family, and a threat to her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law due to her husband's financial support of her and the family. The author uses the following proverb:

Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi (Mamabolo, 2015:141).

The woman's eternal abode is with her in-laws.

This means that if her spouse dies, she must not return to her parents' home.

The author writes expressions like:

Ba bangwe ba belegetšwe madimabe (Mamabolo, 2015:141).

Others were born for misfortune.

The following saying indicates that Madimabe's in-laws conflicted with her.

“Rena ga re sa le batho matšatši a, motho yo mokaone ke Madimabe”
(Mamabolo, 2015:145).

We are no longer regarded as human these days; Madimabe is the better one.

The author also used idioms like the following one:

Go bintšhwa koša ya oto le tee (Mamabolo, 2015:148).

To be persecuted.

Go nkgga go sa bola (Mamabolo, 2015:149).

The situation is bad.

Terms that ridiculed Madimabe were thrown at her by the in-laws like *tšhwene* 'monkey', *setlatla* 'stupid', *leseana la maabane* 'a baby that was born yesterday'.

(d) *Ditšwapitšengkgolo ya bokgabongwalo* – Serudu, M.S. (1991)

(i) *Ge o sa nyalwe ke nna, o ka se ke wa nyalwa ke motho.*

In this short story, patriarchy is imposed and the female character, Mmapekwe, has little freedom of choice. Mmapekwe's husband to be, viewed her as a deceitful woman.

The author used the following comparison of this female character:

... a thelela bjalo ka hlapi (Serudu, 1991:16).

... she slipped like a fish.

Mmapekwe was compared to a fish, because she was unreliable.

The following terms were used by her fiancée to describe her:

... mosetsana yo ga a tonye, ga a fiše, eupša o no ba yo bonolo, ... (Serudu, 1991:16).

... this girl is neither cold nor hot instead, she's lukewarm, ...

Mmapekwe is portrayed as an opportunistic woman in this short story. The following sayings attest to this.

... o be a hlohleletša lesogana go senyegelwa ka yena go mo rekela se le sela
(Serudu, 1991:16).

... she was encouraging her guy to spend on her by buying her this and that.

... fela ka pelong go tletše bolotšana bjo bo kganyogilego gore lesogana le tle mo rekele se le sela la mafelelo (Serudu, 1991:17).

... but her heart was filled with witchcraft, envying the guy for buying her this and that for the last time.

The following idioms are noted in this story.

go kgopela sego sa meetse (Serudu, 1991:18).

To ask for someone's daughter to be a bride.

go lata (Serudu, 1991:19).

When a man leaves his home to live with the bride's family.

A Northern Sotho proverb was implied in the following explanation. The proverb is one of the selected ones in this study.

Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi.

The meaning of this proverb is quoted in Serudu (1991:19) as follows:

Gape ka molao wa Sesotho, ge e ka re ngwetši e sa tšwa go fihla ya hwelwa, ga go ke go thwe o hwetšwe ke mogatšagwe a ka boela ga gabo. Mosadi wa kgoro efe goba efe ge a tšerwe ka kgorong ye nngwe, le ge a ka hwelwa ke mogatšagwe, o tla no šala a babalelwa gabotse ka mo kgorong yeo.

According to Northern Sotho law, when the bride's spouse passes on, they never say that since her husband is dead then, she can go back to her home. Any woman who is married and living in a man's home, even if her husband dies, the in-laws will look after her in that home.

Analysis of Northern Sotho proverbs

The language used in the selected Northern Sotho proverbs, frames their identities and women are represented in a traditional way. The following selected proverbs were analysed.

(i) *Mosadi ke tšhwene, o lewa mabogo.*

The researcher finds this proverb insulting and provoking towards women, African women in particular, as it compares them to unattractive monkeys. Metaphor is used in this proverb.

Mosadi ke tšhwene ...

A woman is a monkey ...

After thorough analysis, the researcher found that women are portrayed as unappealing, yet they are expected to work hard. In African traditional and contemporary societies, when a woman gets married, she lives with her in-laws for a period, sometimes for years due to inadequate funds to purchase a house for the newlyweds. This may impose a burden on the woman tasked with daily domestic responsibilities. In rural areas, women are expected to rise early in the morning to first gather firewood and retrieve water from the river. According to the selected short stories, some women are treated as slaves by their in-laws as evidenced by the last phrase of this proverb:

... o lewa mabogo.

She is judged by her hands.

In Northern Sotho and African culture in general, women are expected to work hard on household chores.

(ii) *Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi.*

The figurative interpretation is that upon marriage, a woman must acknowledge that upon her husband's demise, she forfeits the right to return to her family. Instead, she must continue living with her in-laws because they are the ones who will look after her. She cannot decide to return to her parents' home.

The researcher finds that this proverb is a form of oppression for women because it limits their freedom of choice.

(iii) *Lehu ga le hlalwe.*

The term *lehu* means death. The literal meaning of this proverb is: death is not abandoned. According to this proverb, it is inappropriate for a widow to go back to her family and leave her in-laws so she can get married to another man without the in-law's permission. This proverb is almost related to the aforementioned one.

The meaning of this proverb is made evident by the fact that the independence of women is governed by other people. Women are portrayed here as objects who are subjected to patriarchal control. They are instructed on actions to take without their

contributions. Unfortunately, this is still the case in South Africa and in some parts of the world.

(iv) *Tša etwa ke ya tshadi pele di wela ka leopeng.*

This proverb implies that women cannot govern because if they are permitted to have leadership positions, there will be chaos. Women are portrayed as inferior and not fit to govern or lead. The literal meaning of this proverb is: If they should be led by a female they will fall into a ditch. It simply means that men cannot be led by women. Feminists have strived and are still fighting for women's rights and liberation. However, progress has been made where women are presently holding many leadership positions in many sectors today across the world.

(v) *Mosadi ke nku, o rekwa mosela*

Metaphor is used in this proverb. *Mosadi ke nku* ... Meaning, a woman is a sheep The words that follow are the ones that are offensive to women:

... *o rekwa mosela.*

The literal explanation is 'her tail is bought'. This means that it depends on her physique from behind. Women must strive to look physically pleasing to men so that they can get married. If she looks appealing and sexy then she will win the man over. This proverb is entirely disparaging especially to African women. These are some of the aspects that the African feminist theory addresses.

(vi) *Mosadi ke mphodi ga a tshela mafate*

In this proverb we see metaphor being used.

Mosadi ke mphodi ...

A woman is a pumpkin plant ...

A woman is not allowed to be with more than one man. It is taboo according to the Northern Sotho culture and African culture in general. Whereas polygamy is permitted and normalised for men.

(vii) *Mosadi o swara thipa ka bogaleng.*

The literal meaning of this proverb means: the woman holds the knife by the blade. This proverb exposes the resilience and strength of women. They sacrifice themselves

for the sake of their children. This proverb shows how selfless women can be for others, putting themselves last.

(viii) *Monna ke hlogo ya lapa, mosadi ke molala.*

Metaphor is also used in this proverb.

Monna ke hlogo ya lapa ...

A man is the head of the family ...

... mosadi ke molala.

The woman is the neck.

This proverb endorses patriarchal dominance and diminishes women's self-esteem, notwithstanding advancements in promoting women to leadership roles. However, huge strides have been made to promote women to higher positions that were originally occupied by men. The proverb can also suggest complementary roles between spouses, with one being a leader and the other a follower. This kind of set-up is especially practised in the traditional families. The contemporary women engage in more labour than men, since they fulfil professional responsibilities and then undertake domestic duties, assisting children with homework while their husbands watch television.

(ix) *Mosadi a hlaletša ngwana bolwetši bo a fola.*

This proverb signifies that a mother, upon giving birth, instinctively finds joy in her child and consequently overlooks the hardships that have been afflicting her. Despite enduring hardships such as abuse, poverty, and lack of provision, she perseveres due to the blessing of motherhood. Women often identify their children as the basis for remaining in relationships despite dissatisfaction. The author used personification in this proverb in stating that:

bolwetši bo a fola.

The sickness is healing.

(x) *Mosadi ke theko ya rumo, re foša kgole.*

The proverb signifies that the location of a woman's marriage remains unknown to everyone. This location unfortunately, remains unknown to the woman herself. It

demonstrates how women's lives are governed by others rather than themselves. The author employed metaphor also in this proverb in stating that:

Mosadi ke theko

A woman is a price

The author is comparing a woman to a price tag.

Patriarchal dominance is evident in this proverb in that women find themselves having less choice where they wish to be married. The choice lies with the man in most cases. The last part of the proverb demonstrates what has been stated.

re foša kgole

We throw far away

5.3.2 Emerging and shifting identities

The researcher observed emerging and shifting identities on how women are represented in the two novels that are written by the female author, Kekana. Linguistic shifts and empowerment discourses are evident in these selected literary sources. *Nnete Fela* and *Nonyana ya Tokologo* are novels that are authored by a female Northern Sotho author who endeavoured to liberate females from patriarchal oppression and empower them.

(a) *Nnete Fela*: M.A. Kekana (1989)

The language used by the author in this novel is more modern and sophisticated unlike the language used in the selected traditional literature. The sociolinguistics of this novel is multifaceted. The author wrote the following referring to the female character by the name of Bubbles.

O be a tsena a etetšana le lekgarebe la seemakadinao le leswana la go bogega. Mohuta wa makgarebe a o hwetšago diswantšho tša ona di kgabišitše maphephe a apešago dimakasine (Kekana, 1989:1).

He entered together with a tall, dark complexioned, pretty woman. The type frequently depicted in photographs featured in newspapers and magazines.

Bubbles was not just a beautiful woman; she was also successful in many ways. The author writes the following to support this statement:

Ge e le Ariel o ile a thoma a gakanega motsotswana ge a bona kgarebe yeo e tla e mo lebile. A boa a makala le go feta go bona e ema selailaing sela sa go bapela le sefatanaga sa gagwe, e bile e ntšha senotlelo e se bula e tsena ka gare (Kekana, 1989:5).

Ariel began to be confused for a minute when he saw that woman coming towards him. He became even more confused when he saw her standing next to the beautiful car that was parked next to his, even taking out car keys opening and getting in.

The selected texts depicting women in traditional roles do not reference women driving exquisite cars. They depict women more as housewives, caretakers and some that are treated as slaves. There is an obvious emergence of liberated women in Kekana's novels.

Ariel, one of the male characters in this novel, was in deep thoughts about Bubbles on his way home. The following were his thoughts:

A mohuta woo makgerebe ga ba ke ba kwana le go re ba tsenye dinala fase ba fate modirong (Kekana, 1989:7).

Her type does not want to work hard on household chores.

The women are also at liberty to discontinue a love relationship that is not working for them in this novel. Julia is one of the female characters in *Nnete Fela* who had a love relationship with Ariel. After a while in their relationship, Julia expected Ariel to pop the question - will you marry me? But Ariel did not seem to be ready for marriage. Julia one day said to Ariel ...

"O feditše mamohla go mpona mo gape." A bolela a leba wateropong a re go e bula a ntšha dilo tša gagwe ka moo (Kekana, 1989:27).

"It's the last time you see me here." She was speaking going towards the wardrobe; after opening it she took out everything that was hers.

The author mentions modern terminology like disco clubs, cinemas, jazz, night clubs etc. She states the following about Bubbles who was very determined and progressive.

Mono Pelindaba o be a na le kgwebo tše pedi, ya sinema ye e lego diatleng tša Bubbles le ya diskhoklaba ye ka molomo e lego yona e hlokomelwago ke Noko, fela nnete e swerwego ke Bubbles nakong ye ntši, gobane mantšiboa a mantši Noko a sepelela kgole ka baka la jese (Kekana, 1989:19).

Here in Pelindaba he had two businesses, the one for cinema which was in Bubbles' hands and the one for disco club which was by word of mouth run by

Noko (Bubbles' father) himself, but truthfully it was in Bubbles' hands most of the time as well because most of the evenings Noko went far away because of jazz.

The author shows how women can take leadership and active roles in dynamic ways that males cannot.

(b) *Nonyana ya Tokologo*: M.A. Kekana (1985)

Kekana strives in these two novels to represent her females as strong, resilient, and independent. The male characters in this novel, Tšhaledi and Lesiba, perceive women as weaker, expect them to be subject to patriarchal domination. Tšhaledi who is a rural man is more oppressive than Max (Taamane's boyfriend) who is an urban man.

In his mini-dissertation, Moeti (2014) asserts that while Kekana's endeavours in advancing women's liberation are commendable, she ought to have explicitly delineated the path women should follow to achieve emancipation from patriarchal constraints. The female character, Taamane, who strove for liberation ultimately found herself going back to her former husband, Tšhaledi in the rural areas relinquishing her life of freedom. In the beginning of her journey, Taamane pursued riches and fame. The author confirms Taamane's endeavours in writing that:

Tumo, tlotlego le lehumo ke dilo tše bohlokwa kudu go yena tše a ikemišeditšego go di kgathola le go orela borutho bja tšona ka tšatši le lengwe (Kekana, 1985:15).

Fame, honour and riches are important things to her that she is determined to achieve and to enjoy their warmth one day.

Taamane also uttered the following words which show how determined she was about her freedom.

Go ipofa maoto o sa le mathomong a peano ya lebelo ga se selo se a ka se dirago ka thato ya gagwe. Gomme ka ge yena a ikemišeditše go fatotša mahlatse a gagwe lefaseng la pontšho, o be a lemoga gore dilo tše bjalo ka nyalo le go ba mmagobana di ka mo ditela go hwetša se a se nyakago goba gona go mo thibela go di hwetša (Kekana, 1985:15).

To bind yourself from the beginning of the race, is something that she is not prepared to do willingly. And since she is prepared to dig for her luck in showbiz, she realised that things like marriage and being a mother will delay her to find what she wants or stop her from getting whatever that she wants.

Taamane tried her best to push back patriarchal control. She uttered the following words to her spouse Tšhaledi:

Mahlong a Taamane gwa apara sešupo sa kgakanego ge a re, “Tšharakano ya eng bjalo! O ra gore o šetše o thoma go nkgethela se ke swanetšego go se dira goba se ke sa swanelago go se dira? Tšhaledi, aowa, nna ga ke nyake go laolwa ka tsela yeo” (Kekana, 1985:27).

Taamane’s eyes wore a sign of confusion when she said, “What confusion now! You mean you’re already starting to choose what I must do or what I must not do? Oh no Tšhaledi, I do not want to be controlled this way.”

Tšhaledi reinforced his patriarchal beliefs by stating the following:

Bjale wa ka mosadi e tla ba wa go dula gae ga ke rate mosadi wa go šoma ka ntle le gae (Kekana, 1985:28).

Now my wife will be a full-time housewife, I do not like a woman who works outside home.

In replying to these oppressive words, Taamane said:

“Ka Nthole le Maite ba ntswetše! Ga ke ešo ka kwa polelo ya kgatelelo ye kaaka” (Kekana, 1985:28).

Swearing with both my parents, Nthole and Maite! I have never heard such oppressive language.

She proceeded in uttering the following words to her new boyfriend Max after she divorced from her husband Tšhaledi.

Nna Taamane ke nonyana, ke fofa le go kotama mo ke ratago (Kekana, 1985:93).

I, Taamane am a bird, I fly and land anywhere I wish.

In saying these words, Taamane expressed her desire to have freedom of choice and not be hindered to achieve her dreams. The language used in this novel is the same as the one used in *Nnete Fela*. It’s about the emerging feminism in Northern Sotho literature. The author also writes about contemporary terms like, modelling, hotels (e.g. Holiday Inn), Sales house awards and so forth.

Kekana sees women as equally powerful as men because they can contribute to the families’ responsibilities as well. She also employed one of the proverbs that the researcher analysed under 5.3.1.

Monna ke hlogo ya lapa, mosadi ke molala.

The man is the head of the family, the woman is the neck.

Feminist movements and theories stated in chapter two and three, have contributed significantly to promoting a more equitable depiction of females as in these selected novels.

5.3.3 Joy and fulfilment in relationships

As stated in chapter four, the selected Northern Sotho poems represent women in a loving and supportive manner. The poets use imagery to show their love and admiration for their women. The women are in joyful and fulfilled relationships with their spouses. The following poems were analysed.

(a) *Go Hunadi* – Mamogoba, P.

The author used elision to enrich his poetic language in the following sentences:

... *reledi sa kgopolo tša ka*

... *ngwan'a watile la pelo ya ka*

... *atleng tša badimo, bengmaphelo* (Mamogoba, 1985:19).

... beauty of my thoughts

... the ocean child of my heart

... in the hands of the gods, health owners

The poet expressed his love for Hunadi by praising her beauty. It is evident that he was fulfilled in their relationship.

(b) *Ke mo ratile* – Manamela, D.

The researcher observed the poet's rhythmic words in this poem.

Ga di ešo tša go tlela

Fela le ge di ka go tlela (Manamela, 1983:8)

They have not yet come to you

Even though they can come to you

The poet used alliteration in the following words.

... *rata ratirati* (Manamela, 1983:8)

... I truly love her

Rhetoric questions are also observed in this poem as in the following sentence:

Ke direng gobane ke mo ratile?

What must I do because I loved her?

This question requires no answer. It is a way of the poet emphasising his facts.

The poet is so much in love with his woman.

(c) *Moratiwa* – Matseke, M.P.

The researcher noted that the poet employed rhetoric questions in this poem that also represent a woman in a loving way.

Naa ke mang yo a kilego a bona moya?

Naa moya ga o tšutlele mo o ratago?

Who has ever seen the wind?

Doesn't the wind blow where it wants to?

The poet employed personification in the following:

... *maleme a dumedišana* (Matseke, 1989:58).

...tongues greeting each other.

The poet used figures of speech to express the love relationship that he had with his woman.

(d) *O ntebatša mašwana* – Mphahlele, E.T. and Tauatsoala, M.J.

The authors of this poem *O ntebatša mašwana*, portray the female character as someone who is a good lover and comforter of her partner. The fiancée is captured by her love and beauty and wonders how he can continue living without her. The figurative language employed by the authors gives readers a clear image of how the poet admires the woman. The use of elision is observed in the following sentence.

Ge o ka kgaola pele ga fahlego sa ka ...

If you can appear in front of my face ...

The full word for *fahlego* is *sefahlego*. The morpheme 'Se' has been omitted to enhance the language. The author used metaphor in this sentence:

Moratiwa, o bjalo ka lehlabula:

Beloved, you are like summer:

He compares his beloved woman to a sunny summer to express the extent of his love for her. He likens her to a flower, implying her beauty.

Wena, letšobana la pelo ya ka,

You, the flower of my heart,

The poet also employs simile in the next sentence to convey to the reader how valuable his woman is in his life.

Sa gago sefahlego go nna ke gauta.

Your face to me is gold.

The researcher observed alliteration in the following sentence:

Bophelo bo tlo galaka la mogalakane, (Mphahlele and Tauatsoala, 1997:35).

Life will be so bitter,

The consonant/vowel 'la' has been repeated to enhance the language of this poem.

(e) *Hunadi* – Soana, A.S.

The poet is deeply in love with a female by the name of Hunadi. She is portrayed as a woman worth loving to the extent that the poet is prepared to die if Hunadi refuses his love proposal.

The poet used personification to express the love that he feels for the love of his life.

Bogale bja lerato bo ntshega pelo? (Soana, 1989:46)

Does the wrath of love laugh at my heart?

(f) *Bogale bja mosadi* – Mogodi, M.I.

In his poem, *Bogale bja mosadi* (The wrath of the woman) Mogodi praises the strength, wrath, and perseverance of a woman. He is astonished at how a woman can be sacrificial in many ways. She sacrifices her maiden name and takes up her husband's surname for eternity, she carries with her marital problems, the husband brings strange diseases home and the woman becomes the carrier and seeks to find healing for both. The author used proverbs that are also purposely selected in this study such as:

mosadi o swara thipa ka bogaleng

which literally means, a woman holds a knife by the blade. A woman is brave to stand and fight for what is hers.

Another proverb that the author used is:

lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi

which literally means, a woman's grave is at her in-laws.

This means that if a woman is married, she must know that even if her husband dies, she must continue living with her in-laws. She cannot go back to her parents' home.

The poet also points out men's weaknesses and laments the troubles they bring to their wives such as:

Monna o ja mere ka moka ke sona sebata.

Ka gae a goroga le malwetšitsoko, (Mogodi, 1989:10).

A man eats all the herbs, he is the beast.

At home he arrives with strange sicknesses/diseases,

He praises the woman who takes up a sword and goes out to hunt for healing for her man even though she's not the one who infected him.

(g) *Bjale ka ge o sepetše* – Lebepe, M.V.

In this poem, the poet uses proverbs like the following:

Sehlare sa muši ke go o tlogela,

For the tree of smoke is to forsake it,

Se nkganago se nthola morwalo, (Masekoameng and Mothapo, 2017:29).

What rejects me takes away my burden,

Mmapelo o ja serati, mmalo!

The heart chooses the one it loves!

The poet is against his woman's behaviour. He stands on his words that he is never going to beg her to come back. He is heaving a sigh of relief because their marriage was rocky. Ultimately, the poet wishes her bad luck wherever she is going.

(h) *Go dingwetši* – Machitela, M.S.

Women in this poem are married to brothers and all live in one house with their mother-in-law. They are depicted as objects in that they are compelled to live peacefully with one another in one house which is not healthy for their relationships. They cannot have their independence. The author used rhetoric questions in this poem as in the one below:

Le reng le baka bogadi dingwetši?

Why are you fighting about the place/home of your in-laws, brides?

Alliteration is also observed in the following sentence.

Ka šebešebe orang se tee sebešo (Masekoameng and Mothapo, 2017:45).

The sound 'š' has been repeated in the sentence for the reader to have an emotive effect.

(i) *Mosadi wa ka* – Lebepe, M.V.

The poet made use of idioms in this poem, to express his affection for his love, for example:

Go ntšhana sa inong,

To love one another,

Go swarana ka diatla tše pedi (Masekoameng and Mothapo, 2017:102).

To work and agree with each other.

The poet also employed rhyme in the following stanzas.

O mooki wa ka,

O ngaka ya ka,

O mma wa ka,

O mogwera wa ka (Masekoameng and Mothapo, 2017:102).

You are my nurse,

You are my doctor,

You are my mother,

You are my friend,

The poet uses simile in the following sentence to describe women's roles as life-givers.

Tseba mosadi ke thari,

Know that a woman must give birth to children.

This demonstrates women's important roles in societies.

(j) *Moratiwa wa ka* – Lebepe, M.V.

The poet used rhyme in the 1st and 2nd stanzas.

O kgauswi le nna ka mehla,

O na le nna ka mehla,

O nkgopa maikutlo ka mehla,

O nthopile pelo le moya,

O nkgapile pelo le moya.

You are always near me,

You are always with me,

You fascinate me all the time,

You have captured my heart and my soul,

You took my heart and soul.

O na le nna ka mehla,

O ntlhokomela ka mehla,

O ntharollela mathata,

O thaba le nna ka mehla (Masekoameng and Mothapo, 2017:95).

You are with me always,

You look after me every day,

You solve my problems,

You are happy with me every day.

He also employed metaphor in the 3rd stanza:

Gobane o tšhite bophelong bja ka.

Because you are beebread in my life.

The woman in this poem is portrayed as a loving woman who looks after her man.

5.3.4 Stereotypes, marginalisation, and resistance

The researcher observed from the analysis of some of the selected Northern Sotho novels, short stories, and proverbs how stereotypes marginalise women based on their gender. Women are marginalised especially by male authors who limit their roles to

housewives, cooks, child bearers and so forth. Fonchingong (2006) laments the way in which women are portrayed and argues that such portrayals perpetuate traditional gender hierarchies and cultural norms that subordinate women.

Marginalisation of women is observed in the selected novels such as *Megokgo ya Bjoko*, *Tšhelang Gape* and all the selected short stories. Women in the short stories are subjected to even worse forms of slavery by their in-laws. In the novel *Megokgo ya Bjoko*, instead of Leilane, Mohlatša's husband comforting her for regurgitating because of what she saw her husband eating, this is what he did to her:

Leilane ga a ka a senya sebaka sa go mo thiba lehlato ka lepara (Matsepe, 1968:11).

Leilane didn't waste time; he began thrashing her with a stick to cure her vomiting.

This proves how stereotyped Leilane is, proving his masculine power over his wife.

In one of the selected short stories, *Le ge o ka nthaka ...!* the male character by the name of Mathintha persecuted his wife and son abusing his power as a man. One day he uttered these words to his wife Matshedišo and her son.

"Ke re a ntšwele motse ka moswane! Ga ke sa nyaka go arabišana nago, le yena morwa yoo wa gago!" (Mamabolo, 2015:86)

"I am saying, he must get out of my house tomorrow! I don't want to argue with you, even that son of yours!"

The language used in the selected Northern Sotho proverbs also reinforces gender stereotypes. Women are frequently undermined and expected to accept actions taken by their spouses that they will not tolerate. Women must accept their husbands' promiscuity whereas they are not expected to have more than one man. Patriarchal dominance is evident in the selected literary sources. An example of a stereotypical proverb is:

Mosadi ke tšwene o lewa mabogo.

The language used in this proverb is demeaning and dehumanises women in that a baboon is considered as an ugly animal. The proverb promotes stereotypes by stating

that women are deemed ugly, yet they must labour hard in the family home. In this proverb, females are depicted in traditional roles.

However, females in the selected Northern Sotho literature that is authored by a female author, Kekana, resist patriarchal control. They are independent in that the author depicts them as strong businesswomen, modellers, career women and so forth. They drive expensive cars; they sit in meetings with men, and some show their strength through smoking, citing that it gives them strength to imagine that they are equal to men. These women are resistant to being dominated and work hard to demonstrate their abilities to advance and thrive in whatever they do. Their resistance is shown in words like the following in the novel *Nonyana ya Tokologo*.

Nna Taamane ke nonyana, ke fofa le go kotama mo ke ratago (Kekana, 1985:93).

I, Taamane am a bird, I fly and land anywhere I wish.

Taamane indeed showed her resistance for patriarchal control through these words. She resisted control from her husband Tšhaledi and boyfriend Max.

5.3.5 Language and power relations

Language plays a pivotal role in the literary texts. The reader learns more about characters through language. The purposely selected literary sources use language in diverse ways. The language that is employed in *Megokgo ya Bjoko* and *Tšhelang Gape* is more traditional. The societies are ruled by kings, and they use traditional courts to settle disputes. Women are living in patriarchal societies, and the power is unequally distributed. Men are in total control whilst women's place is at home. The following paragraph is the type of language used in Matsepe's *Megokgo ya Bjoko*.

Re llela go phela, re llišwa ke go phela; re llela go phala ba bangwe, re llišwa ke go phalwa ke ba bangwe; re llela tšwelopele, re llišwa ke tšwelopele, ka ge nnete gona bophelo e le peapeano yeo go yona mang le mang a ratago go ba tšhia ya letšatši le lengwe le le lengwe. Re llela go buša, re llišwa ke go bušwa; re llela go huma, re llišwa ke bodiidi, gobane nnete gona se sekaone se ka ganwa ke wa kgopolo ya mohuta mang? (Matsepe, 1968:1)

We yearn to live, yet living frustrates us; we yearn to be better than others, we are frustrated when others are better than us; we yearn for progress, yet progress frustrates us, because truly life is nothing but a race that everyone wants to win daily. We yearn to govern, yet we don't want to be ruled; we yearn to be

prosperous, yet poverty frustrates us, because the truth is, what kind of person are you if you do not treasure boundless ideals?

Contrary to the texts that represent women in traditional ways, females in *Nnete Fela* and *Nonyana ya Tokologo* challenge the power dynamics by denouncing patriarchy. The language used in the two novels assert power to female characters. In the novel *Nnete Fela*, Bubbles proved to be better than her twin brother Karabo in performing well in the businesses assigned to her by her father Noko. The author wrote the following:

E rile ge a ba abela tlhokomelo ya disinema tšeo magareng ga bona, Noko a ba a dutše a tseba gore Bubbles o tlilo go dira gakaone go Karabo (Kekana, 1989:19).

When he distributed the management of the cinemas amongst them, Noko knew that Bubbles would perform better than Karabo.

In *Nonyana ya Tokologo*, Taamane is resisting power dynamics through empowering herself as a career woman in modelling, she also drives a car like Bubbles and is not in a hurry to get married. The author states the following about Taamane:

Ke yena nonyana ya tokologo (Kekana, 1985:76).

She is a free bird.

It is evident that women in traditional settings do not have a voice, whereas women in modern contexts do. Additionally, the names given to female characters by the selected authors represent their character traits, and some illuminate patriarchy by using such names in their writings. In *Megokgo ya Bjoko*, the female name *Mohlatša* means the vomiter. She regurgitated when she saw her husband eat a calf embryo. *Mmapelo* in *Tšhelang Gape* authored by Matsepe, means the one who break hearts. In the selected short stories, the authors named their female characters as follows:

Ntholeng - which means offload me. She was overburdened with house duties at her in-laws' home.

Madimabe - means bad luck.

However, the names given to female characters in the emerging feminist literature authored by Kekana, are more of empowering women. For example, Bubbles, *Taamane* which means Diamond, Suzan and so forth.

5.4 SOCIOLINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION

The social structures of the selected novels authored by Matsepe, *Megokgo ya Bjoko* and *Tšhelang Gpe* are more traditional and governed by chiefs and kings. The author writes about the chiefdoms of Kgoši Lefehlo and Kgoši Nthumele. When there are disputes in the society, the men of the kraal will congregate in the chief's yard to engage and intervene in the problem to find solutions. The perpetrator will then be judged in traditional courts. After Leilane in *Megokgo ya Bjoko* physically assaulted his wife and father-in-law, his case was taken to the traditional council to discuss what to do further. Societies are patriarchal where men and women continue to preserve traditional roles, with men dominating women. The novels are also characterised by power struggles in the society.

The selected short stories form part of the traditional social structures. The language used in the texts is oppressive to the women who are mostly living with their in-laws and subjected to oppression and slavery. The married woman belongs not only to her husband, but to the entire family.

There is a shift in language use in the selected novels authored by Kekana, *Nnete Fela* and *Nonyana ya Tokologo*. The study discovered evolving gender ideologies in these literary sources, which have a changing effect on Northern-Sotho speaking communities. Like many other African communities, Northern Sotho communities are historically patriarchal and practise traditional customs. Folktales are entrenched in the communities to teach the youth about the customs and traditions. However, there is a shift in Northern Sotho tradition as women oppose the status quo. Women challenged patriarchal control through leadership, education and management of huge businesses. Kekana is one of the Northern Sotho authors who pioneered feminism and seeks to emancipate women from patriarchal prison. Her female characters are independent and do not rely on their spouses for their provision. Women's voices are no longer silenced within the patriarchal societies as in the traditional contexts.

5.5 DISCUSSION LINKED TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The analysis made in this study answers the research questions that are laid out in chapter one.

Upon analysing the selected Northern Sotho literary sources in this study, the researcher noted the evolution of women's representations in Northern Sotho literature over time. Some selected literary texts represent women in traditional ways. Women are given traditional roles such as housewives, child bearers, cooks, cleaners and so forth. However, there is a shift in representation of women in novels that are authored by the selected female author. She represents her female characters in a more progressive way. They hold leadership positions, have careers, and are successful more than their male counterparts.

Linguistic features that were observed in the analysed selected texts are proverbs, idiomatic expressions, repetitions, metaphors, indirect speech, semantic features and so forth. These features are highlighted in the representation of women in the texts.

The selected proverbs clearly show how women are represented in traditional ways in the Northern Sotho communities. Women in Northern Sotho society are expected to diligently fulfil their domestic responsibilities, take care of their husbands and children. Whilst their husbands are permitted to be polygamous, women are expected to stay loyal to their marriages. Kekana and other female authors and researchers, challenge patriarchal structures by striving to liberate their female characters.

After the analysis of findings made, the researcher noted the linguistic choices in the selected literary texts that either reinforced or challenged traditional gender norms.

5.6 CONCLUSION

The data presented in chapter four has been analysed in this chapter. Data gathered was from the selected Northern Sotho novels, short stories, poems and proverbs which represent females by male and female authors. The researcher observed the contrasting ways of depicting females in the selected literary genres. Male authors seem to be portraying females in a stereotypical way while the female author depicts her females in a progressive way. For example, Mohlatša in the novel *Megokgo ya Bjoko*, is a rural, full-time housewife who is provided for by her husband. Her husband subjected her to physical abuse, and such circumstances were typically condoned during the traditional age.

In some selected novels, women are represented as housewives, caregivers, child bearers, and they depend on their husbands for their provision. Some women ultimately experience abuse from their spouses due to their dependence. Unfortunately, this type of abuse persists beyond literary works. Women in South Africa and around the world continue to face abuse from their spouses and other males, whether they are employed or not. The rate of femicide is shockingly alarming across the world.

In contrast with the male authors, the Northern Sotho female author Kekana who also portrays females, represents them in a radical and progressive way. Her females resist the saying that the women's place is confined to the kitchen. They are career women, models and they are independent, free from patriarchal control.

The research findings indicate that male authors portray female characters stereotypically, while female authors depict them in a more progressive manner. It is evident that the male authors' perspective on female characters is laid back in the selected Northern Sotho texts. Female characters like Bubbles, Taamane, and Suzan who are portrayed by the female author Kekana, challenge traditional gender roles.

Language plays a pivotal role in how women are represented in the selected literary sources. Language can either reinforce by marginalising women or challenging patriarchal norms. The selected Northern Sotho proverbs adversely impact women by employing insulting language that diminishes and belittles them. These proverbs compel women to tolerate their husbands' infidelity, whereas they are expected to stay loyal.

Contrary to how females are represented in the other selected literary genres, the poets praise the females for their beauty and hard work.

Chapter six of this study will focus on the summary, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, the researcher presented the findings derived from the analysis of purposefully selected Northern Sotho novels, short stories, poems and proverbs. The study discovered that male and female authors represent women in various ways. The researcher further systematically answered each research question based on the analysis. The researcher found that male authors in the selected novels and short stories depict their females in a biased, stereotypical way. In some selected literary sources, the female characters continue to live in the patriarchal era. They are dependent, submissive, full-time homemakers, caregivers and tolerant women. Some endure domestic violence, which was normalised in these patriarchal societies. Unlike the male authors, the female author who wrote the two selected novels emancipates her females from patriarchal control. The females are independent, assertive, and career women focused on their progress. The selected Northern Sotho proverbs exacerbate the situation by using derogatory language towards females and exalting patriarchy and polygamy. Outstandingly, the poems praise women's beauty and hard work.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This study is about a sociolinguistic exploration of female representation in selected Northern Sotho literature that has evolved through time. A comprehensive analysis of the selected literature and additional written sources was conducted regarding the representation of women. The Northern Sotho literary texts were purposefully selected because they depict women. For many years, women in Africa and worldwide, have been depicted as subservient, obedient, forgiving, inferior, and reliant on their partners for sustenance. They were further portrayed as housewives, nurturers, child bearers, cooks, among other roles. Nevertheless, societal dynamics have evolved owing to education and feminist theories that have significantly facilitated the liberation of women from patriarchal prison and tackled gender inequalities. The evolution arises from the challenges posed by existing societal norms and expectations. The selected

literature acts as a lens for revealing female representations. The study employed a multidisciplinary approach, combining sociolinguistics, literary analysis, and feminist theory to uncover nuanced insights into the evolving status, roles, and narratives surrounding women in Northern Sotho literature. The structural elements of the language employed in the selected literary works elucidate the portrayal of women.

In chapter one of this study, the researcher outlined the problem statement. The research objectives were stated followed by the research questions about female representation in Northern Sotho selected literary sources. An overview of the theoretical framework underpinning this study was provided. The feminist theories that significantly contributed towards the understanding of the depiction of women were employed. The research design, research methodology, study population and data analysis plan for this study were outlined. Finally, the researcher gave an outline of the chapters in preparation for the specific chapters of this study that would follow.

Chapter two of this study extensively reviewed relevant literature that portrays women and feminism in Africa and globally. The researcher acknowledged and interacted with the scholars' discourse. The study established that while male authors represent women in conventional stereotypes, female authors depict them in a dynamic and progressive manner.

6.2.1 Traditional representations

Northern Sotho authors like Montle (2021) who was quoted in chapter two, critically examines the depiction of women in proverbs and observes that they perpetuate misogynistic views. In applying dominance theory, the researcher observed that women are marginalised and dominated by men in the selected literary texts due to their identity. Women's voices are undermined and not heard.

Difference theory helped in understanding the different ways men and women communicate. It can challenge and undermine the way women communicate, and women's voices can be taken for granted. This can sometimes lead to more inclusive spaces for men and women.

The analysis of existing theses and dissertations on female representation were also perused and engaged in chapter two. These research publications provided a

comprehensive perspective on the predominantly stereotypical portrayals of women from various sociocultural backgrounds by male authors.

The selected Northern Sotho proverbs still confine women to traditional roles, and they are expected to remain faithful to their marriages whilst their spouses are permitted to be polygamous.

6.2.2 Progressive representations

The researcher stated in chapter two that de Beauvoir (1949) is one proponent who contributed immensely towards feminist theories. This feminist sees men and women as having equal freedoms and the right to live their lives the way they choose. She contributed significantly towards women's liberation from patriarchal oppression.

Consequently, this explains why the selected Northern Sotho female novelist, Kekana, successfully represented her female characters in a dynamically evolving manner.

The researcher applied theories such as feminist sociolinguistic, social constructionism, dominance theory and difference theories in understanding the representation of women in Northern Sotho selected literature and society. The study investigates the language used in some of the selected Northern Sotho proverbs, novels, and short stories that perpetuates gender violence and exalts patriarchy. In his article, Diko (2025:10) extensively analysed the representation of women in the lyrics under scrutiny, illustrating how language (de)constructs and reinforces power hierarchies, positioning women inside discourses that perpetuate male hegemony.

The researcher also observed that females are represented in a loving and resilient way in the selected Northern Sotho poems.

Chapter three presents theories that are crucial to this study, building upon the previously discussed theories that significantly contributed to the understanding of women's representation in chapter two. The theoretical framework employed in this study provided guidance and is entirely aligned with the research aims and objectives. This study is entrenched in the feminist theories including liberal, radical, socialist, womanism, African feminism and intersectional feminism. The focus of this study is especially on the African feminist theory which addresses the plight of African women

in the African continent. The researcher observed the oppression endured by African women at the hands of their spouses and other male figures in the selected literary texts. The theories were subsequently applied to the texts to achieve a clearer comprehension of women's representation.

Chapter four of this study presented the research design and methodology. As stated earlier, this study is qualitative in nature, and the research design is descriptive. The researcher aimed to examine the representation of female characters in the selected Northern Sotho literary sources authored by both male and female writers. The study further outlined the research paradigm, the research methods, target population, sampling techniques, data gathering and analysis. The sampled literary sources were presented, and ethical considerations were acknowledged during data collection and analysis. The data in this study is non-probable, meaning that it was purposefully selected from literary sources. Data was collected from Northern Sotho novels, short stories, poems and proverbs. The literary sources were selected because of their representation of women. This study further employed thematic and CDA as methodologies for analysing the acquired data.

Relevant themes that reflect the representations of women were identified in the selected literary sources. The researcher found that women are either portrayed in a traditional way or progressively. The textual examples were then moved to thematic categories, whereas CDA helped in determining the language used in the texts. The language utilised in the selected texts either enhanced or challenged patriarchal dominance.

In chapter five of this study, the researcher presented and analysed the research findings that were extracted from the purposely selected Northern Sotho literary sources. The research objectives and the theories underpinning this study were taken into consideration during analysis. The study sought to systematically answer each research question based on the analysis. The researcher collected varied views on women representation from the selected literary sources, from sources that have a traditional representation of women to those that resist stereotypical societal norms. The emerging and shifting identities highlight changes in how women are depicted. Moreover, linguistic shifts were examined, highlighting the usage of new terminology and the presence of empowerment discourses.

An overview of the selected written sources was made, highlighting important contextual details and why these sources were chosen. Excerpts from the texts were presented and organised according to emerging themes. Only the themes that are relevant to female representation were extracted from the texts and analysed. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The researcher organised the data by major themes identified, traditional representations of women, emerging and shifting identities, and joy and fulfilment in relationships.

6.2.3 Language and power

Instances of stereotyping, marginalisation, and resistance were identified and analysed. The researcher found stereotyped tendencies and marginalisation in literature written by male authors. However, there are women in some selected texts who resisted and challenged these roles through language and actions. The texts were extracted from the novels of *Nnete Fela* and *Nonyana ya Tokologo* where females resisted patriarchal control. The females in the literary sources chose to delay marriages for the sake of progressing their careers and dreams. The language employed in the literary works is deeply rooted in feminist principles. It is worth noting how language is used to assert or deny power to female characters. Women are muted in some of the literary texts, but others have discovered ways to express themselves to gain independence. Some authors employ naming practices to diminish the status of women. As stated in chapter four, the choice of names of female characters is informative like *Ntholeng* which means deliver us from heavy duties and take over the hard work, and *Mohlatša* from the novel *Megokgo ya Bjoko* which means the vomiter.

The changes in language use reveal evolving gender ideologies in the Northern Sotho-speaking community. There is increased awareness of gender bias and emerging observance of gender roles. However, in the Northern Sotho community, there is an emergence of educated, professional women with business leadership qualities.

Furthermore, linguistic features like metaphor, idioms, figurative meanings, and figures of speech were used in the selected literary sources to construct these representations. From these linguistic features, the researcher was able to analyse

how the representations reflect societal attitudes towards women in the Northern Sotho speaking communities.

6.2.4 Social context – traditional versus emerging

In chapter five, the researcher observed that the societal structures in the texts with traditional representation of women are more rural. According to the selected literary sources, certain villages are ruled by kings, and the courts that hear local disputes are traditional. The societies are also deeply patriarchal, and women's voices are silenced. On the other hand, in texts that have emerging feminism, there are modern institutions such as commissioners, police stations, jazz clubs, cinemas, and modelling agencies. These texts represent assertive and independent female characters.

Research questions were systematically answered based on the analysis. The researcher found that the representation of women in Northern Sotho literature has evolved over time. The representation of women evolved from a depiction in traditional and stereotypical ways to a more progressive and assertive way. Finally, a summary of key findings was made. The findings demonstrate that, while significant progress has been made towards women's emancipation, much more effort is required to achieve gender equality. The findings also unveiled the reality of GBV in Africa and across the world. It was practised in the pre-colonial era and, tragically, it is continuing today. It is discouraging that the perpetrators of GBV and femicide seem to be undeterred by the prospect of long-term prison time.

6.3 CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

This study is about the sociolinguistic representation of women in the purposively selected Northern Sotho literary sources. The sources were meticulously selected because of their depiction of women in various ways by both female and male authors. The analysis revealed that some of the selected sources have rural social systems ruled by kings and chiefs, while others are set in modern societal contexts. This study demonstrated how the representation of women in Northern Sotho literature has evolved over time. The research analysed the linguistic features employed in contrasting these representations. Chapter one outlined the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, an overview of theoretical framework, research design and chapter outline.

Consistent with prior research, and the selected literature, the study demonstrates that female characters are stereotypically represented by male authors, in contrast to the more transformative depictions offered by female authors in chapter two. The literature reviewed and theories applied demonstrates that language is a powerful tool in shaping positive or negative representations of females.

The linguistic features used to construct the representation of women in the texts facilitated the comprehension of their depiction. The literature review in this study critically examined existing relevant scholarship. The researcher engaged and interacted with what the scholars said in their research about the representation of females and how feminist theories contributed towards their liberation. The researcher explicitly pointed out the gaps and unresolved issues. The findings indicate that feminism within Northern Sotho culture warrants deeper scholarly engagement, and that additional academic contributions are necessary to expand the existing literature on this contested issue.

Chapter three presented a review of feminist theories which underpin this study. Drawing on selected feminist theories, the study undertook a critical examination of the shifting portrayals of women in Northern Sotho written texts within their historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives and frameworks, the researcher seeks to achieve a more nuanced understanding of the issues and challenges faced by women in the 21st century. However, the researcher found that African feminist theory and African womanism both confront the challenges faced by African women who continue to endure prejudice based on their race and gender.

Chapter four detailed the research design, methodology, sampling procedures, data collection and analysis methods, as well as trustworthiness measures and ethical considerations. The qualitative nature of this study enabled the researcher to collect and analyse data from selected literary sources using thematic and CDA to examine the challenges that women encounter. Data was collected through textual analysis by identifying recurring themes from the Northern Sotho selected literary books.

Following a thorough analysis of the selected Northern Sotho literary texts, the study found that female characters were marginalised in some written texts by male authors, whereas the female Northern Sotho author portrayed her female characters in a transformative manner in the selected novels. The research objectives and questions

which are stated in chapter one were addressed in chapter five which presented and analysed data extracted from the literary sources.

This study concludes that the male authors depicted their female characters stereotypically, but the female author portrayed her female characters as strong and progressive. The researcher noted how female characters are further subjected to both physical and emotional abuse despite being marginalised and their voices silenced in some selected literary sources. On the contrary, in some selected literary texts, the voices of women are starting to emerge. They are allowed to spread their wings and fly, like Taamane in *Nonyana ya Tokologo*.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings and the conclusions, the researcher recommends that more Northern Sotho authors write about feminism, which remains a contentious issue in South Africa and around the world. This study posits that the creation and publication of further literary works addressing gender equality within Northern Sotho culture will empower women who have historically faced oppression. Positive representations of females should not solely originate from female authors; a greater contribution from male authors is also necessary to provide these depictions.

This study also recommends that more scholars should write about GBV which is a thorny issue to date. Femicide is at an all-time high. Women are slain every day in South Africa and around the world because of their gender, race, and nearly everything else about them. Despite the implementation of legal penalties, the persistence of femicide suggests that punitive measures alone may be insufficient. A multidimensional approach involving education, advocacy, and community intervention is urgently required.

Another crucial recommendation is that more female authors write and enrich their literary works by raising their voices to empower other women, eventually guiding them out of patriarchal prisons. It is imperative that they cultivate self-assurance and foster confidence in women, thereby demonstrating the capabilities inherent within this gender. The researcher advocates for the support and encouragement of emerging Northern Sotho female authors to produce and publish literature that is authentically about gender representations.

Women should not only be depicted as mothers, wives, caretakers but should also be represented in empowering roles such as leaders, professionals, businesspeople and so forth. The researcher has presented and made findings about the emergence and shifting of identities of women in modern portrayals as compared to the traditional depictions.

The selected Northern Sotho literary sources illustrated how women are represented in both traditional and modern ways. However, the researcher acknowledges that more research can still be made employing other literary sources like drama and other folklore literary sources that portray women.

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ANNEXURE A: Department of African Languages Research Ethics Review Committee



COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

25 October 2023

Dear Ms Anthea Lucy Ndlovu

NHREC Registration # :
Rec-240816-052
CREC Reference # :
5554233_CREC_CHS_2023

Decision:
Ethics Approval from 25 October 2023 to 25 October 2024

Researcher(s) Name: Ms. A. L. Ndlovu
Contact details: endlowa@unisa.ac.za
Supervisor(s) Name: Prof. P. Phaahla
Contact details: p.phaahla@telkomsa.net
Co-Supervisor(s) Name: Dr. D. R. Mabule
Contact details: mabuldr@unisa.ac.za

Title: Unveiling the Shifting Landscape: A Sociolinguistic Exploration of Women's Representation in Northern Sotho Literature through the Lens of Written Sources.

Degree Purpose: PhD

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa College of Human Science Ethics Committee. Ethics approval is granted for one year.

The *negligible-risk application* was reviewed by College of Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee, in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the College Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.



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4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No fieldwork activities may continue after the expiry date (**25 October 2024**). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

The reference number 5554233_CREC_CHS_2023 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Signature: 

Prof. KB Khan
CHS Research Ethics Committee Chairperson
Email: khankb@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 429 8210

Signature: PP



Prof ZZ Nkosi
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ANNEXURE B: Originality test results

	Similarity Index
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PAPER NAME

NDLOVU AL_DOCTORAL THESIS_EDITED
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AUTHOR

ANTHEA LUCY NDLOVU

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ANNEXURE C: Editor's declaration

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14 October 2025

Declaration

Re: Language editing of Doctoral thesis

To whom it may concern

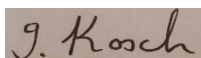
I herewith wish to confirm that I have edited the Doctoral Thesis of Ms AL Ndlovu entitled

**UNVEILING THE SHIFTING LANDSCAPE: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC
EXPLORATION OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN NORTHERN SOTHO
LITERATURE THROUGH THE LENS OF WRITTEN SOURCES**

The onus rests on the candidate to respond to the comments and queries and to effect the changes that were indicated by means of the track-change function in the document.

I have edited many PhD theses and Master's dissertations to great satisfaction of my clients as well as scientific articles and research proposals as researcher and Professor in the Department of African Languages at Unisa and honed my editing skills as editor-in-chief of the *South African Journal of African Languages* (2007-2019).

Yours sincerely



J.M. Kosch