

**PROVERBS AS TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN  
NORTHERN SOTHO**

by

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## DECLARATION

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I, Ms Paulina Maapola, declare that the above dissertation is my original work. All sources used or quoted have been properly indicated and acknowledged through complete referencing.

I further declare that this dissertation has been submitted to originality checking software and complies with the university's requirements for originality.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the role of Northern Sotho proverbs as crucial instruments of communication and community development, deeply embedded in African oral traditions. Proverbs, often perceived as more than mere literary expressions, serve as vehicles for Indigenous knowledge, encapsulating cultural values, social norms, and collective wisdom. Using a qualitative research methodology involving interviews with native speakers, elders, and educators, the study examines the contextual applications of selected proverbs across societal domains, including education, leadership, family dynamics, and conflict resolution. By investigating these practical uses, the research highlights the multifaceted significance of proverbs within their respective communities.

The findings indicate that Northern Sotho proverbs play a pivotal role in fostering interpersonal communication, promoting social cohesion, and guiding ethical conduct. They serve as tools for decision-making, encouraging critical thought while reinforcing fundamental values such as respect, cooperation, and accountability. Moreover, the study underscores the enduring relevance of proverbs in contemporary society, asserting their potential to contribute to inclusive and culturally grounded development initiatives. It further advocates the recognition, integration, and preservation of African proverbs as essential components of cultural identity, suggesting that such efforts are vital for addressing the challenges posed by globalisation and language marginalisation.

### **Key Terms:**

Proverbs, Indigenous knowledge, Oral tradition, Northern Sotho, Communication, Community development, Cultural values, social cohesion, Ethical behaviour, and Language preservation.

## KAKARETŠO

Thuto ye e tsinkela diema tša Sesotho sa Leboa bjalo ka didirišwa tše bohlokwa tša kgokagano le tlhabollo ya setšhaba, tšeo di tsemilego medu ditšong tša molomo tša Afrika. Diema ga di lemogwe bjalo ka dipolelo tša dingwalo fela eupša bjalo ka barwadi ba tsebo ya setlogo, tšeo di bontšhago ditekanyetšo tša setšo, ditlwaelo tša leago le bohlale bja setšhaba. Ka go šomiša mokgwa wa boleng, go akaretšwa dipoledišano le diboledi tša setlogo, bagolo le barutiši, nyakišišo e sekaseketše ka fao diema tše di kgethilwego di šomago ka gona maamong a nnete a bophelo go swana le thuto, boetapele, mafolofolo a lapa, le tharollo ya thulano.

Dikutollo di utolla gore diema tša Sesotho sa Leboa di godiša poledišano magareng ga batho, kgokagano ya leago, le boitshwaro bja maitshwaro. Di šomišwa go hlhla go tšea diphetho, go tšwetša pele go nagana gabotse, le go tiiša ditekanyetšo tša go swana le tlhomphe, tirišano le boikarabelo. Thuto e gatelela kamano ye e tšwelago pele ya diema maamong a sebjalebja le bokgoni bja tšona bja go thekga tlhabollo ye e akaretšago bohle, yeo e theilwego setšong. E ipiletša go temogo ye kgolo, kopanyo, le go boloka diema tša Seafrika go hlokomela boitšhupo bja setšo le go lwantšha ditlamorago tša go ikopanya ga lefase ka bophara le go kgaphelwa thoko ga polelo.

### **Mareo a Bohlokwa:**

Diema, Tsebo ya setlogo, Setšo sa molomo, Poledišano, Tlhabollo ya setšhaba, Ditekanyetšo tša setšo, Kgokagano ya leago, Boitshwaro bjo bo botse, Pabalelo ya polelo.

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*Ke a leboga. Motho ke motho ka batho.* "Thank you. A person is a person through other people."

## DEDICATION

I would like to pay special tribute to my late grandmother, Morobela Mmapula Raphahle Maapola, whose enduring legacy inspires me. Through her, we developed a deep appreciation for indigenous knowledge, passed down through her captivating storytelling, her sharing of legends and fables, and her rich use of idioms deeply rooted in our culture. Her wisdom, love, and unwavering commitment to oral tradition nurtured our understanding of who we are and laid the foundation for my scholarly interest in this field. This research is, in many ways, a reflection of the seeds she so lovingly planted in us. May her soul rest in eternal peace.

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## **CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

Despite the transformative influence of technological advancement and globalisation, many communities continue to take pride in their cultural heritage and actively make efforts to preserve it. As UNESCO (2014) articulated, a society without a genuine cultural foundation is considered soulless. Across the globe, national governments have instituted specialised departments tasked with promoting and preserving the cultural heritage of their diverse populations (UNESCO, 2015). Similarly, international organisations, academic institutions, and the private sector invest in developing and protecting cultural elements at national, community, and local levels.

The ongoing concern for the preservation of indigenous languages underpins the rationale behind the significant budgetary allocations by the South African Department of Arts and Culture for the protection, restoration, and revitalisation of these languages (ANC, 1996). This research aims to contribute to knowledge production on the developmental challenges facing indigenous languages in South Africa. Specifically, the study focuses on Northern Sotho proverbs, exploring their challenges and assessing their future role in communication and the development of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

The importance of this topic is underscored by the global recognition of proverbs as fundamental elements of cultural expression and societal development (Trench, 1905; Whiting, 1932). Opposing forces increasingly confront proverbs, threatening their relevance and continuity within open and dynamic cultural systems. Barker and Galasinski (2001) contend that all cultural elements must navigate between forces that promote their survival and those that hasten their extinction. Traditional African cultures, including proverbs, face significant pressure to coexist with dominant colonial and Western cultural paradigms that pervade education, media, entertainment, religion, business, and other societal

sectors. These forces have progressively undermined the foundations of indigenous cultural systems, prompting growing concerns regarding their long-term sustainability. Considering this existential threat, Northern Sotho proverbs were selected as a case study to examine the impact of such changes and to explore potential strategies for preserving cultural heritage in the face of these challenges.

Informed by the African Renaissance discourse, the research sought to demonstrate how traditional proverbs can be preserved and revitalised to support the African Union's objective of promoting the cultural development of African nation-states (Mamdani, 1999; Nelson & Wright, 1995; Chilisa, 2012). The primary objective of this study was to examine the current sociocultural environment in which Northern Sotho proverbs exist, assess the impact of Western cultural systems, and propose recommendations to ensure their continued relevance and survival.

## **1.2 Background to the Study**

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, the African National Congress (ANC) led government has prioritised the development of indigenous languages as a strategic pillar in its national development agenda. Educational curricula have been a key area of focus, alongside support for media outlets, civil society, and the business sector, to enhance the growth and dissemination of indigenous languages. A growing number of South African scholars have also made significant contributions to the academic literature on Indigenous languages (Mncube, 2009; Karlsson, 2002).

Proverbs are essential to South African oral tradition and are considered a vital means of indigenous communication. Within the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) framework, Northern Sotho proverbs have been recognised for their cultural significance and educational function. Rakoma (1995), for example, compiled and organised Northern Sotho proverbs alphabetically in *Marema-ka-dika tša*

*Sesotho sa Lebowa*, providing a valuable resource for linguistic and cultural preservation.

According to Adeyemi (2012), proverbs are deeply embedded in African culture, with individuals who speak Indigenous languages serving as active carriers of this oral tradition. Mbiti (1995) highlights that the language of proverbs encompasses a rich vocabulary, figurative expressions, and symbolic representations that encapsulate the community's values and experiences. Proverbs draw from diverse aspects of society and address various human experiences, natural phenomena, and social relations, aiming to catalyse wisdom, ethics, and philosophical thought in many African contexts.

This study focuses on two central aspects of Northern Sotho proverbs: their role in communication and their contribution to IKS. The findings demonstrate how these proverbs can be employed as practical tools to engage multiple stakeholders, including educators, cultural practitioners, parents, policymakers, business leaders, and civil society organisations, in promoting cultural sustainability and intergenerational knowledge transfer.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

In post-apartheid South Africa, there is a growing perception that Indigenous knowledge systems are under threat due to the influence of modernisation and globalisation. This concern is particularly pronounced in the case of Northern Sotho, which is not among the most widely spoken languages in the country. This study examined the challenges affecting the survival and relevance of Northern Sotho proverbs, focusing on their role, status, and prospects.

Linden (1991) warns that absorbing Indigenous communities into globalised societies often results in the loss of their unique cultural knowledge. This pattern is observable among Northern Sotho youth, who are increasingly disengaged from their cultural heritage. This detachment raises questions about the

effectiveness of existing succession planning mechanisms for transmitting Indigenous knowledge.

There are also concerns about the capacity of government institutions to provide effective leadership in preserving traditional cultures (Leshilo, 2014). Traditionally, Northern Sotho proverbs served as important tools for conveying wisdom and social norms to diverse groups, including children, elders, and community leaders. Today, however, there is evidence that Western traditions are displacing these cultural values, and elders struggle to pass on this knowledge to younger generations (Chilisa, 2012).

This study was, therefore, guided by the need to explore concrete barriers to the intergenerational transmission of Northern Sotho proverbs. It sought to answer questions such as: What are the main obstacles preventing the preservation and use of proverbs among Northern Sotho youth? What evidence exists to support these concerns?

The study posits that proverbs are part of South Africa's indigenous cultural identity and must be preserved. Particular attention will be given to Northern Sotho cultural values such as:

- Language and proverb use
- Community cohesion
- Human relations
- Hospitality
- Respect for authority and elders
- Time consciousness.

Examples of cultural expressions include:

*Rutang bana ditaola le se ye natšo badimong.* Parents should teach their children good morals and wisdom before they pass on (Rakoma, 1995).

*E kitimile kgale Thamaga le mmala wa yona ke o mokhunou.* A community's strength lies in its children and their proper upbringing and education.

## 1.4 Definitions of Key Concepts

According to Taylor (2003:13), proverbs express universal truths embedded in societal values, ethics, and moral teachings. They convey experiential wisdom rather than abstract logic, often encapsulating collective understanding through metaphor, symbolism, and analogy (Yusuf, 1997). Proverbs are considered an essential mode of cultural expression and a powerful medium for transmitting knowledge, values, and philosophy (Adeyemi, 2005).

**Folklore** is defined by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1998) as the traditional beliefs, myths, tales, and practices of a people, transmitted orally. Folkloristics is the academic study of these cultural expressions.

**Northern Sotho** is one of South Africa's 12 official languages, primarily spoken in the Limpopo, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga provinces, with speakers also found in the Northwest, Northern Cape, and Free State Provinces (Mojalefa, 2002).

**Culture** refers to the collective manifestations of human intellectual, artistic, and social achievement, encompassing the arts, beliefs, customs, values, norms, institutions, and practices characterising a particular group or society at a given time. It serves as a framework through which communities express their identity, transmit knowledge, and maintain continuity across generations.

**Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)** refer to the unique, traditional knowledge developed by communities over generations, often used for local decision-making and environmental management. Unlike Western scientific knowledge, IKS is context-specific and grounded in cultural practices (Ajibade, 2003; Robinson & Herbert, 2001).

**Communication** is defined by Mphahlele (2003) as the use of verbal or non-verbal cues to transfer information in a social interaction. Communication can be formal or informal and occurs through oral, written, or symbolic channels, depending on context.

## **1.5 Aim and Objectives of the Study**

According to Thomson (2014), the objectives of social research are the specific actions undertaken to uncover hidden truths, answer research questions, and resolve theoretical or empirical uncertainties. In line with this assertion, this study investigates the role of Northern Sotho proverbs as tools for communication and IKS development within Northern Sotho-speaking communities.

### **1.5.1 Aim of the Study**

The primary aim of this study was to explore the role of proverbs as tools of communication and cultural development among Northern Sotho-speaking communities. Specifically, the study sought to investigate the challenges impeding the development, transmission, and usage of Northern Sotho proverbs, while assessing their potential as integral components of IKS. The lack of up-to-date, scholarly analysis on this aspect of Northern Sotho culture highlights the significance of this research, as it addresses a crucial gap in the community's cultural literature and knowledge system.

### **1.5.2 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To identify the key challenges hindering the preservation and use of Northern Sotho proverbs among the youth in post-apartheid South Africa.
2. To explore the role of Northern Sotho proverbs in communicating cultural values, including language use, community cohesion, respect for authority, and time consciousness.
3. To assess the effectiveness of current mechanisms for transmitting Indigenous knowledge, specifically Northern Sotho proverbs, across generations.
4. To evaluate the impact of modernisation and globalisation on the relevance and status of Northern Sotho proverbs in contemporary society.

5. To investigate the capacity of government institutions to support the preservation of traditional cultural knowledge, including Northern Sotho proverbs.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

In alignment with the objectives outlined for this study, the following research questions have been formulated. This study sought to answer the following key research questions:

1. What are the main obstacles preventing the preservation and use of Northern Sotho proverbs among Northern Sotho youth?
2. How do Northern Sotho proverbs contribute to the transmission of cultural values such as language, community cohesion, respect for authority, and time consciousness?
3. How effective are current succession planning mechanisms in ensuring the intergenerational transmission of Northern Sotho proverbs?
4. What evidence exists to support concerns about the displacement of Indigenous cultural values by Western traditions among Northern Sotho communities?
5. To what extent are government institutions capable of providing effective leadership in preserving and promoting the use of Northern Sotho proverbs and other aspects of traditional culture?

### **Hypothesis or Proposition:**

This study hypothesises that Northern Sotho proverbs are an essential part of South Africa's indigenous cultural identity, and that their preservation and use face significant challenges due to the dual forces of modernisation and globalisation. Furthermore, the study posits that current mechanisms for transmitting these proverbs, especially among younger generations, are insufficient to safeguard heritage.

## **1.7 Rationale and Significance of the Study**

This study is significant because it aims to provide policymakers, heritage authorities, and cultural practitioners with valuable insights and guidelines for developing folklore and indigenous cultural practices. The research will contribute to an improved understanding of proverbs as a vital element of folklore and a unique form of indigenous communication.

The findings will also inform strategies to enhance the application of proverbs within Northern Sotho communities and the broader African society. This study will also serve as a reference point for future scholars, researchers, and practitioners interested in the intersection of language, culture, and IKS.

## **1.8 Literature Review**

Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2012) emphasise the critical role of literature reviews in situating a study within existing academic discourse and identifying gaps for further research. This study builds upon extensive literature on folklore, proverbs, communication, and IKS.

Bascom (1981) states that folklore encompasses myths, legends, folktales, proverbs, riddles, and other forms of oral artistic expression. It is often defined as the collective cultural knowledge passed down orally from generation to generation, encompassing traditions, customs, and beliefs. Trench (2005) and Whiting (2006) further note that folklore, unlike written literature, can persist independently of a writing system and often coexists with other forms of cultural expression such as dance, music, and visual art.

Leach (1962) identifies folklore as the repository of a society's wisdom, where oral traditions serve as the foundational mode of education, transmitting both social values and environmental knowledge. In this regard, folklore represents an original and enduring technology for cultural continuity.

Scholars such as Adeyemi and Balogun (2005), Taylor (2003), and Yusuf (1997) argue that proverbs serve as concise yet powerful expressions of communal thought, offering insights into various aspects of life, including political, social, moral, and philosophical realms. According to Nicolaisen (1994), Seitel (1981), and Meider (1989), proverbs are verbal crystallisations of folk wisdom, typically employed to influence social behaviour and communicate ethical norms.

Within Northern Sotho culture, proverbs (locally known as diema) play a central role in oral traditions, serving both communicative and educational purposes (Leshilo, 2012). Northern Sotho is spoken in Limpopo Province and has numerous dialects, including Sepedi, Setlokwa, Selobedu, Sehananwa, and Sepulana. It is essential to distinguish between Sepedi, a dialect, and Northern Sotho, a broader linguistic classification.

This literature review will examine the following thematic areas:

- **Proverbs and Moral Values:** Respect, obedience, politeness, responsibility, humility, honesty, and good manners.
- **Proverbs as Warnings and Advice:** Guidance for everyday conduct and decision-making.
- **Proverbs and Work Ethic:** Themes of tolerance, perseverance, and hard work
- **Proverbs and Social Organisation:** Reflections on family, governance, wealth, poverty, justice, and community cohesion.
- **Proverbs and IKS Development:** Roles in preserving and transferring indigenous knowledge and wisdom.

This study will utilise various sources, including academic books, theses, dissertations, journal articles, and conference proceedings by African scholars. While important contributions have been made by researchers such as Serudu (1993), Masenya (2010), and Phiri (2015), a gap remains in the literature regarding the explicit use of proverbs as tools for communication and development. This study sought to address that gap.

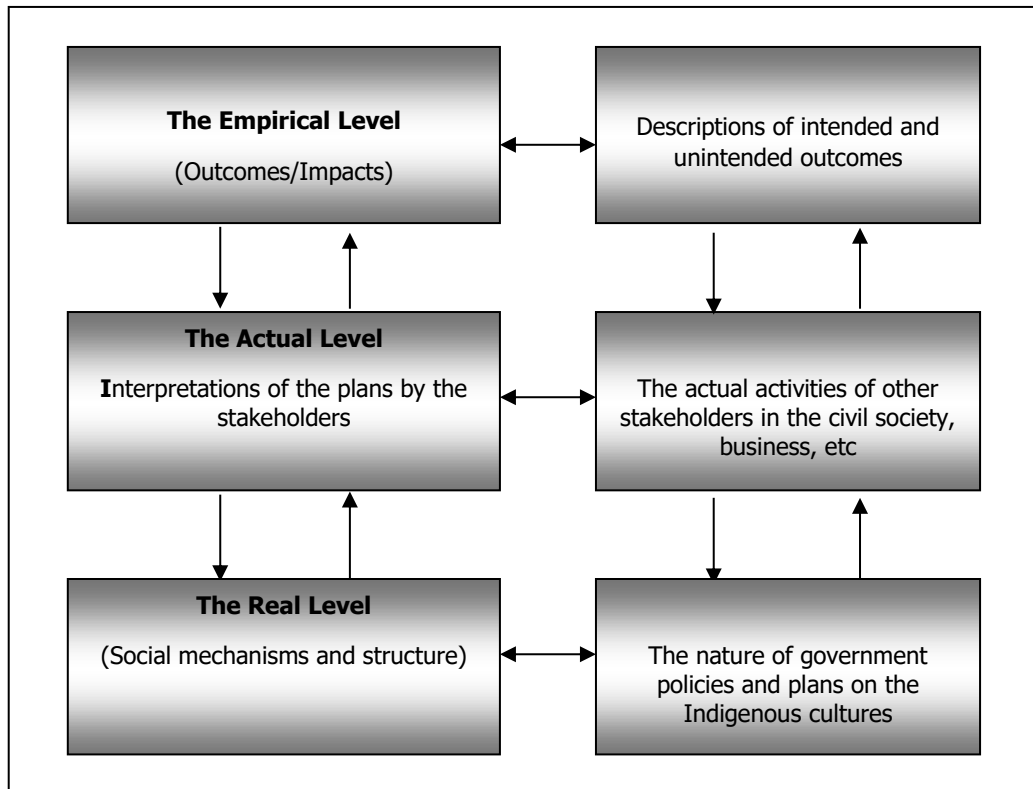
## **1.9 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

Creswell (2012) defines a theoretical framework as the structure that supports and guides a research study, providing a lens through which the problem is examined. This study draws on theories that emphasise the role of power relations and stakeholder influence in shaping socio-cultural realities.

According to Bhaskar (1998), Barker and Galasinski (2001), and Nelson and Wright (1995), understanding the power dynamics among stakeholders is essential to uncovering the reasons behind cultural stagnation or progress. Where power inequalities exist, they often manifest as hegemony, marginalisation, and the suppression of indigenous cultural forms (Parker, 1992; Mamdani, 1999).

This theoretical framework enables the analysis of the roles of various members, including government agencies, educators, cultural custodians, and community members, and their roles in promoting or impeding the use of Northern Sotho proverbs. It supports a critical examination of cultural survival and revitalisation, particularly in the face of competing global influences.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the conceptual model, adapted from Bhaskar (1998), which highlights how power relations among stakeholders influence the preservation of culture and the transmission of indigenous knowledge.



**Figure 1.1: Application of the Critical Realist Stratification Model to the Study (Source: Adapted from Bhaskar, 1998)**

Figure 1.1 illustrates the application of Bhaskar’s (1998) critical realist stratification model, emphasising that a comprehensive understanding of the status of Northern Sotho proverbs must consider the roles of multiple stakeholders, including government institutions, business entities, and civil society. The model’s theoretical underpinning asserts that the nature of power relations among these stakeholders significantly influences the outcomes related to the preservation, development, and integration of indigenous proverbs into cultural practices.

### **1.9.1 Methodology**

Research methodology involves systematically collecting and analysing data to address specific research objectives (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2010; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This study will employ a

qualitative methodology to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and knowledge in depth.

As indicated in Figure 1.1, data were collected from the following sources:

- Government policies, departments' policies, and strategies related to Indigenous knowledge and language preservation.
- Stakeholders such as cultural organisations, community elders, educators, youth, business leaders, traditional leaders, and academics who can provide insights into the status and challenges of Northern Sotho proverbs.

Macmillan and Schumacher (1993:372) highlight that qualitative research is designed to describe and analyse people's social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions. Creswell (2007) supports this, noting that qualitative research emphasises data collection in natural settings and relies on inductive reasoning to generate thematic insights.

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) characterise qualitative research as:

- Contextual and naturalistic, conducted within the participants' real-life settings.
- Emphasising participants' perspectives while minimising researcher bias.
- Respectful of all viewpoints, with each participant's voice considered meaningful.
- Centred on capturing authentic human experiences rather than reducing them to statistics.
- Focused on the validity of participants' language and expressions.

## **1.9.2 Instruments for Data Collection**

### **1.9.2.1 Interview Method**

Face-to-face interviews were employed as the primary data collection method in this study to gain in-depth insights into the role of proverbs in communication and cultural development among Northern Sotho-speaking communities. This

qualitative approach facilitated direct engagement with participants, creating a conversational environment that encouraged the sharing of personal experiences, perceptions, and knowledge about Northern Sotho proverbs. The method is chosen for its ability to generate rich, context-specific data relevant to the study's objectives.

### **1.9.2.2 Participant Selection**

Participants were purposively selected to ensure a broad representation of perspectives. The sample will include key stakeholder groups, including elders, educators, cultural practitioners, language experts, and youth. This purposive sampling strategy aims to capture diverse insights and experiences regarding the development, transmission, and use of Northern Sotho proverbs.

A semi-structured interview schedule guided each interview. A semi-structured interview schedule guided each interview. This format allows for flexibility in probing emerging themes while maintaining consistency across sessions. Open-ended questions were used to facilitate detailed responses and to encourage participants to express their views freely.

### **1.10 Ethical Considerations**

Before interviews began, all participants were informed of the study's purpose and the voluntary nature of their participation. Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any stage, had been upheld throughout the research process. Participants were asked to sign a consent form, and interviews were conducted only after they had given informed consent. This study adhered to strict ethical research protocols to protect participants' dignity and rights. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of South Africa (UNISA), and formal permission was sought from the Research Review Committee of the College of Human Sciences, specifically from the Department of African Languages.

The following ethical principles guided the research:

- **Informed Consent:** Participants provided voluntary, written consent after being fully informed about the study's objectives and procedures.
- **Autonomy and Respect:** Participants' autonomy was honoured, and their perspectives respected.
- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** All identifying details were anonymised, and data were treated confidentially.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Care was taken to avoid using biased language related to gender, age, ethnicity, or social status.
- **Parental Permission:** For participants under eighteen, consent was obtained from their parents or guardians.

### **Ethics in Qualitative Fieldwork**

Qualitative research requires ethical flexibility and constant negotiation. Informed consent is treated as an ongoing dialogue rather than a one-time procedure, allowing participants to express concerns or withdraw at any stage.

- **Privacy:** Names and locations were coded or disguised in publications to protect participant identity.
- **Trust and Empowerment:** Researchers build genuine relationships with participants, avoiding manipulation or misrepresentation.
- **Sensitivity and Care:** Researchers avoid causing psychological or emotional harm. A sense of fairness and respect will guide interactions and reporting.

#### **1.10.1 Data Handling and Analysis**

Interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred language, Northern Sotho or English, to ensure clarity, understanding, and cultural sensitivity. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently

transcribed for analysis. The data generated through these interviews contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the role of proverbs in cultural identity, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and social development within the Northern Sotho-speaking community.

### **1.10.2 Interview Questions**

The following sample questions will guide the semi-structured interviews:

- What do you know about proverbs in general?
- How would you define folklore and Indigenous knowledge?
- What is the relationship between folklore and proverbs?
- What role do proverbs play in everyday life and cultural identity?
- Can you provide examples of Northern Sotho proverbs and explain their meanings?
- How important is it for young generations to learn and understand proverbs?
- What factors affect your community's current usage and understanding of proverbs?
- What recommendations do you have for sustaining and revitalising Northern Sotho proverbs?

### **1.10.3 Document Analysis**

Document analysis was used as a supplementary data collection instrument to support and triangulate findings obtained through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. This method enabled the researcher to examine the broader socio-cultural, educational, and policy contexts relevant to the use of proverbs in Northern Sotho-speaking communities. Marshall and Rossman (2016) note that documents can provide rich contextual data, offering insight into the beliefs, values, and institutional frameworks that shape cultural practices.

#### 1.10.4 Nature and Relevance of Documents

As Leedy (1997) defined, document analysis involves identifying and examining relevant written materials to extract meaningful information. This study employed this technique to trace the cultural, linguistic, and educational significance of Northern Sotho proverbs over time. Document analysis is particularly useful for examining social phenomena such as cultural transmission, identity, and value systems (Best & Kahn, 1993). It also helped to uncover institutional attitudes toward indigenous knowledge by analysing language policies and educational documents.

##### 1.10.4.1 Types and Categories of Documents

The study will focus on two primary categories of documents:

- **Traditional Texts:** These include collections of Northern Sotho proverbs, oral literature, published folklore, and ethnographic records that illustrate traditional meanings and usage.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Studies:** Encompassing academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, dissertations, and theses that explore the communicative and social roles of proverbs.

##### 1.10.4.2 Sources of Documents

Documents were sourced from both physical and digital repositories:

- **Libraries and Archives:** The researcher will consult public and academic libraries, cultural research centres, and national archives for primary sources such as historical proverb collections, cultural texts, and official language documents.
- **Digital Resources:** Online databases, institutional repositories, academic journals, and cultural websites provided access to scholarly publications, government documents, and educational materials.

Examples of documents to be analysed include:

- Prescribed literature and textbook chapters
- Academic journal articles
- Conference papers
- Theses and dissertations
- Language policy documents and ministerial circulars.

#### **1.10.4.3 Contribution to the Study**

Through document analysis, the study gained a deeper understanding of how Northern Sotho proverbs function as communicative tools and agents of cultural and social development. This method also helped to identify policy-level trends, institutional support mechanisms, and gaps in current literature. The systematic review and interpretation of documents contribute to data triangulation, thereby enhancing the reliability, depth, and academic integrity of the study's findings.

#### **1.11 Data Analysis**

The study employed content analysis as the primary method for analysing qualitative data. According to Schrink, Fouché, and De Vos (2011:399), qualitative data analysis involves inductive reasoning and theoretical reflection to extract meaning from empirical data. Following the recommendations of Strauss and Corbin (1998), data were coded, categorised, and organised into thematic areas.

The analysis aimed to uncover the following:

- The status of Northern Sotho proverbs in community communication and IKS.
- Key challenges and obstacles impeding the development and transmission of proverbs.
- Existing governmental policies and their effectiveness in addressing these challenges.

- Stakeholders proposed recommendations promoting the use and relevance of Northern Sotho proverbs to promote the use and relevance of Northern Sotho proverbs.

### **1.12 Study Area: Sekhukhune Region Ga-Nchabeleng**

This study was conducted in Ga-Nchabeleng, a village in the Sekhukhune Region of the Limpopo Province, South Africa. The area is predominantly inhabited by Northern Sotho-speaking communities, making it an ideal location for exploring the role of proverbs in communication and cultural development.

Ga-Nchabeleng is part of the Makhuduthamaga Local Municipality. It holds cultural and historical significance owing to its strong adherence to traditional practices, including the oral transmission of Indigenous knowledge through proverbs, storytelling, and ritual practices. The community structure in this area includes active participation from elders, traditional leaders, educators, and youth, all of whom are important stakeholders in Northern Sotho cultural expressions.

The selection of Ga-Nchabeleng as the study site is purposive and strategic, based on its rich cultural heritage and the continued relevance of oral traditions in daily life. This setting offers a unique opportunity to explore how proverbs convey values, social norms, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and community identity.

The study aimed to capture how modernisation, migration, and the transmission and use of proverbs in the region. Insights drawn from this rural, yet culturally vibrant setting, will contribute meaningfully to the broader discourse on IKS and cultural sustainability in South Africa.

### **1.13 Conclusion**

This study aimed to foster a renewed appreciation for Northern Sotho proverbs as a vital component of cultural identity, communication, and IKS. By analysing the socio-cultural, institutional, and generational dynamics that shape their use,

the research aims to empower the Northern Sotho people to embrace, preserve, and transmit their cultural heritage with pride and dignity to future generations.

### **1.14 Outline of the Study**

This study is structured into five chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research problem:

#### **1.15 Chapter Outline**

- **Chapter One: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the study by providing the background and context of the research. It outlines the problem statement, research questions, research objectives, and the study's significance. The chapter also outlines the rationale and scope of the investigation, laying the foundation for subsequent chapters.

- **Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

This chapter critically engages with existing scholarship on proverbs, communication, and cultural development within indigenous contexts. It also discusses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that underpin the study, thereby situating the research within broader academic discourse and identifying key knowledge gaps the study aims to address.

- **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

This chapter details the methodological approach adopted in the study. It explains the research design, sampling strategies, data collection instruments (such as interviews and document analysis), data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations. The methodology is justified in relation to the research questions and the study's qualitative nature.

- **Chapter Four: Data Presentation and Analysis**

This chapter presents the empirical findings generated from the data collection process. The data are thematically organised and analysed in relation to the research questions and objectives. Where appropriate, direct participants support the analysis and illustrate key themes.

- **Chapter Five: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

This chapter presents the research findings from the reviewed literature and the theoretical framework employed in this study. It concludes the data and offers practical recommendations for stakeholders, while preserving and promoting Northern Sotho proverbs. The chapter also outlines the study's limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In the preceding chapter, the researcher laid the groundwork for this research by defining the research title, problem statement, research questions, and objectives, and by providing the background and rationale for the study. This chapter delves into the extensive literature relevant to the study's objectives. Reviewing publications on the topic, the researcher aims to uncover insights and perspectives that will enrich and inform the study. These discussions will elucidate critical concepts from the literature and culminate in the construction of a theoretical framework that underpins the study. This synthesis of existing knowledge serves as the cornerstone for the research endeavours, guiding researchers' exploration of the role of proverbs in communication development within Northern Sotho culture. Specifically, this chapter will delve into the literature on indigenous proverbs. The researcher will outline the concept of proverbs and review those related to a wide range of topics, including moral values, wealth, poverty, tolerance, hard work, consciousness, motivation, patience, perseverance, family relationships, warning signs, advice, solidarity, conflict resolution, social justice, and IKS development. This thorough exploration of the literature will provide a solid foundation for this study.

### **2.2 Literature review**

The existing literature on Northern Sotho proverbs has been significantly enriched by the contributions of scholars and authors such as Serudu (1993), Masenya (2010), Phiri, Mulaudzi, and Heyns (2015), Ramohlale, Mogoboya, and Chauke (2021), among others. One contribution was made by Serudu (1993), who compiled a variety of proverbs and folktales. Masenya (2010), on the other hand, expatriated on the historical and biblical marginalisation of women in South Africa and elsewhere around the world, worsened by the high prevalence of HIV

and AIDS among women. She uses the Northern Sotho proverb to explain the aggravated situation in which women find themselves: “*Wa re o bona e hlotša, wa e nametša thaba.*”

Phiri et al. (2015) examined the impact of the indigenous proverb “*lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi*” on women’s mental health, noting that it encourages Northern Sotho women to remain in marriage despite hardships. Mphasha (2016) further contributed to the understanding of the legal significance of proverbs in judicial and social cases among the Northern Sotho. Meanwhile, Montle (2021) used a qualitative approach to examine how Northern Sotho cultural proverbs denounce stereotypes about black women in contemporary South African society. Ramohlale et al. (2021) examined the contemporary relevance of Northern Sotho proverbs in local communities’ social lives, while Seanego (2021) highlighted the significance of preserving these proverbs for posterity through qualitative research.

Despite these valuable contributions, a notable gap remains in understanding the role of Northern Sotho proverbs as communication and development tools (C4D). This study aimed to address this gap by examining the utilisation of Northern Sotho proverbs within communication and development. By exploring this area, the researcher sought to contribute new insights and perspectives to the existing body of literature. This research will shed light on the cultural, social, and practical dimensions of Northern Sotho proverbs, thereby enhancing our understanding of their potential impact on communication and development initiatives. Addressing these issues will also have practical implications for communication strategies and development programmes, viewed through the lens of Northern Sotho indigenous proverbs.

To enrich the academic discourse, the researcher examined additional experiences and evidence regarding proverbs as tools for communication and development from various parts of the African Continent. This analysis involved the works of scholars from Nigeria, Kenya, and Ghana who utilised Indigenous languages within their cultural contexts.

The researcher drew from the works of Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian author who wrote extensively about Igbo culture and folklore. Achebe's (2010) novel collections include *The African Trilogy*, comprising *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, and *Arrow of God*, which particularly highlights the communicative and cultural significance of proverbs, demonstrating how they function as integral elements of communication.

Similarly, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1994) explored the role of language, culture, and folklore in his works. In "Decolonising the Mind," Ngũgĩ discusses the importance of Indigenous languages and oral traditions, including proverbs, in fostering communication and development.

In contrast, another Nigerian author, Amos Tutuola (1952), is known for using Yoruba folklore and oral traditions in his novels, such as *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*. Tutuola's works frequently feature proverbs as key components of storytelling and communication. Meanwhile, Kofi Awoonor (1974), a Ghanaian poet and author, often incorporated Ewe proverbs and oral traditions into his works, such as *"Guardians of the Sacred Word: Ewe Poetry."* His poetry and essays reflect the cultural and communicative significance of proverbs within African societies.

Wole Soyinka (2003), a Nigerian playwright and poet, delved into themes of culture and communication in his works. In plays like *Death and the King's Horseman*, Soyinka integrates Yoruba proverbs and traditions to convey profound insights into human relationships and societal norms. Additionally, Izu, C. (1975), a Nigerian scholar renowned for his extensive work on African culture and communication, has significantly advanced the understanding of the role of proverbs in African societies. In his seminal work, *The West and the Rest of Us: White Predators, Black Slavers, and the African Elite*. Izu (1975). explores the significance of IKS, including proverbs, in communication and development in Africa. The researcher believes that Izu's perspectives will profoundly enrich the current study, as his contributions offer an extensive, in-depth examination of indigenous communication and development, surpassing those of many others in the field.

By engaging with these diverse perspectives, the researcher interrogates and highlights the rich tapestry of African oral traditions. This approach highlights their crucial role in communication and development, thereby deepening and broadening academic inquiry into this field.

The foregoing authors represent a few examples of the diverse range of voices exploring indigenous proverbs in synergised communication and development (Development communication/Communication for development) within African languages and cultures. In contrast to the foregoing research efforts, South Africa has given attention to communication for development (Burton, 1998). This view is also echoed by Raselekoane (2014).

This lack of understanding of communication for development creates a gap in understanding the nexus between communication and development, specifically in how proverbs can be deployed in tandem as tools for communication and development within the Northern Sotho language and culture. The connection between communication and development is strongly emphasised by Ademowo and Balogun (2017:149), who assert that effective communication is a key driver of sustainable development, fostering both social change and economic progress."

If culture is a veritable instrument of development, if language is a carrier of culture, and if the relationship between language and culture is like that between two sides of the same coin, then the role of the proverb as a metaphorical use of language cannot be overemphasised in any development discourse.

Turning the attention to the South African situation, wherein researchers have either concentrated on proverbial communication only or on proverbial developments alone, the researcher commences with those South African scholars who have researched on proverbial communications of the Northern Sotho alone, followed in a contrasting fashion by those in the Western and European countries, who researched on communication for development. Firstly, Ramohlale et al. (2021) posit that indigenous proverbs form an integral part of

everyday language and serve as a building block of the Northern Sotho language. These authors emphasise that proverbs are vital to the Northern Sotho language and that the language is aesthetically incomplete without them.

In the 18th century, Northern Sotho proverbs were communicated orally (not in writing), transmitted from one generation to another by word of mouth. Consequently, Rakoma (1995) saw the need to collate all available, valuable, and frequently used Northern Sotho proverbs. He compiled an indispensable book titled *Marema-ka-dika tša Sesotho sa Lebowa* and successfully preserved Northern Sotho proverbs for posterity. Rakoma believed the proverbs needed to be preserved because they might otherwise become extinct. Rakoma's concerns regarding the extinction of proverbs and the problems faced with their use are supported by other authors, such as Seanego (2021:475), who argues that, of concern, is that some jokes on social media/Facebook constitute misrepresentations, resulting in the distorted use or misuse of proverbs as communication tools. He further argues that some platforms advertise the proverbs carelessly without considering their long-term negative impacts on the public. This concern has also been noted by Raphalalani (2017), Mashige (2011), and Okpewho (1992:226).

Proverbs, in general, are known to promote wisdom, harmony, and social cohesion within societies. However, it is important to note that, depending on their context and usage (Omoera, 2013, p. 16), some proverbs might inadvertently promote disharmony. In the Northern Sotho culture, the primary intent of proverbs is to offer guidance and reflect societal values. It is less common to find proverbs explicitly designed to promote disharmony.

The interpretation of certain proverbs can lead to disharmony if they are misconstrued (misused or taken out of context). When it comes to proverbs, their impact is heavily influenced by the context and the way they are used, as previously alluded to by Omoera (2013:16). Additionally, Nwachukwu-Agbada (2002:5) confirms that it is context that validates a proverb as communication.

Therefore, when examining proverbs, consider their cultural background and intended use within the community (Esimaje, Masagbor, and Ezirim, 2014, p. 257). Here are a couple of examples that could be considered contentious:

"Ngwana llela naka ya mukhura sehlang le mo nee." Translation: "The child cries for the tooth of the hen next to him." This Sepedi proverb implies that people sometimes desire things they cannot have or things that are not meant for them. In this case, the child is crying for something that does not exist, like a hen's tooth. The proverb highlights the futility of pursuing the unattainable, reminding us to focus on what is possible and realistic rather than yearning for the unattainable. It is a metaphorical way of advising against wasting energy on things that are impossible to achieve.

"Kgomo e swara ka kgole, motho o swara ka molomo." Translation: "The cow is held by the rope; the person is held by the mouth." This Sepedi proverb reflects the idea that what controls or influences a person is their speech. Just as a cow is guided or controlled by a rope, a person is often guided or constrained by their words. It can be seen as a reminder of the power of speech and how a person's words can lead them to success or trouble, depending on how they are used. The proverb emphasises that words are powerful and have the potential to shape a person's life, for better or for worse.

Regarding the preceding concerns, Ramohlale et al. (2021), Moloko-Phiri (2015), Possa (2010), and Seanego (2021:475) have isolated those local proverbs that tend to promote disharmony in the Northern Sotho and Southern Sesotho cultures, respectively. For example, in Northern Sotho culture, proverbs that are often used out of context are presented in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1:** Misused Proverbs in Northern Sotho

Proverb in Northern Sotho	Translation	Impact
<i>Fihla thupha o senye ngwana.</i>	Spare the rod and spoil the child.	Outlawed in South Africa as it insinuates corporal punishment and violence.

<i>Lefotwana e sego la gago o hloba le gaela.</i>	If the hatchling is not yours, you pluck its feathers without mercy.	Promotes social disorder.
<i>Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi.</i>	A woman's final resting place is often where she was married.	Promotes women's abuse and gender-based violence.
<i>Monna ke lepai re a apolelana.</i>	A man is a blanket we all share.	Promotes women's abuse.

However, other researchers from different cultures have presented findings that counter Rakoma's beliefs of preserving proverbs in their conventional form and identity. For instance, such authors include Ntshinga (2010), who represents isiXhosa culture, and Possa (2013:39), who represents Southern Sotho culture. They both argue that, owing to cultural dynamism, proverbs need to be adapted to meet the demands of modern times rather than preserved wholesale for posterity.

Generally, the transformation/modification, or overhauling of proverbs is feasible, as proverbs are renowned for being fluid, malleable, and flexible, allowing them to be adapted for modern commercial entertainment purposes without harm on various media platforms or in onstage performances.

In line with proverbial discourse, Possa (2013:) further postulates that some contemporary proverbs are jokes created for fun by youth and other creative members of society. This aligns with similar perspectives by Mieder (2004), who contends, "there is no doubt that proverbs as traditional expressions of human wisdom are here to stay for generations to come." Rather than becoming extinct, as posited by Raphalalani (2017) and Mashige (2011), proverbs can be transformed to fulfil a renewed role. Similarly, Grzybek (1994: 236) has expressed that using proverbs out of context for commercial purposes is harmless and helps them fit into modernity.

Synthesising the Northern Sotho proverbial discourse from the preceding authors, it appears that considerable attention has been paid to the misuse and

miswriting of proverbs, while ignoring the effects of cultural change due to dynamism. However, ignoring cultural dynamism creates a gap in understanding the use of proverbs as communication and development tools. Consequently, the Northern Sotho culture, like other cultures worldwide, cannot escape the harsh reality of the evolution of proverbs imposed by cultural dynamism, as discussed next in the context of Western and European cultures.

On the contrary, some scholars of Western and European languages have studied the cross-cultural impacts on proverbs to enrich their local understanding of proverbs as tools for communication and development. Their position is that proverbs can serve as communication tools for development, a moral compass for addressing societal issues, as tools for societal motivation, as vehicles for community administrative systems, as resources for encouraging learning within communities, as tools for marketing and branding, and as mechanisms for capacity building at workplaces (Lubinga & James, 2004). These proverbial themes and perspectives are elaborated next.

### **2.2.1 Proverbs used as communication tools for development**

According to the Indonesian author Rabiah (2012:6), language is an inseparable part of culture, as it manifests culture. The roles of language as a communication tool include communicating with others, making legal judgments, planning, organising, controlling, team building, advertising, and branding.

In addition, Okworo (2009) posits that communication is central to all human activities in community development processes and that without it, there can be no development. Onah (2012, 2015) and Aruma (2018:8) state that group dynamics, coordination, and social change cannot be achieved without communication within human organisations.

Contrary to the preceding views, Harbour and Twist (1996) argue that, from a gender perspective, proverbs have generally failed to address the conditions for women's development globally. These include issues such as poverty, illiteracy,

domestic violence, discrimination, and barriers towards advancement for women in senior professional positions.

UNICEF (2008) maintains that Communication for Development (C4D), among others, goes beyond merely communicating and providing information to the public. It involves understanding people, their beliefs, values, and the social and cultural norms that shape their lives. UNICEF classifies Communication for Development as a two-way process for sharing ideas and knowledge, utilising various communication tools, such as proverbs, to empower individuals and encourage communities to act towards development and societal change, as discussed below.

### **2.2.2 Proverbs used as tools for societal motivation to act.**

According to Gwaravanda (2016) and Lubinga (2014), the value of proverbs is expressed through play in mobilising people to support human endeavours. These include events as entertainment, at public events such as weddings and funerals, at festivals, in the opening of new community projects, at political and religious rallies, and as opportunities for community education programmes on moral and related issues, as covered in the next section on societal morals.

### **2.2.3 Proverbs used as a moral compass for regulating societal issues.**

Contributing to the proverb discourse, Ademowo and Balogun (2014) and Taylor (2003:13) conceptualise proverbs as elements of folklore that address specific opportunities, challenges, and problems in society. Furthermore, emanating from a systems perspective, Yusuf (1997:120) and Agbaje (2002) posit that indigenous proverbs are valuable resources that can be relied upon to solve local community issues. Mieder (1989:1) and Irabor (2018) concur with this view, asserting that proverbs can provide practical administrative guidance within communities, as explained in the following paragraph.

#### **2.2.4 Proverbs used in Community administrative systems.**

In Germany, communication is hailed as a critical success factor in Systems Development (SD) within the engineering sector. Specifically, the higher the communication frequency, the more productive the project (Braithwaite & Joyce, 2005). Similarly, in Africa, indigenous proverbs, such as those cited by Makgopa (2022), can be utilised for administration in rural areas, according to Possa (2010) and Malunga and Banda (2004). These authors discuss how traditional wisdom, as expressed in African proverbs such as Makgopa, can be applied to issues related to community administrative systems. Makgopa (2022), which embodies wisdom and the insights passed down through generations, highlights the importance of cultural knowledge in promoting effective governance in rural areas. The application of such proverbs helps ensure that leadership decisions align with both the community's traditional values and its social realities.

They suggest that African proverbs can inform effective ways of administering local communities, drawing on traditional local government systems. For example, they argue that proverbs can be used to educate the public on traditional land ownership systems, natural resource conservation, climate change issues, indigenous technologies, and governance issues related to community development. They further observe that collecting African proverbs and using them to support modern local government systems can help illustrate how the modern and traditional can coexist, grounded in the principles of inclusive, democratic/participatory development and community learning, as discussed below.

#### **2.2.5 Proverbs used as resources for promoting community learning.**

In society, Aboluwodi (2012:33) asserts that the beauty of proverbs lies in their ability to communicate a society's culture to both youths and adults, serving as a learning resource and a nation's foundational block. They admonish and encourage youth to respect adults. For example, Lebeloane and Quan-Baffour (2008:43) and Sotvaldieva and Masharipova (2021:156) posit that, specifically in

Africa, such educational efforts can be implemented by incorporating “Letšema” programmes into the educational system to educate youth. The “Letšema” programmes aim to collectively build communities through voluntary contributions and development services, utilising Indigenous knowledge. According to these authors, this will instil a sense of the value of brotherhood and sisterhood through voluntary assistance to community members and by alleviating poverty by ensuring food security in rural communities. The “Letšema” programme, the authors maintain, could help reduce youth-related crime, among other things, by encouraging parents to work with teachers. “Letšema” can also be used in business settings, as explained in the following paragraph.

### **2.2.6 Proverbs used in Marketing and in brand promotion of products.**

Contrary to the beliefs of certain American folklorists, epidemiologists, and linguistic analysts who predicted the extinction of proverbs, Mieder and Mieder’s (1977) research found that proverbs are experiencing a renaissance in modern product advertising. Their malleable, mechanistic, and innovative nature has made them a powerful tool for differentiating companies and creating deeper emotional connections with customers in American and European markets.

For example, Companies like Nike and Coca-Cola have successfully leveraged proverbs in their marketing strategies. For instance, Schutte (2024) highlights Coca-Cola’s “Taste the Feeling” campaign, which used the African proverb “A person who drinks from another’s well does not forget” to emphasise sharing and generosity. This advertising campaign aimed to show how Coca-Cola brings people together and creates moments of joy and happiness.

This strategic use of proverbs provides a competitive advantage, as demonstrated by the success of these companies. Moreover, transformed proverbs can also be effectively integrated into workplace training, as discussed in the next section.

### **2.2.7 Proverbs used in capacity building at workplaces.**

Regarding building capacities within workplaces, Malunga and James (2004), from Capacity Development Consultancies of INTRAC International, based in Malawi, assert that African wisdom, specifically proverbs, can be tapped into in the modern workplace to develop employees' capacities worldwide. This attests to the innovative use of proverbs as tools for communication and development. Furthermore, Malunga and James (2004) indicate that some companies use indigenous proverbs to enhance their employees' training, citing the adage "knowledge is power". This is made possible because employees appreciate the proverbs, which equip them with some knowledge of the Internet/social media, as expressed in the following paragraph.

### **2.2.8 Proverbs used within the Internet and social media.**

The use of proverbs on the Internet and social media involves transforming them in ways influenced by the European and Western worlds, in which conventional proverbs are deliberately modified to suit the user's purpose, as displayed across various media such as the internet, TikTok, TV, and others. The primary purpose is to create entertainment and humour. The entertainment industry thrives on this as the acts are commercialised. The original meaning may be distorted, and its essence lost. However, there are various schools of thought on the transformation of proverbs. For example, some authors centre on whether this practice should be further supported (Varga Raji-Oyelade, 2021). Perhaps more research is required to situate anti-proverbs or transformation within the proverb discourse, as emphasised in the following paragraph on the cross-cultural and multifunctionality of proverbs.

### **2.2.9 Cross-cultural and multifunctional use of proverbs.**

The cross-cultural and multifunctional use of proverbs suggests that they form an indispensable and integral part of human life, becoming part of special norms within communities. Hoshan (2021) asserts that proverbs have been renewed

and differentiated in legal and justice matters, where they are used as legal codes, as discussed in the next section on the legal use of proverbs.

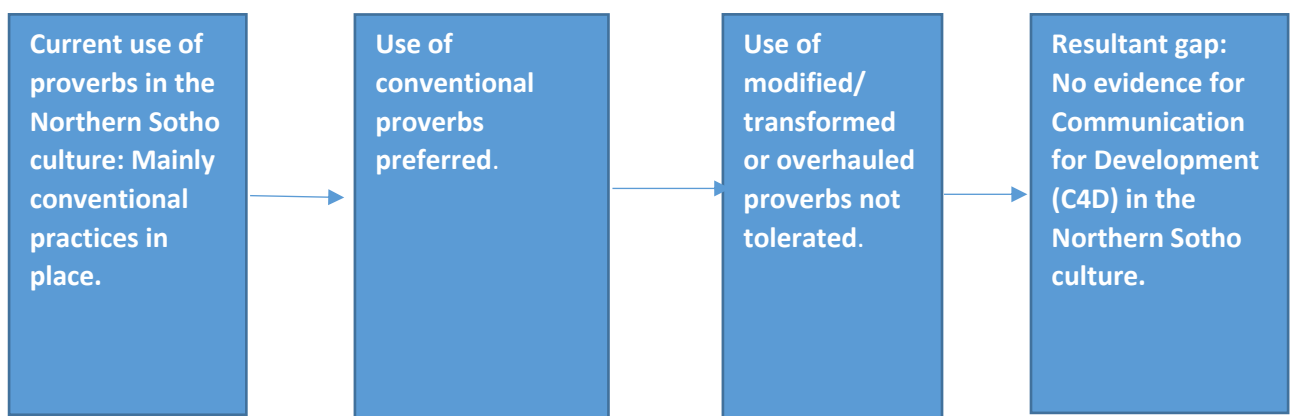
### 2.2.10 Proverbs used in legal judgments

Following from the previous section dealing with cross-functional and multifunctionality of proverbs, Taylor (1996:2) asserts that proverbs have now found renewed function in legal matters and are being used in and around the world “to pass judgements on events and work as legal codes”, for example, in such proverbs as “*Two wrongs do not make a right*”. Similarly, in Northern Sotho culture, Mphasha (2016:20) confirms that this international legal practice has been used locally for time immemorial and further confirms that proverbs have always played a critical role in settling disputes among the people. For example, the chief and headmen sit in a traditional court under a tree to administer justice to wrongdoers and resolve community legal problems. Wrongdoers are charged and pay their penalties using cows. As culture evolves, wrongdoers are now allowed to pay their penalties with any form of currency, rather than being required to pay in cows and goats.

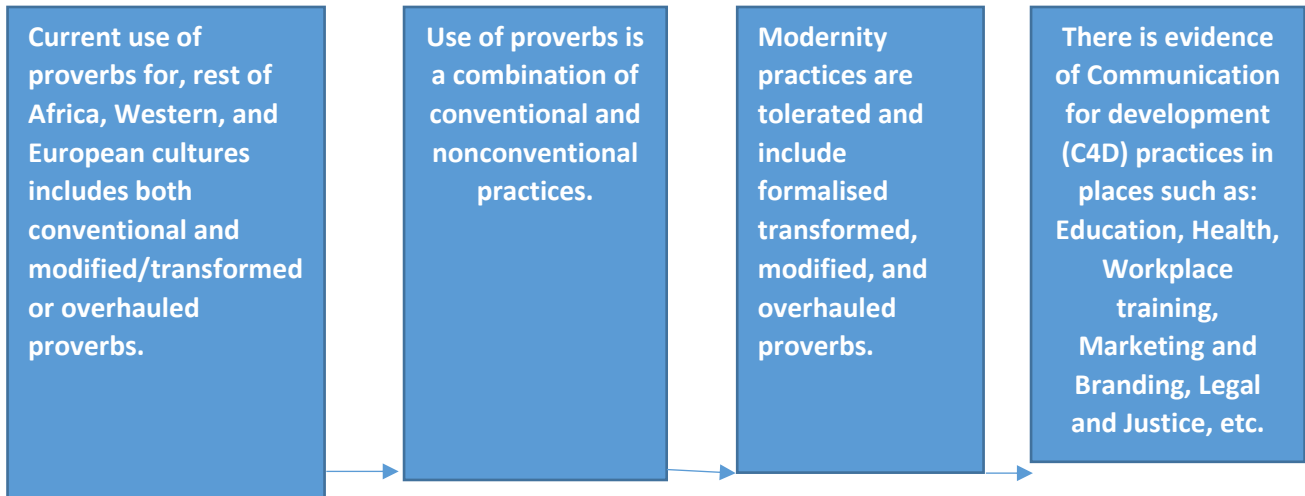
Thus far, based on the literature review in the previous sections, it emerges that the use of proverbs as tools for communication and development can ultimately be modelled using Schools of Thought, as shown in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1:** Suggested model for proverbs uses, Schools of thought.

#### CONVENTIONAL SCHOOL OF THOUGHT



## MODERN SCHOOL OF THOUGHT



**Figure 2.1:** Suggested model for proverbs uses, Schools of thought.

Extant literature suggests, as per Figure 2.1, that globally, the use of proverbs is influenced by the two schools of thought, that is, the Conventional School of Thought and the Modern School of Thought. The conventional School of Thought, as per Figure 2.1, can be understood as follows:

### Conventional School of Thought

#### 1. Current Use of proverbs in Northern Sotho culture:

- The primary application of proverbs remains within traditional practices.

#### 2. Preference for Conventional Proverbs:

- There is a strong preference for using traditional proverbs that align with long-established cultural norms and values.

#### 3. Use of Modified or Transformed Proverbs:

- The use of modified/ transformed, or overhauled proverbs is not tolerated.

#### 4. Resultant Gap:

- According to the extant literature, no evidence of Communication for Development (C4D) exists in the Northern Sotho culture.

It is comprehensible from the preceding School of Thought that the emphasis lies on the fact that proverbs should not be tampered with, even if the culture they carry is evolving because of dynamism. Therefore, this School of Thought clearly does not accommodate cultural changes stemming from modernity, and, by doing so, it neglects the effects of cultural dynamism, which is understood to permeate all cultures worldwide.

On the contrary, the Modernity School of Thought is a natural extension of the Conventional School of Thought. It primarily utilises conventional and unconventional proverbs, as depicted in Figure 2.1 and further described in the structured version in the next section.

### **Modern School of Thought**

#### **1. Current use of Proverbs in the rest of Africa, Europe, and Western cultures**

- According to the Modern School of Thought, proverbs within different cultures include conventional and modified/transformed or overhauled proverbs.

#### **2. Preference for both conventional and unconventional proverbs**

- According to the Modernity School of Thought, conventional and unconventional proverbs are preferred within the cultural practices as influenced by cultural dynamism in response to cultural dynamism and prevailing modernity trends.

#### **3. Use of Modified/Transformed or overhauled proverbs**

- Modified/transformed or overhauled proverbs resulting from modernity practices are entirely accommodated in the culture as they support innovation and creativity in a modern and developing world.

#### **4. Evidence for Communication for Development (C4D)**

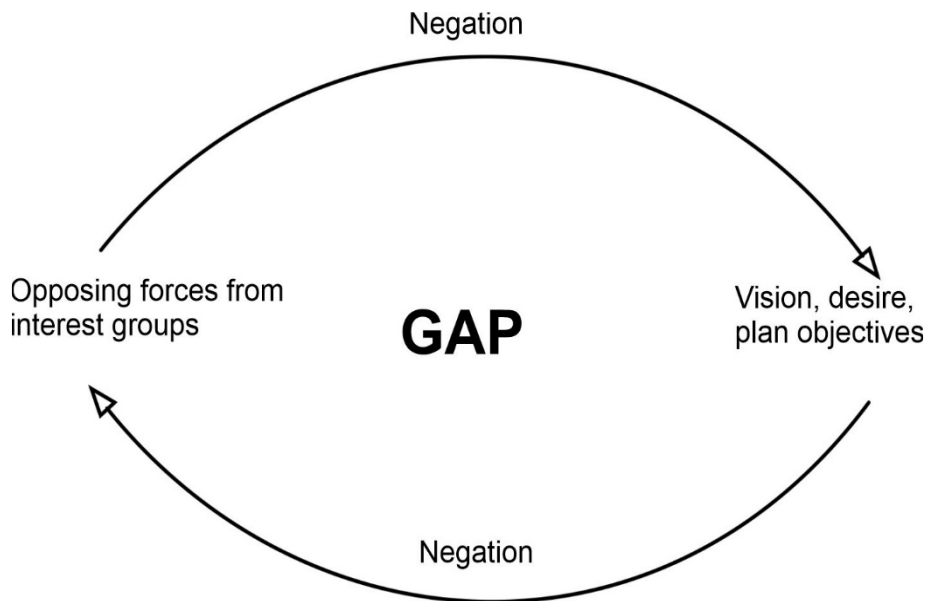
- There is tangible evidence of entrenched Communication for Development (C4D) practices, as attested to in branding and marketing Workplace products in the Workplace marketplaces. Workplace training using proverbs, and legal and justice using proverbs as codes for justice.

The hallmark of the Modernity School of Thought is that all cultures are dynamic; consequently, they are in constant evolution. This school of thought posits that proverbs should be modified or transformed to suit modern practices, rather than allowing them to become extinct (Mieder, 2004). Consequently, Mieder (2004) further posits that “*proverbs will never die*”. Following Mieder (2004), proverbs have now found renewed use in various applications, including branding and marketing, workplace employee training, legal coding, and commercial social media usage, among others.

The Northern Sotho culture is largely lacking in adopting and accommodating modern school of Thought practices. Northern Sotho researchers still lament the misuse and miswriting of proverbs in Northern Sotho culture, and their eventual extinction. This deficiency may need to be remedied if Northern Sotho culture's proverbial use is to remain on par with other cultures worldwide. Consequently, the future of Northern Sotho culture lies in integrating modern practices with those of other cultures worldwide. This School of Thought further presupposes that, because of human uncertainty owing to cultural changes (dynamism), opposing forces will always prevail, interfering (causing dis-equilibrium) with the standard or conventional use of proverbs in any culture and society. Attention is now turned to the opposing forces in the next section.

### **2.3 The reality of opposing forces in social systems**

Following the preceding discussions, Figure 2.2 can be introduced as a framework for appreciating the nature of the problems or opposing forces that the indigenous proverbs could face.



**Figure 2.2:** The dialectic relations between the ideal state (vision/desire) and opposing forces.

The model depicted in Figure 2.2 suggests that the ideal situation involves applying local proverbs in as many areas of community life as possible. This ideal situation or vision/desire indicates what must be the case in the indigenous proverbs: survival. This is the realm of government departments entrusted with ensuring the long-term, sustained growth of indigenous proverbs through their development policies and plans. For example, the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme (1996) aimed to empower the IKS of the former black homelands. This initiative continues today in the various national and provincial development plans. The survival and development of the indigenous proverbs of the former homelands constitute an important component of the initiative.

On the other hand, numerous activities by people can hinder the development of indigenous proverbs. This includes the negative influences of TV and other media platforms propagating Western culture and technology as the right and only tool for societal communication. Such activities exist to propagate their selfish

interests (Bhaskar, 2008). Unfortunately, the nature of this group's negative impacts has not been well researched, as the indigenous proverbs under study are concerned. This is one gap in our knowledge that this study sought to fill.

Based on the literature reviewed above, the two complementary theories (Functionalism and Critical Realism) emerge as central to guiding this study.

## **2.4 The Theoretical Frameworks guiding the study.**

A theoretical framework is essential to any research study, providing a structured set of concepts and theories that guide the research process. It serves as a foundation for understanding the research problem, framing the research questions, and interpreting the findings. By outlining the key concepts, theories, and assumptions underpinning the study, the theoretical framework directs the research, helping to choose appropriate research questions, aims and objectives, as well as to understand and analyse the collected data (Ngulube, Mathipa, and Gumbo, 2015; Kivunja, 2018; Adomowo, Hussein, and Agyem, 2018; Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

An appropriate theoretical framework emerges through thorough literature reviews, ensuring the research is grounded in established knowledge and theoretical insights (Ngulube, Mathipa, and Gumbo, 2015).

This study employs two complementary theoretical frameworks: Functionalism and the Critical Realist Approach. When two or more theoretical frameworks are integrated into a single study, it is known as theoretical triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). According to Ngulube et al. (2015), triangulating theories enhances the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and increases the validity of the explanations. The role of the two theoretical frameworks is substantiated in the following section.

Functionalism will assist the researcher in gathering data from various societal structures/institutions, while Critical Realism will help collect data from three stratified levels/layers within each societal structure/institution. These stratified

levels/layers include the top echelon/real level (government), the middle echelon/actual level (implementers of rules or policies), and the bottom layer/empirical level (ordinary language users experiencing distortions or abuses of language or proverbs). The uses and distortions/abuses need to be addressed through the various structures/institutions outlined in Functionalism theory, as shown in Figure 2.3. By leveraging the complementarity of these theories, the researcher will be able to garner rich insights from data navigated from the broad structures/institutions of society to the three stratified levels within each institution.

This section begins by introducing Functionalism as a framework that undergirds the study, focusing firstly on who the leading proponent is, how the theory is applied in the study, followed by the identification of the secondary proponents, what contributions they made towards the theory, and what criticisms have been levelled at the theory, as no theory is perfect or is beyond criticism. Criticism of the Functionalism theory will therefore be discussed in the context of Critical Realism, a complementary theory that underpins the study.

#### **2.4.1 Durkheim and Functionalism Theory**

French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) is the leading proponent of functionalism theory in sociology. Durkheim, the originator of this theoretical framework, believed in a social structure/institution composed of norms and values that serve as a standard measure for human regulation. This structure exists above individuals, as they are born into a society of norms and values. According to Durkheim, people's behaviour is shaped by these social structures, which consist of external facts, norms, values, and institutions that influence individual behaviour.

Durkheim emphasised the use of scientific methods to research the fundamental laws that influence human behaviour. He demonstrated the concept of human solidarity and its achievement (Pope, 1975). Durkheim also posits that humans are inherently selfish, and excessive freedom can harm both individuals and

society. He concluded that cooperation among society members could bring happiness and progress, rather than constant conflict over scarce resources. This view contrasts sharply with Karl Marx's Conflict Theory, which justifies the struggle for limited resources.

Durkheim argues that social solidarity is achieved through socialisation and the learning of societal norms and values. He maintained that fostering a sense of social solidarity is essential for eliminating selfishness, as it is the glue that holds society together. As industrialisation led to diverse lifestyles among citizens within the same society, Durkheim proposed the concept of organic solidarity based on the interdependence of individuals with dissimilar lifestyles. Social solidarity theories are discussed next.

#### **2.4.1.1 Social solidarity theories**

Social solidarity (Durkheim, 1982) theories posit that for members of society to function effectively within institutions, they need to socialise in solidarity, culminating in their joining institutions to offer beneficial services and create stability for the communities in which they operate.

Social consensus/division of labour (Durkheim, 1982) occurs when community members are employed. The exact skill sets to cover the different positions. They cannot be employed in the same position because they possess different skill sets required to cover the positions needed for staffing and productivity.

Durkheim's social solidarity is achieved through socialisation and the learning of society's norms and values. Durkheim maintains that creating a sense of social solidarity is the only way to eliminate selfishness and disharmony among community members. He argues that social solidarity is the glue that holds society together. As citizens within the same society stopped living the same lifestyles, because of industrialisation, Durkheim maintains that there will be a need for social solidarity based on dissimilar lifestyles, and called this organic solidarity.

According to Durkheim, a society comprises interconnected structures (institutions) that work together towards equilibrium, or a stable society. Such structures can include institutions, such as church/religion, education, finance, laws, and social facts, which are societal norms or standards by which all people are judged or accepted. Societal stability depends upon the normal functioning of these structures working together in harmony to create a stable society, as shown in Figure 2.3. Durkheim proposed the organic analogy to understand society and its institutions. After studying Auguste Comte, Emile Durkheim later criticised Comte. He developed his functionalist methods and theories, which compared society to the human body, just as the body consists of different, interrelated organs that enable it to survive, society consists of different components that enable it to survive.

Functionalism postulates that society functions as a unified entity composed of smaller, interdependent units. This means that society does not have just one function, nor is it composed of many homogeneous groups or institutions each playing the same role. Instead, each distinctive part of society serves a specific purpose. Problems arise when one part of society fails to fulfil its role. Functionalism theory is important because it connects the various aspects of society and explains how they work in tandem to support society's well-being. According to Durkheim, society should be analysed and described in terms of assigned functions. Society is a complex system of interrelated parts, where no single part can function independently of the others. These parts comprise the entirety of society. Durkheim conceptualised several notable theories in his lifetime. In his theory of functionalism, he contributed the concepts of social facts, division of labour, solidarity, and Anomie.

Anomie, by definition, occurs when some members exhibit dissonance towards certain societal functions, ultimately leading to the decline of norms and values. Durkheim found that significant differences between individuals in industrialised societies created moral degeneration, which he called Anomie. For example, an abuse or misquotation of Northern Sotho proverbs constitutes such a wrong that

warrants the application of the Functionalism principles to reverse the anomalies incurred.

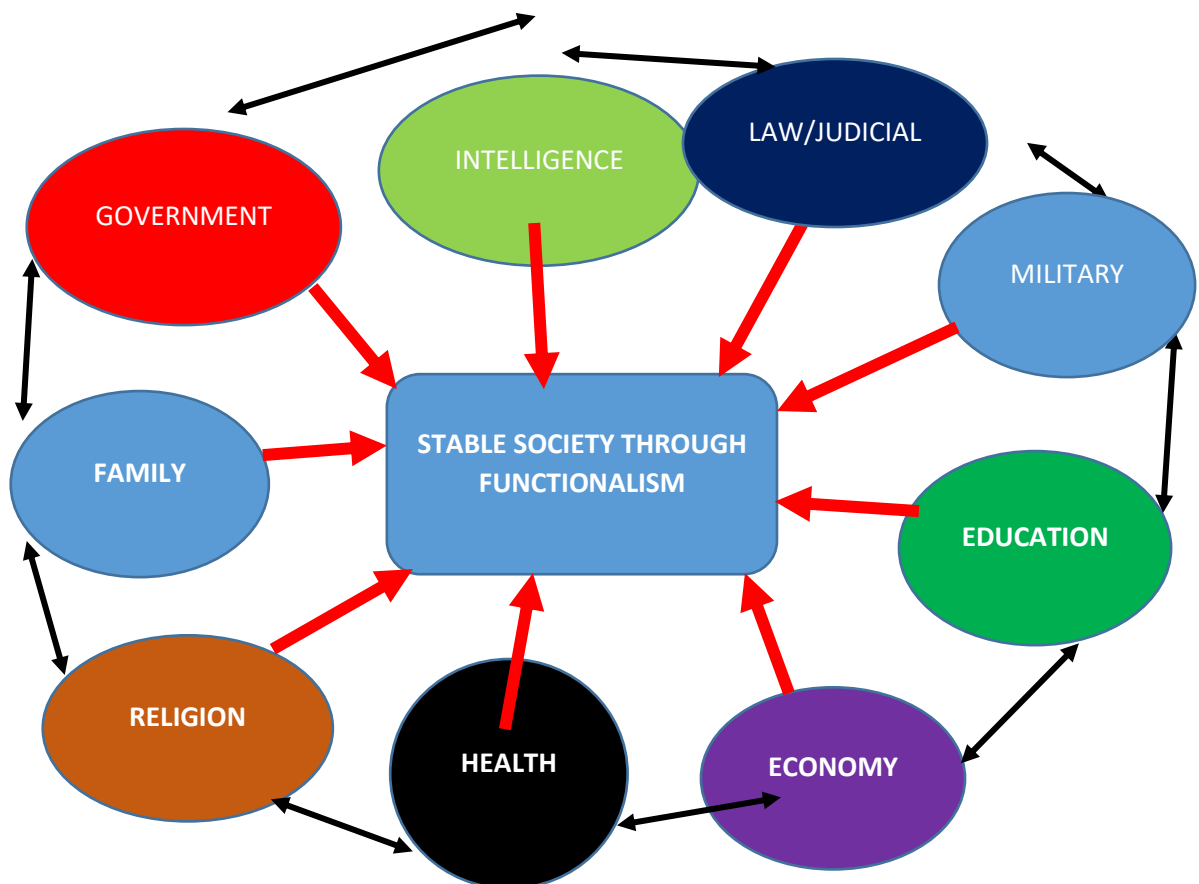
As a sociological theory, functionalism is also known as “Consensus Theory” (Durkheim, 1982). According to this theory, society must remain stable as depicted in Figure 2.3, and therefore, require social norms and values for guidance which all members of the society must adopt, for it to function correctly in such societal elements as: norms, customs, traditions, values, and in institutions such as religion, education, law, schools, churches and others. For example, a specific social value is that we should be law-abiding citizens. This applies to proverbs in Northern Sotho culture; they are used according to the conventional school of thought, which requires adherence to their original intent and meaning. Modifying proverbs would cause disequilibrium in the IKS, requiring the community to make some effort to normalise.

Functionalism’s central ideas are that institutions and structures work independently and interdependently to maintain social order. Individuals' norms, values, and behaviours are influenced and shaped by society’s structures, and social order and stability exist because of society’s consensus.

Functionalism is, therefore, a School of Thought for understanding aspects of indigenous culture and society. In this case, Functionalism will be used to understand Northern Sotho proverbs as a genre of folklore that carries and conveys indigenous culture. The theory is a positive theory (Positivism) which consistently enforces a state of equilibrium. From a deterministic view, it will always predict the outcomes. Within this theory, function refers to the extent to which a given activity promotes or interferes with the maintenance of a system.

The theory emphasises the sharing of norms and values, encouraging individuals and institutions to work together to achieve a harmonious society that addresses its own issues as the community develops on all fronts. These include education, crime, technology, the economy, and others, through indigenous collaboration and the collective efforts of all members of society.

The theory asserts that societal structures shape individuals. According to Parsons (1937), one of the secondary proponents of functionalist theory who followed Durkheim, the father of functionalism, these societal institutions can be likened to the different organs of a human body, where each part works together to ensure optimal functioning. Parsons emphasised that societal stability relies on the coordinated functioning of these structures. This idea is illustrated in the visual model of functionalist institutions (Figure 2.3), which shows how a stable society can benefit from coordinated use of cultural tools, such as proverbs. Proverbs can play a significant role in addressing societal problems, such as anomie (the breakdown of social norms and values), as seen in the use of Northern Sotho proverbs as tools for communication and development.



**Figure 2.3 A suggested model for functionalist institutions**

The visual illustration of Functionalism Institutions in Figure 2.3 emphasises the interconnectedness of the nine major institutions (depicted by circles) that are common to all societies worldwide. The bi-directional arrows flowing from each circle to another indicate how one institution influences and is influenced by another. All institutions contribute to the overall stability of each society, as indicated by the red arrows pointing towards the central, stable society depicted by the box in the centre, representing a stable society through the lens of Functionalism. For example, in the Northern Sotho culture, the functions of the above institutions, as portrayed in the diagram, can be explained by how they socialise stability and order within each society. In the following paragraphs, the functions of the institutions in Figure 2.3 are briefly discussed, accompanied by relevant Northern Sotho proverbs presented in a tabular format for illustrative purposes, to enrich the discourse.

### **Family Institution**

The family institution or structure is responsible for providing primary socialisation (a paramount function of the social institution) by teaching basic norms and values and reproducing the next generation of adults who know how to use, for example, proverbs within the society. For example, children are taught to respect parents and any adult they meet, as expressed in the following Northern Sotho proverbs. This teaching creates harmony and stability within each family and society. The following is an example of proverbs that can be taught to children.

**Table 2.2** Family Institution proverbs

	<b>Proverb</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>English Translation</b>
1.	Bagwera ba gago ge ba sela moetšana le wena o sele.	Bagwera ba mphato wa gago ge ba tšwela pele mošomong goba thutong ya bona, le wena o itapiše bjalo ka bona gore o se tlo šalela morago.	When your classmates progress in their work or education, work as hard as they do, so you do not fall behind.

2.	Mokgatatšhemo ya lehwiti o kgata a holofetše.	Motho ge a dira modiro ke tshwanelo gore a o kgotlelele ka gore kgotlelelo e tliša katlego.	When working, they must persevere because it brings success.
3.	Phala ye e se nago phalana ke lešilo.	Motho yo a se nago moeletši o fela a lahlega.	A person without proper counselling is always lost.

## Health Institution

The health institution socialises individuals by providing places where members of society can attend to their health matters under the supervision of qualified professionals, such as medical doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals. The primary aim is to promote a healthy society, as discussed below. A proverb that serves as an example of the health institution follows:

**Table 2.3** Health Institution proverbs

	Proverb	Meaning	English Translation
1	Bohwabogolo bo teng, go apara ke mebala	Motho ge a nyaka go phela o swanetše gore a hlokomele go fepa mmele wa gagwe ka dijo tšeo di swanetšego gore a tle a thabe, gomme ka morago a ka kgona go itsomela tša go apara.	If a person wants to live, they must feed their body with healthy food to be happy, and then they can find clothes for themselves thereafter.
2	Bolwetši bo re tlala nthuše diphoofolo tšaka ke hlaba di tšhaba.	Motho ge a ka re gola a bjabja ebile a le diphateng tša malao gomme a buša a gana go ja, a name a tsebe gore o godiša bolwetši go be go befelwe go ba go hlagiša le lehu.	If someone grows up and is bedridden and refuses to eat, he should know that he is aggravating his ailment, which could even cause his own death.
3	Mogaba ge o godile o mela dikilokotla	Motho ge a tšofala o etelwa/tlelwa ke dihlabi le malwetši.	As a person grows older, pain and disease abound.

## Economy Institution

The economic institution socialises society by making goods such as food, groceries, clothes, cars, and houses available and distributing them. The institution also provides jobs that enable society to meet all its basic needs. When all societies have access to goods and commercial means that meet their basic survival needs, they become stable. However, some inequalities may persist, making society unstable, as not everyone is equal in terms of wealth. A proverb about the economy follows as an example from the Northern Sotho culture:

**Table 2.4** Economy Institution proverbs

	<b>Proverb</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>English Translation</b>
1.	Mo go hwilego bomoloto talane ntshe e sa topiwa.	Felo fao motho wa mohumi a bego a robetše, badiitšana ba kgorogela gona go topa tše ba ka bago di šetše, mola tlogile.	Where the rich men slept, the poor came to pick up what they had left behind.
2.	Motse re feta wa balata, wa babina kgomo re a tsena.	Metse ya badišana ga e ke e etelwa ke motho, fela metse ya bahumi ga e hloke baeti ka gobane ba tseba gore ba tlo ja, ba khora, ba nyakalala.	The waters of the poor are never visited, but the waters of the rich do not need visitors, for those who know him will eat to satisfaction and rejoice.

## Education Institution

The educational institution provides secondary (when institutions support one another) socialisation, thus integrating individuals into communities/society and providing a sense of belonging and identity. Education is responsible for society's socialisation by preparing individuals for jobs and employment, enabling them to participate in economic institutions. This fosters a stable society in which all individuals are economically active and productive, thereby contributing to the community's overall welfare. A Northern Province proverb that supports the education institution is as follows:

**Table 2.5 Education Institution proverbs**

<b>Education</b>			
	<b>Proverb</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>English Translation</b>
1.	Rutang bana ditaola le se ye natšo badimong.	Batswadi rutang bana ba lena mekgwa ye mebotse le mahlale o hle a lefase gore mohla le hlokofala bana ba lena ba šale ba phela go se matshwenyego.	Parents, teach your children good manners and wisdom so that, when you pass on, they will live better lives.
2.	Hlogokgolo ke se lebelo ke rema gatee ka rutantšha marojana.	Maatla le bohlale bja motswadi di bonagala ge a rutila bana ba gagwe gore ba phele gabotse bjalo ka yena.	The power and wisdom of a parent are evident when they have taught their children to live better than they did.
3.	Mahlaku a maswa a ema ka a matala.	Bana ba banyenyane ba swanetše go ithuta go ba bagolo.	Younger people should always learn from their elders.

**Religion Institution**

The Faith or Religion institution is also a secondary socialisation mechanism in which people worship totems representing society. Religion also serves a psychological function, providing society with moral guidance. By doing so, society becomes stable when religious norms and values are adhered to within each community. However, nations sometimes go to war over differing religious beliefs. A few Northern Sotho proverbs that exemplify the essence of faith or a religious institution are listed below.

**Table 2.6 Religion Institution proverbs**

	<b>Proverb</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>English Translation</b>
1.	Selo seo se thutšego batho mogolo se a ba bona	Motswadi ga ke a lebala go fepa bana ba gagwe gobane o ba belegile a ba rata. Modimo yo a	A parent will never forget to feed her children because she gave birth to them and

		ba bopilego o tseba seo a ba bopetšego sona gomme o ba hlokomela ka mehla gore ba hwetše tša go ba phediša.	loves them. The God who created them knows his purpose for their creation.
2.	Tlala ke a neka phefo ke ja noni.	Lehu ga le bjalo ka tlala e kgethago badiitšana fela, lona le tšea le bahumi ba sa kakatletše mahumo a bona.	Death does not choose whether someone is rich or poor. It takes away the rich whilst they are still enjoying their riches.
3.	Tswetše e sego ya geno ke nama.	Selo seo go batho bangwe e lego manyami go batho ba bangwe e ba lethabo le nyakalalo.	For some people, what is sadness becomes joy, and for others, what is sadness becomes happiness.

### Government Institution

The government institution socialises society by making the country governable for all citizens. This is achieved by enacting laws that citizens must follow. The rule for each country prepares every citizen to know, follow, and practice the principles that avoid anarchy and anomie, which can lead to chaos and death for many. The government is also responsible for establishing and implementing measures for education and development. Consequently, the government and other educational institutions, such as universities, ensure that languages function optimally (Seanego, 2021). By implication, the government is responsible for ensuring that proverbs function correctly in all cultures.

**Table 2.7** Government Institution proverbs

	Proverb	Meaning	English Translation
1.	Dikala tša mošate ga di ratane.	Baetapele ba mmušo ga ba ratane, gobane yo mongwe le mongwe o rata ge yena e ka ba yo mogolo go fetiša bohle.	The kingdom's leaders do not love one another because each wants to be the greatest.
2.	Koša ya tšwa mošate balata re a latela	Taelo ye e ntšhitšwego ke kgoši re a e latela le ge e ka ba bjang goba bjang.	All people follow orders issued by the king.

## Law/Judicial Institution

The law and judicial institutions socialise society by enacting and enforcing laws that must be followed in each culture. Anarchy prevails in societies without a rule of law. This view equally applies to the Northern Sotho culture. If there are no laws, individuals will kill each other, as in other countries, such as Haiti, where gangsterism reigns supreme (an Anomie). Proverbs play a role in creating laws for a stable society. An example of Northern Sotho proverbs in the Law/Judicial institution follows in Table 2.8.

**Table 2.8** Law/Judicial Institution proverbs

	<b>Proverb</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>English Translation</b>
1.	A go kgalwe tšhipa e sego mmolai wa yona.	Ge go rerwa molato go se hloiwe mong wa wona gobane e ka ba go ahlola molato woo ka lehloyo fela.	When judging a crime, play the ball and not the man. That is, punish the crime, not the person.
2.	2. Mollwane wa lerumo ga o selwe.	Molao ge o beilwe o beilwe gomme wa se hlomphiwe, gona batshedi ba ona ba tlo otlwa.	If a law is established and not respected, its transgressors will be punished.

## Intelligence Institution

Without intelligence, the Law/Judicial institution would be compromised. Other institutions, such as the military, law enforcement, and the justice system, support intelligence. From time immemorial, the Northern Sotho people have practised intelligence gathering and spying on enemy activities. This institution has always served as a source of information for the military and for protecting the king's or the chief's government. Northern Sotho proverbs representing this institution follow.

**Table 2.9: Intelligence Institution proverbs**

	<b>Proverb</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>English Translation</b>
1.	<i>Go nyatša kgoši ke go tloga</i>	Motho ge a sa epee ka fase ga babuši ba gagwe a tsebe gore ba tla mo leleka mebušong ya bona.	If a person does not respect their rulers, they should be aware that they may be expelled from their land.
2.	<i>Lentšu la kgoši le agelwa lešaka.</i>	Taelo yeo e tšwago go babuši ke tshwanelo gore e hlomphiwe gobane gwa se dirwe bjalo banyatši ba yona ba tlo otlwa gomme ba se boelwe ke selo.	The king's commands /orders must be obeyed, as those who disobey will be punished.

**Military institution**

The Military institution socialises society by recruiting soldiers and providing training, so its primary function is to protect the country from foreign invasions. When wars are contained, each society experiences peace /equilibrium. Northern Sotho proverbs related to the Military institution are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.10: Military Institution proverbs**

	<b>Proverb</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>English Translation</b>
1.	Lešako la hloka thobela ke mojana.	Batho ge ba hloka molao woo o ba bušago ba ka se ke be ba kwana gobane yo mongwe yo mongwe wa bona o tlo rata go itirela ka tsela yeo a e ithatelago ka yona.	If people lack a law that governs them, they will not agree, because each will want to do as he pleases with it.

2.	Makhura a kgoši ke batho.	Moetapele a ka hlomphiwa fela ge le yena a hlompha balatedi ba gagwe, gobane ka ntle ga bona, boetapele bja gagwe ga se selo; gobane o tlo etelela mang pele ge e se bona batho bao ba mo filego setulo seo.	A leader can only be respected if he or she respects his or her followers, for without them, his or her leadership is nothing; for whom will he visit first when he sees the people who gave him that seat?
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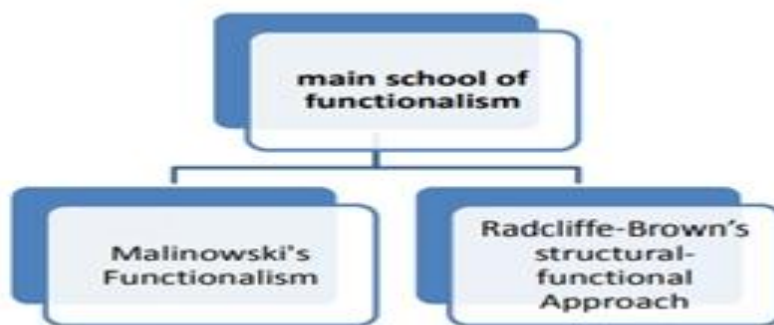
Based on Figure 2.3, functionalism is an ideal theory that deals with culture, helping contemporary communities utilise Northern Sotho proverbs as threefold communication and development tools.

- Firstly, it fosters a culture of proper use of proverbs as expected by the consensus society in Figure 2.3.
- Secondly, reducing moral degeneracy that affects the use of proverbs reduces the use of proverbs (Mashige, 2011; Raphalalani,2017; Seanego,2021).
- Lastly, reversing the disequilibrium or anomie caused by the misuse of proverbs using Functionalism society socialisation mechanisms, as every facet of the society depends on the others, as portrayed in Figure 2.3, and therefore contributes to the overall stability and functioning of the society.

For example, in the Northern Sotho culture, when people collaborate to achieve a common goal, they refer to it as “Letšema” (Lebeloane & Quan-Baffour, 2008). Functionalism, likewise, will encourage Northern Sotho language users to collaborate in solving the challenges they encounter when using the proverbs. This can serve as an acceptable practice for Northern Sotho proverbs.

Functionalism emphasises the consensus and order within communities, focusing on the social stability and shared community values. Consequently, disharmony or “Anomie” within the system, or deviations from it, would lead to its malfunctioning, as societal elements must adjust to achieve stability. Functionalism, therefore, analyses society through its macro-level mirror.

Functionalism theory holds great promise for the proverbs to revert to their original beneficial use: to reprimand community members, offer advice, develop and unite society, and reconcile citizens against any factors that create disharmony or disequilibrium. No theory is perfect. Consequently, those secondary proponents, regarded as Durkheim's followers, contributed to functionalist theory by introducing several extensions. The first two secondary proponents are depicted in Figure 2.4.



**Figure 2.4: Main school of Functionalism Theoretical Framework (Adapted from Nickerson (2024))**

Although Durkheim is considered the father of Functionalism, subsequent scholars have significantly expanded and led the discourse. Notably, two key secondary proponents who have contributed extensively to Functionalism are highlighted in Figure 2.4. The leading proponents of functionalism include Émile Durkheim, Bronisław Malinowski, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, and Karl Marx. The first secondary proponent discussed next is Malinowski.

### **2.4.2 Individualistic functionalism**

Malinowski (1884-1942), as a first secondary proponent who extended Durkheim's theories, extended Durkheim's functionalist theories by introducing "Individualistic Functionalism", outlined as follows:

- He believed that all customs and institutions in a society are integrated and interrelated so that their relationship is directly proportional; therefore, if one changes, the other will. Each is then a function of the other.
- The second strand of Malinowski's functionalism is known as "needs" functionalism. Malinowski (1944) argued that human beings have a set of universal biological needs, and that various customs, practices, and institutions are developed to fulfil these needs. He identified specific biological needs, such as food, shelter, health, protection, and reproduction. According to Malinowski, social structures and cultural practices are designed to ensure that these essential needs are met, thus maintaining the stability and functionality of society. Each of these practices serves a specific purpose in addressing one of the biological requirements, ensuring the survival and well-being of individuals within the society.

In summary, Malinowski mainly promoted societal needs such as food, reproduction (biological continuity of society), and the four sequences: economy, social control, education, and political organisation. He stated that these needs must be satisfied to stabilise society. He did not give much consideration to the functioning of societal structures. These societal structures feature in the model of the second secondary proponent, Radcliffe, discussed in the following section.

### **2.4.3 Structural Functionalism theories**

As a second secondary proponent, Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) contributed to the discourse by extending Durkheim's theories in introducing "Structural Functionalism". He believed that the study of social structure includes the study of culture. Radcliffe-Brown (1952). explains social phenomena in three distinct ways:

- He focused on the conditions under which social structures are maintained. According to him, some laws regulate the structural functioning of societies.

- Modified the concept of "need" from Malinowski and Durkheim into "necessary conditions for the existence of human societies," stating that these conditions can be discovered through proper scientific inquiry.
- He cautioned against using organic analogy, as stated by Malinowski and Durkheim in their theories.

#### **2.4.3.1 The following are the features of Radcliffe-Brown's structures.**

- Existence of a Social Group: Social structure consists of various groups, such as the family, clan, social classes, caste, and kinship systems, each contributing to the organisation and stability of society. The family socialises children, while clans and moieties define social order and identity. Social sanctions enforce norms, and totemic groups foster cohesion and cultural identity. Social classes and caste systems regulate the division of labour, resources, and power, while kinship networks govern relationships and obligations.
- *Internal structure of the group.* These groups have a specific internal structure. For example, a family consists of the relationships between a father, a mother, and their children.
- *Social classes.* The groups are arranged into social classes and categories. For example, the economic classes in Western societies, the castes in India, and similar social structures in other societies.
- *Social distinctions between different classes are based on sex, economic status, authority, and caste distinctions.* For example, there is a social distinction between the Brahmins and the Shudras in India.
- *Arrangement of persons in a dyadic relationship.* An example of a dyadic relationship is a person-to-person relationship. Master and servant.
- *Interaction between groups and persons.* Interaction between persons can be observed in social processes involving cooperation, conflict, and accommodation. On the other hand, intergroup interaction can manifest in wars between nation-states.

### **2.4.3.2 Types of social structure**

Radcliffe-Brown (1952) extended Durkheim's theories by focusing on two types of social structures: The distinction between the Actual Social Structure and the General Social Structure primarily resides in membership and the relationships within the group. In the Actual Social Structure, relationships among individuals and groups are dynamic, as new members join through processes such as immigration or birth. In contrast, existing members may exit due to death or migration. This fluidity reflects the group's constantly evolving composition and the changing nature of social interactions.

The General Social Structure, in contrast, generally remains stable over time, with membership remaining relatively unchanged for extended periods. Despite the continuous entry and exit of individuals, Radcliffe-Brown (1952) argued that the overall structure remains intact. This framework was introduced in his work *Structures of Social Life* (1952). Radcliffe-Brown's main assertions and contributions are as follows.

### **2.4.3.3 Structure and function**

Radcliffe-Brown argues further that social function is the interconnection between social structure and social life. Structure and function are logically linked, and structure and function support each other and are necessary for each other's continuity. The social life of a community can be defined as the functioning of its social structure.

### **2.4.3.4 Structural functional law**

Radcliffe-Brown posits that law is a necessary condition for the continued existence of society. It is through the law, he argued, that deviations are corrected and adjustments made towards the original state. Like all previous proponents, Radcliffe-Brown also received criticisms as detailed below. This confirms the fact that no theory is perfect.

#### **2.4.3.5 Criticism of Radcliffe-Brown's Structural Functionalism**

- It is wrong to look at society as a living organism since the structure of the living organism does not change. Societal structure does evolve with time.
- There is an error in assuming that one's abstraction of a social situation reflects social reality at all costs.
- According to this approach, the processes that unite society are deterministic. This position cannot hold in the absence of any concrete case studies. The approach does not consider evolutionary changes. After Durkheim, Malinowski, and Radcliffe-Brown, a third secondary proponent emerged, as the theory still required some improvements, as alluded to in the previous sections, acknowledging that no theory is perfect. The third secondary proponent, Talcott Parsons, is discussed next.

#### **2.4.5 Functionalism: A systems perspective**

In extending the Functionalism Theory, Talcott Parsons (1902-1979) posited that the primary means of societal survival was the shared norms and values instilled in its members through social systems. According to him, deviating from those norms creates disequilibrium in the system, threatening its survival. He believed that society behaved like a human body, with social institutions functioning like organs.

**The organic analogy holds** that society behaves like a human body. The human body is composed of various parts that work in harmony to enable the body to function optimally. As for proverbs, diverting or misusing them will contribute to their decline and eventual extinction. This then requires society to function as a unified entity to reverse the misuse of Northern Sotho proverbs.

#### **Four needs of society**

According to Parsons, these functional prerequisites or four basic needs of society that are needed for societal survival are:

### **Goal attainment (Political Function):**

Parsons believes that a society is only possible when there are common standards: the society must have a collective goal, and acceptable means of achieving it.

### **Adaptation (Economic Function)**

Every society must provide for its members' basic needs to survive.

**Integration (Social Harmony):** Specialist institutions are developed to reduce societal conflict. For example, education and media create a sense of belonging. In this research, proverbs serve as tools for communication and development.

**Latency:** The unstated consequences of actions; there are two types of latency: Pattern Maintenance for maintaining value consensus through socialisation, and Tension Management for opportunities to release tension safely.

Parsons believes that the collapse of institutions such as the family, education, religion, law, and others could lead to a regression to pre-industrialisation levels. This is because the functions of these institutions are specific.

- The family provides the environment for reproduction and bringing up children; education develops skills for society.
- Knowledge and culture to its youth.
- Politics develops skills for governing a country.
- Producing goods and services; Economics is responsible for producing goods and services, and religion promotes moral guidance and a place for worship to pacify the soul and spirit.

Parsons (1951) posits that only those elements of society that can adapt in the Darwinian style will survive. This Darwinian style should be understood in the context of Darwin's theories. For example, Darwin (1859), on his theories of human evolution, also called "natural selection", maintained that in dangerous

circumstances, only those individuals most adapted to their environment survive. This is very applicable to contemporary South African society, which faces challenges such as the survival of indigenous proverbs, including Northern Sotho proverbs. As Merton discusses in the following paragraph, a fourth secondary proponent, the Northern Sotho community, would function to preserve or defend the status quo.

#### **2.4.6 Manifest and latent functions**

Like other functionalists, Merton (1910-2003) had a specific function (Merton, 1957). Merton observed that some functions were intentional (Manifest actions), and others were not (Latent functions). He further commented that some functions disrupt society. These different functions are discussed next.

- **Manifest functions**

Society comprises institutions whose purpose is their manifest function, which is the intended consequences. These are known as manifest functions. For example, the Manifest for Good Education helps children access the opportunities they need.

- **Latent functions**

At times, society can produce unintended functional outcomes from its institutions. These are known as latent functions. For example, the latent function of attending religious gatherings can be helping individuals feel a sense of belonging. For example, at the Modjadji rain queen, people dance in anticipation of rain. Such acts by the Modjadji tribe and the latent function of such activities can build hope and solidarity in difficult times.

- **Strain theory**

This applies to cases where, for example, individuals have qualified in education and training programmes but cannot secure employment. This situation can

prompt people to engage in criminal activities, such as abusing proverbs on social media in the Northern Sotho culture. This applies to social media, where proverbs are used out of context. Despite the above, the functionalist theory of functionalism had shortcomings, as discussed in the following section. As theories are imperfect, they are amenable to criticism and overhauling, as reflected in the next section. The Theory of Functionalism's imperfections follow next.

## **2.5 Criticism of Functionalism theories**

Functionalist Theory revolves around the central idea that society has a consensus on its values and norms, and that all institutions within it tend to be stable, integrated, and in harmony. One major criticism of traditional Functionalism is that it fails to account for the role of government institutions in regulating society. Functionalism assumes that society is stable, well-integrated, and static (Walle, 1977, p. 70). Such a position ignores the sectional interests that underpin the activities of the various sectors of society. Sectional interests exist to promote conflicts within society. No contemporary society can, therefore, be stable without the activities of the regulating hands of government.

Today, government departments play important roles across all sectors of the national development process, including cultural development. Government departments need to take effective action against the influences of Western technologies, the business sector, TV and other media programmes, the content of education curricula, the attitudes of youth towards their Indigenous cultures, and the attitudes of the public towards their own cultural expressions. Otherwise, the future of such expressions, including local proverbs, will not be guaranteed.

Bhaskar (1998), Barker and Galasinski (2001), Mojalefa (2002), and Raselekoane (2014) contend that power relations between the stakeholders constitute the basis for understanding the structure, status, and existence of the social system/entity concerned. Where stakeholders wield unequal power, the theory suggests that hegemony, domination, suppression, conflict,

contradictions, and inequalities will prevail (Parker, 1992; Mamdani, 1999). This was the case during the era of apartheid laws, in which the Indigenous languages of South Africa received little recognition by the authorities of the day (Mojalefa, 2002). The role of government departments in the development of indigenous proverbs is central to the theoretical framework of this study.

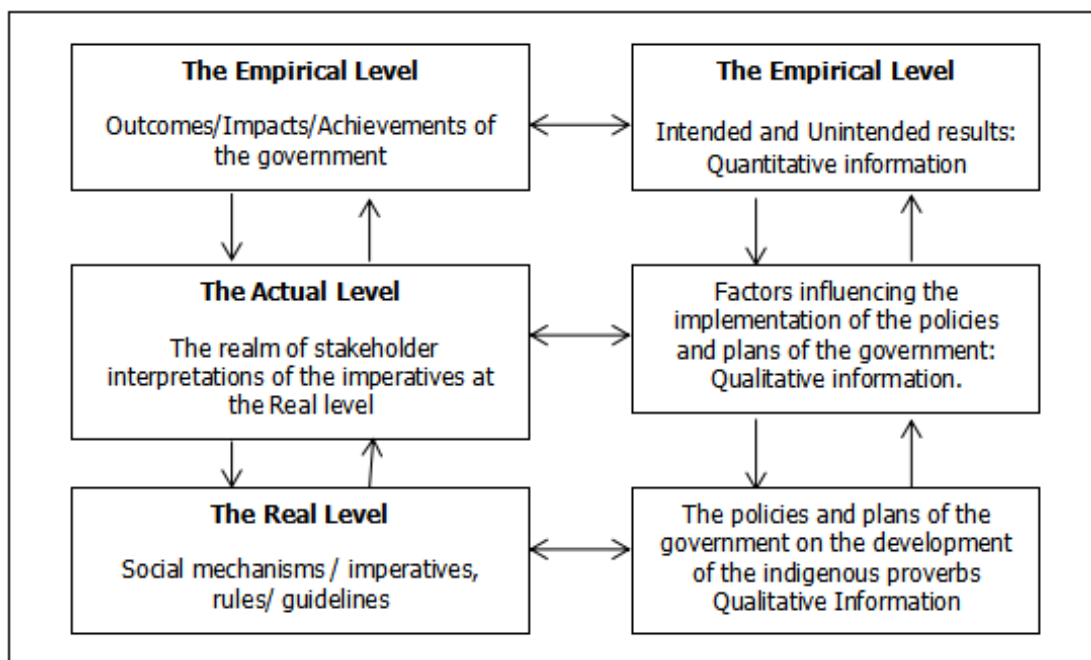
Given that various sectors of modern society operate to promote their own sectional interests, it is essential to focus on theories that reflect this reality. Theories must accurately portray the situations occurring on the ground (Bhaskar, 2008). In contemporary South African society, government departments exist to manage the sectional interests that drive the activities of different cultural groups, such as the Western industrial-urban system and the Indigenous traditional cultures of the former homelands.

A conflict-based theoretical framework, such as critical realism, can be drawn upon to indicate the positions occupied by various stakeholders in developing the proverbs under study. Regarding the stakeholder positioning process, the critical realist model will locate the study's status or condition at the top of a stratification system (the Empirical level). The stakeholders who use or undermine the survival of proverbs in their daily communication activities are located (the Actual level). The government policy guidelines for promoting proverbs will be at the Real level.

This concept of stratification of social entities has led social theorists to associate the critical realist model with the idea of 'depth ontology'. This idea of stratification of social entities has led social theorists to associate the critical realist model with 'depth ontology' because it conceptualises social explanations in terms of three basic layers, as indicated in Figure 2.5. The real level in the model involves laying down rules, regulations, and laws for the development of Indigenous South African languages, among other responsibilities (Department of Arts and Culture, 2002).

Figure 2.5, therefore, aligns with the issues underlying the objectives of this study. It also aligns with the framework of critical realism, as presented by Bhaskar

(1998), Sayer (2000), and Hammersley (2002). The approach emphasises stakeholder relations as they work to achieve their sectional interests. The critical realist model (Fig. 2.5) is appropriate because it will enable the author to identify the factors underpinning the existence, status, and levels of usage of the indigenous Northern Sotho proverbs in the current communication and developmental activities of the Fetakgomo Municipality. The possible threats to the survival of the proverbs would emerge from those who provide information to me. The roles of government departments in promoting Indigenous South African languages will also be revealed through the research project. The different strata of society would be ideal for collecting the data needed to answer the research question. Simply, this will yield information on the status of Northern proverbs. The policy issues will constitute ontological contributions to the knowledge base, thereby enriching the understanding of Northern Sotho proverbs and providing insights into why there is no consensus on communication for development (C4D).



**Figure 2.6** Critical realist stratification model (Adapted from Bhaskar,1998, and Sayer, 2000)

The Real level in the model corresponds to the Department of Arts and Culture's work in laying down rules, regulations, and laws for the development of Indigenous South African languages, among its many other responsibilities (Department of Arts and Culture, 2002). Figure 2.5, therefore, aligns with the issues underlying the objectives of this study. It also aligns with the framework of critical realism, as presented by Bhaskar (2008, 1998), Sayer (2000), and Hammersley (2002). The approach emphasises stakeholders as they work to achieve their interests.

Figure 2.5 indicates that a meaningful understanding of the status of the proverbs to be analysed in this study, which should be based on the questions the researcher will pose to elicit answers from the relevant stakeholders at the Actual level. These will be the ideas, thoughts, opinions, and recommendations of government officials, the youth, the elderly, and other individuals in the study region who are well-informed about indigenous proverbs.

Figure 2.5 is based on the three layers of critical realist theory. It indicates that the proverbs on society will depend on the nature of government policies, plans, and programmes designed for the sector.

Figure 2.5 also indicates that the impact of proverbs on society will depend on the proverbs themselves. The layer occupied by the Actual indicates the level of involvement by the local communities in the future of the proverbs. The Empirical layer indicates the performance and impact of proverbs in communities' lives.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

The literature review and the theoretical framework presented the communities' lives. The review suggests that the proverbs are closely tied to the development plans of local communities and the national government. They also indicate that government policies and plans are necessary for the long-term, sustained development of the provinces. The review's overall theme concerns the role of human agents in linking proverbs to national development policies and plans.

The discussions align with the objectives of this study. The discussions indicate further that local communities need to show interest in the future of their indigenous proverbs. enabling environments for developing the proverbs. In the long run, it is the local communities that will continue to rely on the wisdom of indigenous proverbs. The next chapter describes research design and methodology.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapters provided a comprehensive overview of the research, outlining the research problem, objectives, and questions. The theoretical framework was introduced, and a thorough review of the relevant literature was conducted in alignment with the study. This chapter, however, focuses on a detailed description of the research methodology employed. According to Snyder (2019), research methodology refers to the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse information related to a research topic. Alternatively, Patel and Patel (2019) define it as a systematic approach to address a research problem.

This chapter provides a comprehensive account of the research methodology employed in this study, including the research paradigm, approach, research design, data collection and analysis methods, and ethical considerations. A research paradigm offers a structured framework that shapes the researcher's worldview and guides the inquiry process. As Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006) explain, paradigms influence how researchers perceive reality (ontology), define the relationship between the researcher and knowledge (epistemology), and determine the appropriate research methods (methodology). This study is situated within a qualitative research paradigm, selected to facilitate an in-depth, context-sensitive exploration of the research problem. A qualitative approach was adopted to gain rich, descriptive insights and a nuanced understanding of the role of proverbs within Northern Sotho-speaking communities.

Qualitative research was chosen because it aligns closely with the exploratory and interpretive nature of the study's aim. The research aimed to understand how proverbs function as a form of development, a topic deeply embedded in the oral traditions, social values, and belief systems of Northern Sotho-speaking communities. Such a focus necessitates an approach that extends beyond

numerical data to capture the depth, complexity, and meaning of proverbs within their natural context (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative approach enables the collection of detailed, descriptive data through interviews and document analysis. They were used as the primary method. At the same time, document analysis of organisational reports, meeting minutes, and policy documents was employed as a secondary method to enrich and triangulate the findings.

Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to identify participants with relevant cultural knowledge (Creswell, 2013). Engaging directly with speakers of Northern Sotho allowed the researcher to illuminate the lived experiences, beliefs, and values that proverbs convey, which is essential for understanding their cultural relevance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative methods also allowed for flexibility in exploring emerging themes, particularly those relating to contemporary challenges in proverb transmission, such as generational shifts, language change, modernisation, and educational systems that marginalise Indigenous languages (Ngulube, 2003). Patton (2015) emphasises that qualitative methods are vital for validating local knowledge and worldviews. In line with this, the research methodology aligns with the broader goals of cultural preservation, education, and empowerment. Neuman (1997) further underscores the importance of a well-defined methodology in ensuring scientific rigour. Accordingly, this chapter outlines the methodological choices in detail, including sampling strategies, data collection procedures, and ethical considerations that guide the study.

### **3.2 Research design**

A research design is a structured plan that outlines the strategies and procedures a researcher uses to address specific research questions or hypotheses. It ensures that the study is conducted systematically and coherently, with findings. Burns and Bush (2010, p. 148) define a research design as “a detailed outline of the procedures followed in a research effort to achieve set aims and objectives.” Similarly, Bryman et al. (2008) describe it as a framework that guides data

collection and analysis, ensuring methodological consistency throughout the research process. McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p. 22) categorise research designs into three principal types: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, each appropriate for different research objectives and data types.

As Terre Blanche et al. (2006) described, a research paradigm refers to a set of shared philosophical assumptions and methodological principles that guide how research is conceptualised and conducted. In this study, the qualitative research paradigm underpins the design and implementation of the research. This paradigm emphasises the importance of understanding participants' perspectives within their natural social and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2013).

This study adopted a qualitative research design, which is especially suited for exploring "*The Use of Proverbs for Communication and Development in Northern Sotho.*" Proverbs are deeply rooted in oral tradition and serve as vessels for Indigenous knowledge, moral instruction, and cultural continuity. They are more than mere linguistic expressions; they embody communal values, shared histories, and ethical norms. The culturally embedded nature of proverbs necessitates an interpretive, context-sensitive research approach grounded in the lived experiences of community members (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Qualitative methods, such as semi-structured face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation, were employed to capture the richness of proverb use. These methods enable the collection of rich, descriptive data that reflect the symbolic, metaphorical, and pragmatic functions of proverbs in social life (Patton, 2002). This design explores how proverbs shape communication patterns, convey collective wisdom, and contribute to community cohesion and development.

The study was further informed by the IKS framework, which recognises the value of local knowledge forms in understanding cultural practices. Odora Hoppers (2002) noted that IKS promotes indigenous epistemologies, especially in African contexts. Within this framework, proverbs are viewed as repositories of traditional

wisdom, passed down through generations to maintain social order and reinforce communal identity.

Qualitative research provides the methodological flexibility required to study dynamic oral traditions. It allows the researcher to adjust interview protocols, build rapport with participants, and follow emergent themes during data collection, an approach especially important when dealing with oral literature where meaning is often co-constructed in interaction (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Document analysis was also employed as a secondary data collection method, involving the review of community texts, cultural manuscripts, and archived materials related to Northern Sotho proverbs. This triangulation enhances the credibility, dependability, and contextual grounding of the study's findings (Bowen, 2009).

In summary, the qualitative research design employed in this study is appropriate and essential for exploring the communicative and developmental functions of proverbs among Northern Sotho speakers. By foregrounding cultural sensitivity, interpretive depth, and methodological adaptability, this design enables a holistic understanding of proverbs, not only as linguistic artefacts but also as powerful tools for social development and cultural continuity.

### **3.3 Research methodology**

This study examines the cultural, communicative, and developmental significance of Northern Sotho proverbs. Research methodology, broadly defined, refers to the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It includes the principles and procedures that guide data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Kothari (2004) describes it as “the science of studying how research is conducted scientifically,” while Mertens (2005) defines it as a systematic process aimed at understanding, describing, and potentially transforming a phenomenon. Myers (2013) emphasises that methodology links research paradigms to data collection methods. These perspectives underscore

that methodology is not just about techniques but about making informed, philosophically grounded decisions throughout the research process.

The qualitative methodology adopted in this study, titled “*Proverbs as Tools for Communication and Development in Northern Sotho*,” is particularly suited to capturing the nuanced meanings and social functions of proverbs in their cultural context. Unlike quantitative or mixed-method approaches, which may overlook cultural depth or context-specific meanings, qualitative research enables an immersive exploration of language, behaviours, and social interaction. According to Creswell (2007), qualitative inquiry is rooted in interpretivist traditions prioritising understanding human experiences within their natural settings. This approach aligns well with exploring proverbs as culturally embedded communicative tools.

### **3.4 Justification for Using Qualitative Research in the Study of Northern Sotho Proverbs**

The selection of qualitative research methods in this study is grounded in their appropriateness for exploring culturally embedded, nuanced, and orally transmitted phenomena such as Northern Sotho proverbs. As Creswell (2013) explains, qualitative research is well-suited to exploring complex social and cultural phenomena in their natural settings. The following points justify the methodological approach.

#### **3.4.1 Understanding Cultural Context**

Proverbs in Northern Sotho are deeply intertwined with the community’s values, social norms, and collective worldview. Qualitative methods provide a means to examine how these proverbs convey moral teachings, reinforce cultural identity, and function in everyday interactions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through this approach, researchers can explore the meanings attached to proverbs within specific cultural and social contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

### **3.4.2 Exploring Language and Communication**

As vessels of collective wisdom and social instruction, proverbs require interpretive engagement with speakers to understand their full significance. Data collection techniques, such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, offer valuable insights into how proverbs are interpreted, contextualised, and applied in real-life communicative settings (Mertens, 2014). This approach enables researchers to explore the dynamic interplay between language and culture.

### **3.4.3 Highlighting Developmental Functions**

Beyond their linguistic significance, proverbs play a vital role in community development. They guide behaviour, mediate conflict, and promote social cohesion. Qualitative tools such as narrative inquiry and ethnographic observation are particularly effective for uncovering these functions (Patton, 2002). These methods enable researchers to investigate how proverbs impact ethical norms, informal governance, and intergenerational knowledge transmission within the community (Creswell, 2013).

### **3.4.4 Gaining Depth of Insight**

Qualitative research prioritises depth over breadth, enabling a richer and more nuanced understanding of participants' lived experiences and individual interpretations (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This is especially relevant when studying culturally rich, orally transmitted traditions, such as proverbs, where meaning may vary significantly across individuals and social groups. Qualitative engagement reveals dimensions that structured surveys might overlook (Silverman, 2013).

### **3.4.5 Flexibility and Responsiveness**

A key strength of qualitative research lies in its adaptability. The researcher can respond to emerging themes during data collection, refine interview questions, and explore new areas of interest as they arise (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This

flexibility is essential when studying dynamic cultural practices, such as proverbs, which change across generations and contexts.

Several factors informed the selection of a qualitative approach for this study:

**1. Understanding Cultural Context:**

Proverbs in Northern Sotho are deeply intertwined with the community's values, norms, and worldview. Qualitative methods enable an in-depth examination of how these proverbs convey moral teachings, reflect cultural identity, and function in everyday discourse.

**2. Exploring Language and Communication:**

As conveyors of collective wisdom and social values, proverbs are best understood through direct engagement with speakers. Techniques such as interviews and focus group discussions provide insights into how individuals interpret, apply, and experience these proverbs in real-life contexts.

**3. Highlighting Developmental Functions:**

Beyond their linguistic function, proverbs contribute to community development by guiding behaviour, mediating conflict, and promoting social cohesion. Qualitative tools such as narrative analysis and ethnographic observation can illuminate these roles more effectively than numerical data.

**4. Gaining Depth of Insight:**

This approach captures participants' experiences and local interpretations, providing a nuanced understanding that quantitative surveys may overlook. Such insights are crucial when exploring culturally rich, orally transmitted phenomena, such as proverbs.

## 5. Flexibility and Responsiveness:

Qualitative research enables the researcher to adapt to emerging themes during fieldwork, a crucial feature when studying dynamic, evolving cultural expressions, such as proverb usage.

In summary, qualitative research provides the methodological framework for investigating the complex, symbolic, and socially situated nature of Northern Sotho proverbs. It thoroughly explains how proverbs operate as artefacts and tools for cultural transmission and community development. The following sections will elaborate on the specific research methods employed to collect and analyse data in this study.

Research methodology refers to the systematic and theoretical analysis of the principles and procedures that guide a research project. It includes the philosophical assumptions, research design, and data collection methods used to investigate a phenomenon. Kothari (2004, p. 8) defines methodology as “the science of studying how research is conducted scientifically.” Mertens (2005, p. 2) describes it as “a process of systematic inquiry designed to collect, analyse, interpret, and use data to understand, describe, predict, or control a phenomenon.” Myers (2013) adds that methodology integrates the research paradigm, design, and techniques into a coherent strategy.

This study, titled *Proverbs as Tools for Communication and Development in Northern Sotho*, employs a qualitative research methodology. This approach is appropriate given the study's focus on the socio-cultural, communicative, and developmental functions of proverbs. As Creswell (2007) emphasises, qualitative research is rooted in traditions that prioritise understanding human experiences in natural settings and the use of context-sensitive methods.

Proverbs within Northern Sotho-speaking communities serve as oral repositories of indigenous knowledge, ethical guidance, and cultural norms. They are used in everyday communication to educate, resolve conflict, and strengthen community

bonds. Therefore, a qualitative methodology characterised by depth, flexibility, and responsiveness is well-suited to uncover these functions. In-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis enabled the researcher to explore how proverbs are used and interpreted across generations.

Unlike quantitative approaches, which prioritise numerical measurement and generalisability, qualitative research emphasises participants. This allowed for a nuanced exploration of how Northern Sotho proverbs influence moral instruction, identity formation, and social development.

### **3.4.6 Justification for the Qualitative Approach**

#### **3.4.6.1 Understanding Cultural Context**

Proverbs reflect the values and worldviews of Northern Sotho communities. A qualitative approach provides tools to interpret the layered meanings embedded in these sayings and the contexts in which they are used (Patton, 2002).

#### **3.4.6.2 Exploring Language and Communication**

Proverbs are vital linguistic devices for expressing collective wisdom. Interviews and focus groups allowed participants to describe how and why proverbs are used in communication, offering insights into cultural transmission and adaptation (Silverman, 2013).

#### **3.4.6.3 Developmental Significance**

Beyond language, proverbs play a developmental role by promoting social cohesion, ethical conduct, and community education. Qualitative tools such as narrative analysis captured the lived impact of proverbs on interpersonal relationships and societal values (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

#### **3.4.6.4 Depth of Insight**

Qualitative research is designed to uncover the complexity of human experience. Ethnographic and interpretive methods enabled the researcher to engage deeply

with participants' worldviews and cultural knowledge, especially in oral-tradition communities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### **3.4.6.5 Flexibility and Responsiveness**

As themes emerged, the research process was refined to explore them in greater detail. This adaptability is critical when studying living cultural forms, such as proverbs, whose meanings are negotiated in interaction (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

In summary, qualitative research provides a culturally sensitive and methodologically robust framework for understanding how Northern Sotho proverbs function as tools for communication and development.

#### **3.4.6.6 Understanding the Cultural Context of Northern Sotho Proverbs**

Proverbs serve as rich repositories of cultural values and collective worldviews within Northern Sotho communities. A qualitative research approach is particularly well-suited to uncover the nuanced meanings embedded in these expressions and the specific social and cultural contexts in which they are employed (Patton, 2002).

#### **3.4.6.7 Exploring Language and Communication**

As essential linguistic tools, proverbs articulate shared wisdom and social norms. Interviews and focus group discussions enabled participants to articulate how and why proverbs are employed in everyday communication. These methods revealed important insights into cultural transmission, adaptation, and oral traditions (Silverman, 2013).

#### **3.4.6.8 Highlighting Developmental Significance**

Beyond their linguistic utility, proverbs fulfil significant developmental functions. They promote ethical conduct, encourage social cohesion, and serve as a form

of education within communities. Through narrative analysis, this study captured the lived impact of proverbs on interpersonal relationships and broader societal values (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

#### **3.4.6.9 Gaining Depth of Insight**

Qualitative research methodologies are designed to explore the complexity of human experience. The researcher engaged deeply with participants' cultural perspectives and indigenous knowledge systems by employing ethnographic and interpretive methods. This was particularly important in examining communities where oral tradition is central to knowledge transmission (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### **3.4.6.10 Flexibility and Responsiveness**

One of the strengths of qualitative inquiry lies in its adaptability. As new themes emerged during data collection, the research design was refined to explore these areas more thoroughly. This flexibility proved essential when studying dynamic cultural forms such as proverbs, whose meanings are continually negotiated through interaction (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Qualitative research provided a culturally responsive and methodologically rigorous framework for investigating the communicative and developmental functions of Northern Sotho proverbs. The approach enabled a deeper understanding of how proverbs are used, interpreted, and sustained within the community.

#### **3.4.7 Types of Research Methods**

Research methods refer to the specific techniques used to analyse data. McMillan and Schumacher (2014) define them as tools that operationalise the research design. In qualitative research, these methods often involve direct engagement with participants and environments to uncover meaning and context.

Neuman (1994) explains that qualitative data typically consist of words and images rather than numbers, providing rich, descriptive insights. Within the constructivist paradigm, qualitative methods allow for the co-construction of meaning between researchers and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 2005, as cited in Mertens, 2010).

#### **3.4.7.1 Qualitative Research Method**

Qualitative research is concerned with understanding phenomena as they occur naturally in their natural settings. It emphasises interpretation over measurement, using methods such as interviews, focus groups, and observation to gain insight into social behaviours, beliefs, and traditions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Inductive. Qualitative studies are inductive rather than hypothesis-testing, allowing theories and patterns to emerge from the data. This approach examines cultural practices, such as best understood within their native social and linguistic contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

#### **3.4.7.2 Quantitative Research Method**

Quantitative research focuses on measurable variables and statistical analysis. Sanders and Pinhey (1983) argue that this approach seeks to establish patterns, relationships, and causality through numerical data. William (2005) supports this view, emphasising objectivity and replicability.

Common types of quantitative research include:

- Descriptive Research
- Correlational Research
- Experimental Research
- Quasi-Experimental Research
- Causal-Comparative Research.

While quantitative methods are valuable in many contexts, they are less suited to the interpretive depth required to understand oral cultural expressions such as proverbs.

### **3.4.7.3 Mixed-Methods Research**

Mixed-methods research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehensively understand complex research problems. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) describe this design as especially useful when numerical trends and in-depth perspectives are required.

By integrating surveys with interviews or focus groups, mixed-methods research enables data triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity of the findings. However, for this study's focus on oral traditions and cultural meanings, a qualitative approach was considered more suitable and methodologically aligned.

## **3.5 Population and sampling**

In research, the population refers to the entire group of individuals, objects, or elements that a study seeks to investigate, while a sample is a subset of that population selected for data collection and analysis (Polit & Hungler, 1999; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). A clear understanding of population and sampling is essential in qualitative research, as these elements significantly influence the study's findings, including their focus, depth, and trustworthiness. The strategies used to identify and select the population and sample determine the richness and relevance of the data collected, thereby shaping the validity and applicability of the research outcomes (Burns & Grove, 2007; Creswell, 2003). This section outlines the population and sampling procedures adopted in this study.

### **3.5.1 Population**

Polit and Hungler (1999) state that a population comprises individuals who meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Similarly, McMillan and

Schumacher (2001) define the population as a group of elements, individuals, objects, or events from which the study's findings are intended to be generalised. It is essential to distinguish between the target population, the study's interest group, and the survey population, also known as the sampling frame, which represents the actual list from which participants are selected.

For the present study, the target population is in the Sekhukhune District of the Fetakgomo Municipality, Limpopo Province. This community was selected for its rich cultural heritage and the active use of Northern Sotho proverbs in everyday discourse. Focusing on this specific population enables a contextualised and culturally grounded exploration of how proverbs function as communicative and developmental tools.

The study concentrated on two key generational cohorts within this population:

- Elderly individuals (aged 55 and above): These participants were considered cultural custodians, possessing extensive knowledge of Northern Sotho proverbs. Their input was critical for understanding the historical context, meanings, and traditional uses of proverbs (Van Wyk, 1996).
- Youth (aged 18 to 35): This group was included to examine contemporary attitudes towards proverbs, particularly considering modernisation, language evolution, and cultural change.

The rationale for selecting these two groups was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of proverbs across generations, from preservation and transmission to transformation and adaptation in the modern context.

### **3.5.2 Sampling**

Owing to the impracticality of engaging every eligible member of the target population, purposive sampling was employed. This non-probability sampling technique involves deliberately selecting participants based on their knowledge,

experience, and relevance to the research topic (Gay, 1996; Creswell, 2003). Purposive sampling is especially well-suited for qualitative research, as it facilitates the collection of rich, detailed data from information-rich cases (Patton, 1990; Becker, cited in Silverman, 2005).

A total of thirty participants were purposively selected:

- 15 elderly individuals (8 males and seven females), chosen for their cultural expertise and deep familiarity with proverbs.
- 15 youth participants (9 females and six males), selected to provide insights into the contemporary use and interpretation of proverbs.

This intergenerational sampling strategy was designed to produce nuanced understandings of the continuity and transformation of proverbs within Northern Sotho-speaking people. The elderly participants offered historical and cultural insights, while the youth provided perspectives on the relevance and adaptation of proverbs in contemporary communication.

As Patton (1990) emphasised, qualitative research does not adhere to strict rules regarding sample size. Instead, the sample size should be determined by the research objectives and the depth of inquiry required to achieve data saturation, at which no new information or themes emerge. Van Wyk (1996) notes that qualitative sampling is dynamic and flexible, driven by the richness and variability of the data rather than by statistical representativeness.

In conclusion, targeted population selection and purposive sampling enabled this study to explore the communicative, cultural, and developmental significance of Northern Sotho proverbs across generational lines.

### **3.5 3 Target Population and Sampling Rationale**

The target population for this study comprised Northern Sotho-speaking individuals, with a specific focus on residents of Ga-Nchabeleng village, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The choice of this village was informed by its rich cultural

heritage and the persistent oral tradition of using proverbs in daily communication.

Given the study's qualitative nature and scope, it was neither feasible nor methodologically appropriate to interview all Northern Sotho speakers in the community. Consequently, purposive sampling was employed to select a small yet information-rich sample that could provide meaningful insights pertinent to the research questions. This approach aligns with qualitative research principles that prioritise depth and contextual understanding over generalisability, aiming to capture diverse perspectives relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2002).

The sample consisted of two primary demographic groups:

- Elderly participants (aged 55 and above): Selected as cultural custodians and bearers of traditional knowledge, this group profoundly understands Northern Sotho proverbs. Their insights were crucial for exploring the historical, linguistic, and developmental significance of proverbs, which often encapsulate collective wisdom, communicate moral values, reinforce social norms, and guide community behaviour.
- Youth participants (aged 18–35): Included to provide contemporary perspectives on the usage, understanding, and relevance of proverbs in modern Northern Sotho society. This group represents the evolving nature of language and cultural transmission, offering insight into how proverbs are maintained, adapted, or abandoned in modernisation and technological change.

Both generational cohorts facilitated a comparative, intergenerational analysis of proverbs as tools for communication and development, enabling the exploration of both continuity and transformation in cultural meanings and social functions.

### **3.5.4 Data Collection Process**

Semi-structured interviews were employed as the primary data collection method for this study. This qualitative technique combines structured questioning and conversational flexibility, allowing participants to express their experiences openly while enabling the researcher to probe emergent themes for deeper understanding.

Kothari (2004) defines an interview as “the presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and a reply in terms of oral-verbal response” (p. 97), while Pandey and Pandey (2015) describe it as “a two-way method which permits an exchange of ideas and information” (p. 59). Such a method was particularly suited to this study, facilitating the use and interpretation of Northern Sotho proverbs across generations.

### **3.5.5 Participant Selection and Rationale**

Using purposive sampling, 30 participants were selected from Ga-Nchabeleng village, comprising:

- 15 elderly individuals (aged 55 and above), acknowledged as custodians of cultural knowledge and oral tradition.
- 15 youth (aged 18–35), selected to capture contemporary views on the relevance and use of proverbs.

The selection rationale stems from the study's intergenerational nature. Elderly participants, by virtue of their lived experience and cultural expertise, provided insight into how proverbs function in communication, moral education, and social cohesion. Conversely, youth participants shed light on the evolving role of proverbs within a modern context influenced by technology, education, and globalisation.

In qualitative research, sample size is determined by the depth and richness of the data rather than statistical representativeness (Patton, 1990). Van Wyk

(1996) emphasises that sample size is dynamic and should be guided by data saturation, the point at which no new information emerges.

### **3.5.6 Sampling Process**

Sampling refers to the process of selecting participants from a larger population to represent the group under study (Burns & Grove, 2007). It is not a statistical generalisation but a wealthy identification of individuals who can provide rich, detailed, and contextually relevant data that directly address the research questions (Durrheim, 1999; Gay, 1996). This requires deliberate and thoughtful decisions about which participants, settings, events, behaviours, or social processes are most likely to yield meaningful insights into the phenomenon being examined (Durrheim, 1999).

In the present study, purposive sampling was employed to select participants with specific knowledge and experience related to proverbs across generations. This method involves intentionally choosing individuals based on their expertise or direct involvement with the phenomenon, particularly their familiarity with proverbs and their role in cultural transmission.

Becker's perspective, as cited by Silverman (2005, p. 136), underscores that qualitative research cannot feasibly include every case owing to practical constraints such as time and resource limitations. Therefore, researchers must strategically select information-rich cases that provide comprehensive and relevant perspectives aligned with the study's objectives. This approach aligns with Creswell's (2003, p. 128) recommendation of criterion sampling, a specific type of purposive sampling, wherein participants are selected according to predefined criteria closely linked to the research goals. For this study, the criteria included participants' cultural expertise and generational perspectives on Northern Sotho proverbs, thereby ensuring meaningful data collection.

Leedy and Ormrod (2001) identify five sampling techniques: random, stratified, cluster, convenience, and purposive. Purposive sampling was chosen for this

research because it enables the deliberate recruitment of participants possessing characteristics essential to exploring the research topic in depth.

The sample consisted of 30 respondents from Ga-Nchabeleng village, divided equally between two groups:

- Elderly individuals (aged 55 and above): Selected for their recognised role as cultural custodians with extensive knowledge of Northern Sotho proverbs. Their contributions are vital for understanding the traditional meanings, historical context, and intergenerational transmission of proverbs.
- Youth (aged 18 to 35): Included to capture contemporary perspectives on how proverbs are perceived, used, and adapted within modern Northern Sotho society. Their insights illuminate cultural change and the evolving role of proverbs amid social modernisations.

The findings of both groups reflect the study's intent to obtain a comprehensive, intergenerational understanding of proverbs as cultural instruments. This sampling strategy facilitates a transformation of traditional knowledge in response to a rapidly changing social environment, thereby enabling a nuanced analysis of cultural continuity and change.

### **3.5.7 Sampling Techniques**

In qualitative research, the choice of sampling technique is determined by the methodology and research objectives, rather than the goal of producing generalisable findings (Coolican, 2014). Sampling in qualitative studies aims to select the cases to be studied (Gupta & Gupta, 2013, p. 41). This process is critical in studies where the population is too large to include. Norwood (2000:210) notes that qualitative sampling aims to identify information-rich cases for in-depth analysis. Polit and Beck (2010:319) further assert that qualitative sampling involves selecting reflective, insightful, and willing participants to engage in detailed discussions that address the study's informational needs.

Selecting the appropriate sampling technique is critical for ensuring the data collected is rich, relevant, and diverse. Researchers must consider factors such as the research question, methodology, participant accessibility, and ethical considerations when choosing a sampling strategy. Qualitative sampling is often flexible and iterative, adapting as the researcher gathers and analyses data. Several sampling techniques are employed in qualitative research, including:

- **Purposive for sampling.** This is the most used technique in qualitative research, in which participants are deliberately selected based on their specific knowledge or experiences related to the research question.
- **Snowball Sampling:** Used for hard-to-reach populations, where initial participants refer the researcher to other potential participants.
- **Theoretical Sampling:** Typically used in grounded theory, participants are selected based on emerging themes during data collection and analysis.
- **Convenience Sampling:** Selecting participants who are easily accessible or most willing to participate, though it may limit the diversity and depth of data.
- **Quota Sampling:** Selecting participants based on predefined characteristics to ensure representation of specific subgroups.
- **Maximum Variation Sampling:** Selecting participants with differing characteristics to capture various perspectives.
- **Stratified Purposeful Sampling:** Dividing the population into subgroups and selecting participants from each subgroup to ensure comprehensive coverage.
- **Critical Case Sampling:** Focusing on participants who can provide particularly relevant or critical insights into the phenomenon.
- **Intensity Sampling:** Selecting participants who have had particularly intense or significant experiences related to the research topic.

For this study, purposive sampling was chosen to align with the research objectives, which focus on a specific cultural group, Northern Sotho speakers.

This approach enables the selection of individuals with in-depth knowledge of proverbs, ensuring that the data gathered is directly relevant to the study's aims.

In conclusion, the purposive sampling method employed in this study enabled the researcher to gather rich, detailed insights from participants who could provide valuable perspectives on the role of proverbs in Northern Sotho communication and development. By incorporating both elderly and youth participants, the study captured a comprehensive view of the evolving use and significance of proverbs in contemporary society.

### **3.5.7.1 Purposive Sampling**

In this study, purposive sampling has been selected as the most suitable method for identifying participants who are easily accessible and willing to engage in the research. The sample will comprise individuals from diverse groups and genders, providing a broad spectrum of perspectives during the interview process. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews.

Purposive sampling is a technique designed to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon, rather than to seek empirical generalisation from the sample to the broader population (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2002, p. 246). The strength of this approach lies in its ability to select information-rich cases that offer in-depth insights into the subject matter (Patton, 2002, p. 230; Henning et al., 2004, p. 45). This sampling strategy is inherently guided by the researcher's judgment, enabling the selection of participants who meet specific, predefined criteria (De Vos, 2002, p. 99). The fundamental assumption underlying purposive sampling is that the researcher's understanding of the topic, the characteristics of the population, and the research objectives are sufficient to guide the identification of the most relevant cases (De Vos, 2000, p. 99). By using this method, participants are selected to provide valuable insights that directly address the research questions, contributing to a broader understanding of the subject (Creswell, 2003, p. 185).

Often referred to as judgmental or selective sampling, purposive sampling is a non-probability method frequently employed in qualitative research. This technique involves deliberately selecting participants based on specific characteristics, expertise, or criteria that align with the research objectives. In this study, which explores how proverbs function as a tool for communication and development in Northern Sotho, purposive sampling was particularly advantageous. It allowed the researcher to focus on individuals with a deep understanding or significant experience with Northern Sotho proverbs, ensuring that the research was rich and informed.

Focused on key informants such as elders, community leaders, and individuals well-versed in the cultural and linguistic significance of proverbs. This approach ensures that the collected data is both contextually relevant and knowledgeable. Participants with expertise in Northern Sotho proverbs will likely provide nuanced perspectives on their meanings, applications, and societal roles, which are crucial to understanding how proverbs function in communication and development within the Northern Sotho community.

Purposive sampling allows for the inclusion of individuals with diverse life experiences, roles, and viewpoints regarding the use of proverbs. This diversity enriches the data, offering varied perspectives on how proverbs contribute to socialisation, education, and community development. Such a comprehensive approach enhances the understanding of how proverbs can influence contemporary practices, such as education, politics, and social reform, while shedding light on their traditional uses within the community.

In addition to its cultural relevance, purposive sampling is an efficient technique, particularly for studies constrained by limited resources or time. It facilitates the collection of focused, in-depth data without requiring a large sample size. By selecting participants knowledgeable about the use of proverbs in community development or communication, the researcher can gather substantial insights within a relatively short timeframe.

Purposive sampling was the ideal strategy for this study on "Proverbs as a Tool for Communication and Development in Northern Sotho." It allowed the researcher to select participants best equipped to provide in-depth, meaningful insights into the cultural, linguistic, and social roles of proverbs, ultimately contributing to the collection of rich, contextually relevant data.

### **3.5.7.2 Sampling Procedure**

In qualitative research, the sampling process is typically guided by the chosen methodology and the subject of investigation, rather than the desire for generalisable findings (Coolican, 2014). According to Best and Kahn (1993:24), sampling is a deliberate process of selecting participants for observation and interviews, which enables the researcher to conclude a specific population. For this study, purposive sampling will be used to select participants to provide relevant and insightful information about the research topic.

Sampling in qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that the goal is not to produce statistical generalisations but to gain a deep, nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under study. The sample size in qualitative studies is typically smaller, with a focus on obtaining rich, in-depth data. The size often depends on saturation, which occurs when no new information emerges from additional data collection, depending on the nature of the study and the research methods.

For this study on "Proverbs as Tools for Communication and Development in Northern Sotho," the researcher aims to explore how proverbs are used, interpreted, and transmitted within Northern Sotho-speaking communities. This necessitates a detailed and systematic sampling procedure to ensure the inclusion of participants who can offer meaningful perspectives. The research will focus on elderly individuals and younger generations from selected villages. By selecting participants who are familiar with and can provide insightful commentary on the use of proverbs, the researcher will gain a comprehensive understanding of their role across different age groups and periods.

Focusing on elderly individuals and youth is crucial for capturing a full range of perspectives on the use of proverbs in communication and development. The elderly, who possess traditional knowledge, offer valuable insights into the historical and cultural significance of proverbs. Their experiences provide a deeper understanding of how proverbs were historically used for communication, education, and social cohesion. They may also reflect on how proverbs have evolved or diminished in relevance.

In contrast, the younger generation may hold different views, shaped by modern media and shifting societal values. Their perspectives reveal how proverbs are interpreted or perhaps marginalised in the digital age. By including youth participants, the researcher can explore how proverbs adapt to contemporary forms of communication and contribute to social change. Additionally, the youth's perspectives on proverbs in educational and social contexts can provide new insights into their role in shaping societal development.

The purposive sampling procedure for this study will involve selecting elderly and youth participants who are subjects and can provide relevant insights. The researcher may also employ snowball sampling to identify additional participants, particularly from communities that are initially difficult to access. The selection criteria for participants will include:

- **Knowledge of Northern Sotho Proverbs:** Participants should be familiar with, use, or possess expertise in proverbs within the Northern Sotho language and culture.
- **Cultural Relevance:** Participants should strongly connect to Northern Sotho culture, including individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- **Willingness to Participate:** Participants must be open to sharing their knowledge and perspectives on how proverbs are used in communication and development.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews will serve as the primary data collection method. These interviews will allow the researcher to explore participants' views

on how proverbs function within their community and their role in communication and development. Participants will be informed about the study's objectives, role, and rights, including confidentiality and anonymity.

The researcher ensured cultural sensitivity and respect for participants' knowledge, recognising that proverbs hold significant cultural value within Northern Sotho-speaking communities. All sensitive information will be kept confidential, and participants can be assured that their contributions are valued and protected.

Following data collection, thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns, themes, and meanings related to the use of proverbs in communication and development. The analysis will also explore how proverbs influence social relationships, cultural values, and societal development in Northern Sotho-speaking communities.

By focusing on a carefully selected group of participants and utilising purposive sampling, the researcher gained a deep and nuanced understanding of the role of proverbs in communication and development within the Northern Sotho cultural context.

### **3.5.7.3 Sample Size**

In qualitative research, determining an appropriate sample size involves a thoughtful consideration of the research objectives, the complexity of the topic, and the chosen methodology. Unlike quantitative research, which aims for statistical generalisation through large samples, qualitative studies prioritise in-depth, context-rich insights. Therefore, smaller, more focused samples are typically more appropriate (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005, p. 52).

As McMillan and Schumacher (2001:177) describe, a sample is a subset of a population selected to represent the group under investigation. This study aimed not to generalise findings to the broader population but to explore the

communicative and developmental functions of Northern Sotho proverbs across generations.

To achieve this, a purposive sampling strategy was employed to select 30 participants, 15 elderly individuals and 15 youth from selected Northern Sotho-speaking villages. This deliberate sampling approach ensures the inclusion of participants with relevant knowledge and experience regarding using and interpreting proverbs. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011:157), purposive sampling is beneficial when the research aims to explore specific perspectives in depth. Snowball sampling may also be utilised to access additional participants, particularly in hard-to-reach communities.

Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique in which initial participants (referred to as "seeds") refer others who meet the study's criteria, thereby expanding the sample (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). In your study on Northern Sotho proverbs, this technique is beneficial for accessing hard-to-reach groups, such as elderly individuals who possess cultural knowledge and youth who may be less engaged with traditional practices (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). These groups can be challenging to identify using traditional sampling methods, but snowball sampling enables you to leverage existing social networks to locate relevant participants.

This approach ensures cultural relevance by targeting individuals who are deeply embedded in Northern Sotho culture, which is crucial for gathering authentic insights into the historical and cultural significance of proverbs (Jones & Magwa, 2018). Snowball sampling also helps expand the sample in a controlled and targeted way, ensuring that participants meet the study's specific criteria, such as knowledge of proverbs and cultural relevance. Additionally, it facilitates intergenerational communication, bridging the gap between younger and older generations and enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how proverbs are used across time (Sithole, 2016).

While purposive sampling targets specific individuals known to possess relevant knowledge, snowball sampling can complement this method by broadening the sample, ensuring diversity, and capturing a wider range of perspectives on the role of proverbs in communication and development (Sithole, 2016; Blaise, 2020).

Recommendation: To improve the methodological clarity of your study, it would be beneficial to provide a more detailed explanation of how snowball sampling is applied, its significance in reaching hard-to-access participants, and how it complements purposive sampling in broadening the study's generational and cultural scope (Blaise, 2020). As Kothari (2004:174) notes, sample size in qualitative research serves analytical rather than statistical purposes. This study focuses on generating cultural and generational insights into the function of proverbs, rather than making broad generalisations.

#### **3.5.7.4 Justification for Sample Size**

The sample size of 30 participants is deemed appropriate for this qualitative study based on the following factors:

#### **3.5.7.5 Relevance to Research Objectives**

The primary aim of this study was to explore the communicative and developmental functions of Northern Sotho proverbs. A sample of 30 participants enables the collection of rich, nuanced data. This aligns with the qualitative research objective of obtaining depth rather than breadth of information.

#### **3.5.7.6 Generational Balance**

The inclusion of both elderly and youth participants ensures balanced, intergenerational representation. This is critical to understanding how proverbs' use, meaning, and transmission have evolved and how they are interpreted across age groups.

### **3.5.7.7 Depth Over Breadth**

Corbetta (2003:49) and Patton (2002:14) emphasise that qualitative research prioritises depth of understanding rather than generalisability. Although the findings of this study may not be statistically representative of all Northern Sotho-speaking communities, they will provide culturally specific and contextually grounded insights into the role of proverbs in communication and development.

### **3.5.7.8 Data Saturation**

In qualitative research, the adequacy of sample size is primarily determined by data saturation, at which point no new themes or insights emerge from continued data collection. A sample of 30 participants is generally considered sufficient to achieve saturation, especially when using in-depth, semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling (Neuman, 2007, p. 143).

### **3.5.7.9 Cultural and Contextual Specificity**

This study focuses on a culturally embedded phenomenon, the use of proverbs, within Northern Sotho-speaking communities. Qualitative studies of this nature often employ smaller, well-targeted samples to explore deeply situated meanings and cultural narratives. Therefore, the selected sample size is suitable for this context-specific investigation.

### **3.5.7.10 Participant Selection Criteria**

Participants will be selected based on the following criteria:

- 1. Knowledge of Northern Sotho Proverbs**

Participants must be familiar with and able to articulate the meanings and uses of Northern Sotho proverbs.

- 2. Cultural Relevance**

Individuals must have a strong cultural connection to the Northern Sotho community to ensure contextual and experiential accuracy.

### **3. Willingness to Participate**

Participants must voluntarily consent to be interviewed and be willing to share their insights and experiences.

#### **3.6 Data Collection Method**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which are well-suited for exploring individual perspectives while allowing for flexibility in responses. This method ensures that all relevant themes are covered while following, allowing new lines of inquiry to emerge. Participants will be fully informed about the study's purpose, and ethical considerations, such as confidentiality, anonymity, and cultural sensitivity, will be strictly observed.

#### **3.7 Limitations and Contributions**

While the sample size may limit the generalisability of the findings, this is consistent with the goals of qualitative research. Neuman (2007:143) affirms that even smaller, non-generalisable samples can contribute significantly to theory and practice when the research is grounded in rich, culturally embedded contexts.

In conclusion, a purposive sample of 30 participants, equally divided between the elderly and the youth, provides a robust and methodologically appropriate foundation for this study. The sample size is justified by the research design, the cultural context, and the goal of achieving data saturation. Ultimately, this approach supports the study's aim of generating detailed, nuanced insights into the role of proverbs in communication and development within Northern Sotho-speaking communities.

#### **3.8 Participants**

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select 30 participants from Ga-Nchabeleng village in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Purposive sampling is widely recognised in qualitative research for its ability to target information-rich participants who can provide in-depth insights relevant to the

research objectives (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). This sample was intentionally stratified to include a balanced representation of older and younger generations, enabling a comparative exploration of intergenerational perspectives on the use and significance of Northern Sotho proverbs (Best & Kahn, 1993).

The sample consisted of 15 elderly individuals, comprising eight males and seven females aged 55 years and above. These participants were selected based on their cultural knowledge, lived experiences, and in-depth understanding of traditional Northern Sotho proverbs. More importantly, they are considered custodians of indigenous knowledge and oral traditions within the community, making them valuable sources of information regarding the historical functions, meanings, and societal roles of proverbs (Kothari, 2004; Neuman, 2007).

Additionally, 15 youth participants, comprising 9 females and 6 males, aged 18-35 years, were included in the study. Including the younger generation was intentional, aiming to capture their perspectives on the contemporary usage, relevance, and interpretation of proverbs in a rapidly modernising social environment. These participants were selected for their ability to provide insight into how traditional knowledge is being adapted, challenged, or possibly diminished in the context of digital communication, formal education, and global cultural influences (Welman et al., 2005).

The intergenerational structure of the sample was purposefully designed to investigate the dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity in the transmission and interpretation of proverbs. By including both age groups, the study sought to assess not only the retention and continuity of indigenous linguistic expressions but also the extent to which proverbs continue to serve as tools for moral instruction, cultural identity, and social cohesion in contemporary Northern Sotho-speaking communities (Corbetta, 2003; Patton, 2002). This diverse and culturally embedded sample supports the research aim of obtaining

rich, contextual, and multi-layered data on the communicative and developmental roles of proverbs across generations.

### **3.9 Research Site**

A research site is where a study is conducted, and data are collected (Kumar, 1999, p. 179). It encompasses any setting that facilitates participant interaction and supports relevant data, including, but not limited to, villages, schools, festivals, or conferences (Rañanga, 2009, p. 48). The selected research site for this study is Ga-Nchabeleng village, situated within the Fetakgomo Tubatse Local Municipality in the Sekhukhune District of Limpopo Province, South Africa.

#### **3.9.1 Justification for Site Selection**

The choice of Ga-Nchabeleng as the research site is informed by a combination of cultural, demographic, logistical, and methodological considerations that align closely with the objectives of this qualitative inquiry.

#### **3.9.2 Cultural Relevance**

Ga-Nchabeleng is a predominantly Northern Sotho-speaking village renowned for its rich oral tradition and preservation of indigenous knowledge. Given that the study investigated the communicative and developmental functions of Northern Sotho proverbs, the cultural practices and linguistic environment of Ga-Nchabeleng offer an authentic and fertile context for data collection. The village provides direct access to indigenous linguistic expressions within their natural communicative settings, which is essential for the depth and validity of the research.

#### **3.9.3 Intergenerational Demographic Composition**

The demographic structure of Ga-Nchabeleng is balanced, with equal representation of elderly and younger residents. This intergenerational composition is critical for the study's aim of examining the transmission, use, and evolution of proverbs across age groups. The elderly serve as custodians of

traditional knowledge, while the youth embody the contemporary usage and possible transformation of proverbial language.

#### **3.9.4 Community Accessibility and Willingness**

The village is known for its accessibility and community openness to academic research. Furthermore, the researcher's familiarity with local language, cultural norms, and ethical protocols facilitates effective communication and trust-building with participants. This enhances both the quality and integrity of the data collection process.

#### **3.9.5 Geographical and Socio-Cultural Significance**

Ga-Nchabeleng is in the southeastern part of Limpopo Province, in the Sekhukhune District. It borders the Capricorn and Mopani Districts to the north, Mpumalanga Province to the south and east, and the Waterberg District to the west. Established in 2000, the district comprises primarily rural communities, including 117 wards and approximately 764 villages. Ga-Nchabeleng reflects the broader socio-cultural characteristics of rural Northern Sotho-speaking communities, making it an analytically valuable case study that serves as a microcosm for understanding the region's traditional life and linguistic practices.

#### **3.9.6 Alignment with Research Objectives**

The village setting allows for the use of proverbs in everyday life, which is fundamental to the study's qualitative focus. It supports an investigation into the continuity and adaptation of indigenous knowledge systems over time. The alignment between the site's characteristics and the research objectives ensures thematic and methodological coherence.

#### **3.9.7 Summary**

In summary, the selection of Ga-Nchabeleng as the research site is justified based on:

- It has a strong cultural and linguistic heritage.
- A demographically balanced population conducive to intergenerational analysis.
- Accessibility and community readiness to participate in research.
- Representativeness of rural Northern Sotho-speaking communities.
- Its alignment with the study's qualitative and interpretive goals.

These factors collectively affirm that Ga-Nchabeleng is not merely a convenient location, but a methodologically sound and thematically appropriate site for this investigation.

### **3.10 Data Collection Techniques**

In qualitative research, data collection techniques are essential for gathering non-numerical data such as words, behaviours, and observations to achieve a more profound, context-based understanding of phenomena (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). These techniques capture participants' lived experiences and the social and cultural dynamics that shape them. As Creswell (2010, p. 78) asserts, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection, emphasising active engagement and critical judgment throughout the process. The researcher must select the most appropriate tools and sources, as highlighted by White (2005, p. 186), to ensure the data collected aligns with the study's objectives.

Qualitative research utilises a variety of data collection methods, including but not limited to:

#### **1. Interviews**

- **Structured Interviews:** Predefined and identical questions posed to all participants.
- **Semi-structured Interviews:** Guided questions with flexibility for follow-ups.

- **Unstructured Interviews:** Open conversations guided by broad themes.
2. **Focus Groups:** Discussed with selected participants to explore group perceptions and interactions.
  3. **Participant Observation:** Immersion in the study environment to observe behaviours and interactions in context.
  4. **Field Notes:** Descriptive notes documenting the researcher's observations and reflections during or after fieldwork.
  5. **Document Analysis:** Examination of existing records, such as letters, reports, folklore, or digital media.
  6. **Case Studies:** In-depth exploration of a particular group, event, or community using multiple data sources.
  7. **Ethnography:** Long-term, immersive participation within a cultural setting to gather detailed insights.
  8. **Audio/Video Recordings:** Capturing verbal and non-verbal cues during interviews or observations for transcription and analysis.

These methods can be used individually or in combination, depending on the research objectives, context, and design.

### 3.10.1 Primary and Secondary Data Sources

Primary data refers to information collected firsthand by the researcher specifically for the study. It is original and tailored to the research objectives. This study primarily utilised focus group interviews as the source of primary data, conducted with two key demographic groups:

- Elderly individuals (aged 55 and above).
- Youth (aged 18 and older).

These interviews aimed to explore the use, interpretation, and cultural significance of Northern Sotho proverbs across generations.

Secondary data, on the other hand, comprises information that has already been collected and published by other researchers or institutions. This includes academic journals, books, historical texts, government reports, and archived documents. In this study, secondary data were obtained through document and content analysis, focusing on historical and literary sources that preserve Northern Sotho proverbs, some of which may no longer be in common usage.

The combination of primary and secondary sources offers a comprehensive perspective, helping to triangulate findings and enhance the credibility and depth of the research.

### **3.10.2 Interview Procedure**

Face-to-face interviews were selected as the primary data collection tool, and convenient locations for participants were chosen. Each session lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was carried out in Northern Sotho to ensure authenticity and ease of communication. Moreover, all interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' informed consent. Ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw, were clearly explained and upheld throughout the process.

A semi-structured interview format was used, guided by the following key themes:

- Knowledge and understanding of Northern Sotho proverbs.
- Usage of proverbs in everyday life.
- Perceived roles of proverbs in communication and development.
- Intergenerational differences in proverb interpretation.

This format allowed the researcher to pursue follow-up questions, probe for elaboration, and adapt the discussion to the natural flow of conversation, thereby enriching the depth and scope of the collected data.

### 3.10.3 Data Organisation and Analysis

Data analysis was conducted manually by the researcher, without using specialised software. This approach facilitated a deeper engagement with the data, fostering cultural sensitivity and nuanced interpretation aligned with the study's context.

#### Transcription and Organisation

- Interviews were transcribed verbatim.
- Special attention was paid to tone, emphasis, and contextual cues.
- Transcripts were categorised by participant demographics (e.g., age and gender).
- Unique identifiers (e.g., E1 = Elderly Participant 1, Y1 = Youth Participant 1) were used to maintain confidentiality and streamline referencing.

#### Manual Coding and Thematic Development

The following steps were followed during analysis:

1. **Familiarisation:** Repeated readings of transcripts to immerse in the data.
2. **Initial Coding:** Assigning descriptive codes to key excerpts, deductively from interview questions and inductively from emerging insights.
3. **Categorisation:** Grouping related codes into categories based on similarities and relevance.
4. **Theme Identification:** Developing overarching themes such as:
  - Cultural value of proverbs
  - Generational transmission
  - Proverbs as moral education
  - Contemporary relevance of proverbs.
5. **Interpretation and Reporting:** Synthesising themes in alignment with the study's objectives and illustrating findings with direct participant quotations.

## **Justification for Manual Analysis**

Manual analysis was deemed suitable due to the manageable sample size and the researcher's linguistic and cultural proficiency in Northern Sotho. This hands-on approach enabled deeper contextual understanding and allowed emergent themes to be interpreted with cultural sensitivity and accuracy.

### **3.10.4 The Interview Method**

Kothari (2004) defines an interview as “the presentation of oral-verbal stimuli and a reply in terms of oral-verbal response” (p. 97). Similarly, Pandey and Pandey (2015) describe the interview as “a two-way method which permits an exchange of ideas and information” (p. 59). In qualitative research, interviews are understood as purposeful conversations between the researcher and participants, designed to gather rich, detailed, and contextually grounded information about participants' experiences, perspectives, and beliefs regarding a specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Interviews are particularly valuable in qualitative inquiry because they provide an opportunity to explore complex topics in depth that may not be accessible through other methods. Direct engagement allows researchers to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences and subjective meanings that participants attach to various aspects of their lives (Mason, 2002). In this study, interviews are an effective tool for exploring how Northern Sotho proverbs function as instruments of communication and development.

This approach enables participants to articulate their interpretations, experiences, and understandings of proverbs, offering insight into how these cultural expressions are used in different communicative and developmental contexts. Interviews are especially well-suited for uncovering how their significance may differ across generations.

Depending on the research objectives and the level of flexibility required, interviews can take the form of structured, semi-structured, or unstructured

formats. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews are often preferred in qualitative studies owing to their flexibility and capacity for depth (Bryman, 2016). These formats enable researchers to follow up on participants' responses, allowing for the emergence of unanticipated themes or insights.

For this study, semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary data collection method. This format enabled open-ended dialogue while thoroughly addressing central themes of proverbs, communication, and development.

#### **3.10.4.1 Interview Procedure**

The interview procedure for this study focused on exploring the role of proverbs in communication and cultural development within Northern Sotho communities. The following steps outline the process, providing clarity on how the interviews will be conducted:

#### **3.10.4.2 Interview Design**

A semi-structured interview format was used. This approach offers flexibility and depth, combining predefined questions with the option to explore responses in greater detail. The interview begins with broad, open-ended questions to introduce the topic, then gradually moves to more focused inquiries on the role of proverbs in communication and cultural development.

#### **3.10.4.3 Setting**

Interviews were conducted in a quiet, comfortable, and private environment to ensure participants felt at ease. This setting fostered open and meaningful conversations. The researcher prepared all necessary recording tools, including audio recorders, video cameras, and written notes, in advance, ensuring that participants signed consent forms before data collection commenced. Consent included permission to record the interview."

#### **3.10.4.4 Introduction to the participants**

The researcher introduced herself and explained the purpose of each interview study in detail at the start of each interview. She emphasised that the interview focuses on understanding how proverbs function within communication and cultural development, specifically within Northern Sotho communities. The researcher reassured participants of their anonymity and confidentiality.

#### **3.10.4.5 Interview Process**

The interview proceeded with the following phases:

- **Ice-breaker:** The interviews began with general, non-threatening questions to establish rapport and make participants comfortable. These questions were designed to create a relaxed atmosphere.
- **Main Questions:** The researcher then asked more specific questions regarding proverbs, particularly focusing on their meanings, functions, and the contexts in which they are used within Northern Sotho culture. These questions were designed to elicit detailed and reflective answers.
- **Proverb Discussion:** Participants were encouraged to share examples of use. They were also asked to reflect on how these proverbs influence their lives, community values, and communication practices. The researcher asked for clarification or elaboration on responses to capture richer data.
- **Active Listening:** The researcher will actively listen, using techniques such as paraphrasing or summarising to ensure a complete understanding of the participant's responses. Follow-up questions were asked to encourage deeper reflection on significant points raised during the conversation.

#### **3.11 Ethical Considerations**

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The researcher ensured that participants understood the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and the intended use of the data. Confidentiality was maintained, and personal identifiers

were removed from the final report to protect participant privacy. Participants will also have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without consequence.

This chapter will provide more discussions and explanations of ethical procedures. This chapter will provide further discussion and explanations of ethical procedures to enrich the discussion of ethical considerations. Bless et al. (2006:139) explain that the word “ethics” is derived from the Greek word “ethos”, meaning one’s character. It is related to the term “morality”. A moral issue is whether a behaviour is right or wrong, whereas an ethical issue concerns whether the behaviour conforms to a set of principles. Research ethics primarily concern the interactions between researchers and the people they study. The essential purpose of research ethics is to protect the welfare of research participants. Johnson and Christensen (2012:99) define ethics as "principles and guidelines that help us uphold the things we value," and recommend respecting these principles and values. "Principles of research ethics ask that researchers avoid harming participants involved. To make *this study trustworthy*, the following ethical issues were considered. When exploring proverbs as a tool for communication and development, several ethical issues must be carefully considered. These include concerns around consent, confidentiality, and the protection of participants. Ethical considerations are important in research or development programs that use cultural or indigenous tools, such as proverbs, as they often involve deeply ingrained cultural practices and knowledge. Next, some of these issues and possible solutions are outlined.

### **3.11.1 Informed consent**

Informed consent is a fundamental ethical requirement in research, ensuring that individuals are fully informed about the nature of a study and voluntarily agree to participate. According to Jackson (2011, p. 54), informed consent involves providing participants with a document before their involvement in a study that outlines the general nature of the research and seeks their consent to participate. The researcher explained the study's purpose and the interview transcription

process and assured participants of the confidentiality of their responses. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study without penalty or consequence.

Each participant was asked to sign an informed consent form indicating that they understood the information provided. As Newby (2010, p. 257) emphasises, consent involves more than just signing a form; it requires participants to fully comprehend the scope, purpose, and nature of their involvement in the study. Informed consent is essential for minimising the risk of researcher misconduct, such as fraud or the unethical use of personal information. Moreover, there are no anticipated risks to participants in this study, and no financial compensation was provided. The researcher also ensured that participants' constitutional rights, including their right to dignity, were respected and would take measures to prevent any harm or discomfort during the research process.

In many cultural contexts, proverbs are viewed as communal knowledge, passed down through generations and collectively owned, rather than being the intellectual property of any single individual. When utilising proverbs for communication or development purposes, knowledge. In this context, informed consent extends beyond individual participation; it involves acknowledging the proverbs' communal and cultural ownership. Researchers must ensure that participants understand the purpose of using these proverbs and how they will be incorporated into the development process.

### **Steps to Address Informed Consent in the Context of Proverbs**

**Engage in Community Consultation:** Before initiating research or development activities, researchers should consult with local communities, elders, and cultural representatives to ensure that participation is based on mutual understanding. This consultation process helps to establish the cultural context and significance of proverbs within the community.

**Obtain Explicit Consent:** Participants should provide informed consent, fully understanding how their words will be used, whether they will be recorded, and whether the proverbs will be shared or published. This ensures transparency and respects participants' autonomy in deciding how their cultural knowledge is utilised.

**Respect Cultural Norms around Sharing Knowledge:** Some proverbs may be considered sacred or private, and cultural norms may govern their dissemination. Researchers must be sensitive to these norms and ensure that consent reflects the community's expectations and cultural values concerning sharing such knowledge.

### **3.11.2 Ethical Approval and Informed Consent Process**

**Obtain Ethical Approval:** Ethical approval should be sought from an institutional review board (IRB) or an equivalent ethics committee before engaging in any research or development work involving humans. This step ensures that the study adheres to ethical standards and safeguards participants.

**Informed Consent Process:** As part of the ethical approval process, providing participants with clear, understandable information about the project is essential. This information should outline the study's purpose, potential risks and benefits, and how participants' contributions will be used.

**Documentation and Transparency:** Provisions should be documented with transparency regarding how the data will be handled, who will have access to it, and how the results will be disseminated. Researchers must be diligent in maintaining ethical integrity by respecting the cultural ownership of proverbs and ensuring transparency in their use in research.

By adhering to these guidelines, researchers can uphold ethical standards while respecting cultural ownership and communal knowledge in studies that involve proverbs and other traditional forms of communication. This process fosters

mutual respect and ensures the research is conducted with integrity, promoting academic and cultural responsibility.

### **3.11.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Confidentiality and anonymity are fundamental ethical practices that safeguard human subjects' privacy throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. Ensuring that the information obtained from participants remains confidential is a core responsibility of researchers. As Punch (1994, 2009) and Miles and Huberman (1994) emphasise, confidentiality is a critical ethical issue that warrants careful attention. Johnson and Christensen (2012, p. 116) assert that researchers must "maintain the confidentiality of both the participants and the data." To uphold confidentiality, personal information provided by participants is protected and made accessible only to the researcher. Participants are assured of this confidentiality through written notice, which ensures transparency and trust in the research process.

While proverbs are often shared freely within communities, they may still carry specific meanings that are sensitive or deeply personal to individuals or groups. Proverbs in research or development programmes may inadvertently expose personal, community-sensitive information or perpetuate stereotypes. There is a risk that certain proverbs could be misused or taken out of context, leading to unintended harm or misinterpretation. Therefore, safeguarding participants' confidentiality is especially important in studies involving cultural expressions, such as proverbs.

### **3.11.4 Steps to Address Confidentiality and Anonymity in the Context of Proverbs**

- **Anonymise Personal Data:** When incorporating proverbs into research or development contexts, it is crucial to anonymise any personal or community-specific data. Researchers must avoid linking

proverbs to individuals or situations in a manner that could compromise confidentiality or reveal sensitive information.

- **Ensure Respectful and Culturally Appropriate Use of Proverbs:** Researchers and practitioners should be adequately trained to understand the nuanced meanings of proverbs, particularly those embedded in specific cultural contexts. This training helps prevent misinterpretation or misuse of proverbs that may harm participants or the wider community. By comprehending the cultural significance of proverbs, researchers can ensure that these expressions are used respectfully and appropriately.
- **Use Group Consent Where Necessary:** In situations where proverbs are viewed as collective knowledge, rather than individual expressions, obtaining group consent may be more appropriate than seeking individual consent. Proverbs often represent a community's collective wisdom; in such cases, engaging the broader community in the consent process is crucial. Group consent respects the communal ownership of knowledge and ensures that the cultural values surrounding the proverb are honoured.

By adhering to these ethical practices, researchers can mitigate the risks of confidentiality breaches, misuse, or harm when working with proverbs in research or development initiatives. These steps ensure the cultural integrity of participants while maintaining ethical standards in data handling and analysis.

### **3.11.5 Privacy**

Researchers concur that participants have a right not to have their lives threatened or endangered. Johnson and Christenson (2012) advise researchers to keep data collected from participants confidential to protect participants' privacy and avoid annoying them. Once again, this indicates problems when researchers conduct hidden research, and there are arguments that state researchers should apply overt research. Hence, the researcher should ensure that the subjects do not feel intruded upon by making all activities clear to them, for example, by reading all or part of the

research report and by ensuring that participants recognise that their names are anonymous. Participants were told they had the right to withdraw from the study whenever they felt uncomfortable or believed their participation violated their rights.

### **3.12 Participant Selection**

Participants were selected purposefully to ensure they were familiar with Northern Sotho culture. The sample included the elderly, community leaders, and youth who know proverbs. A diverse group was selected to provide a balanced perspective of how proverbs function across different age groups and social contexts. The researcher sought to include perspectives from both genders, across age ranges, and from multiple community roles.

### **3.13 Closing**

Participants were invited to share any final thoughts or reflections at the end of each interview. The researcher expressed gratitude for their participation, ensuring they feel appreciated for their time and insights. The researcher also reminded participants of their right to withdraw from the study.

This procedure ensures a respectful, comprehensive, and meaningful exploration of proverbs as tools for communication and cultural development in Northern Sotho communities. The research aims to capture various perspectives while maintaining ethical standards.

### **Examples of Research Questions:**

- What do you know about proverbs? (O tseba eng ka diema?)
- What do you know about folklore? (Naa o tseba eng ka dingwalwatšhaba?)
- How would you define indigenous knowledge? (O ka hlaloša bjang tsebo ya setšo?)
- What is the relationship between folklore and proverbs? (Ke kamano efe yeo o e hwetšago magareng ga dikanegelo le diema?)

- What are the educational roles of proverbs in society? (Ke dikarolo dife tša thuto tša diema setšhabeng?)

And so on, as outlined in the original document.

### **3.14 Desk Research and Document Analysis**

Document analysis was a pivotal data collection technique in this study, employed to validate and supplement data gathered from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Marshall and Rossman (2016) noted that various document types can provide essential background information, supporting the rationale for selecting specific sites, programmes, or populations. Moreover, they argue that document analysis offers valuable insights into the values and beliefs of individuals engaged in the study context.

Documentary analysis involves the researcher accessing and extracting relevant information from existing documents for examination (Leedy, 1997, p. 191). Suitable documents typically include reports, records, and other archival materials. In this study, documentary analysis was particularly useful for exploring social phenomena, such as attitudes and perceptions (Best & Kahn, 1993, p. 191). While this method primarily deals with secondary data sources, it was selected for its ability to track and measure characteristics over an extended period. The researcher analysed ministerial circulars and language policies as part of the data collection process. The insights derived from document analysis contributed to the triangulation of findings obtained from other data collection methods. The documents selected for analysis in this study were drawn primarily from a literature review of existing scholarly work on proverbs.

These included:

- Prescribed & book chapters.
- Research articles.
- Conference papers

- These are related to proverbs.

The systematic gathering and analysis of these documents yielded valuable qualitative data on the role of proverbs in Northern Sotho culture as vehicles for cultural knowledge, social norms, and communication strategies. By using document analysis, the researcher could explore the multifaceted role of proverbs in a non-intrusive and comprehensive manner, examining their function as potent communication tools and catalysts for social and cultural development.

To ensure a thorough investigation, the researcher selected documents that directly addressed the use, meaning, and impact of proverbs within Northern Sotho communities, with particular attention to traditional and contemporary contexts. The documents were sourced from:

**Library and Archives:** The researcher visited libraries, archives, housing research centres, and research centres that house collections of Northern Sotho proverbs and related cultural materials. These institutions offered valuable primary sources, such as ethnographic records, proverb collections, and other texts that reflect cultural practices and linguistic traditions.

**Digital Resources:** The researcher also utilised academic databases, online journals, and websites offering access to digital resources on Northern Sotho proverbs and cultural studies. These included online repositories of academic articles, books, and other scholarly works pertinent to the study.

The types of documents selected for analysis included:

**Traditional Texts:** These comprise collections of Northern Sotho proverbs, published folklore, oral literature, and other materials that capture the traditional usage and meanings of proverbs within the community.

**Cultural and Linguistic Studies:** These include academic articles, books, and dissertations exploring the linguistic, cultural, and sociological aspects of

Northern Sotho proverbs. These texts often analyse the functions, roles, and influence of proverbs in communication and on social norms.

By employing this document technique, the researcher sought to understand how Northern Sotho proverbs function as communicative devices and as instruments of cultural and social development. The careful selection and analysis of documents enabled the researcher to uncover nuanced perspectives on the power and significance of proverbs within the Northern Sotho-speaking community.

### **3.15 Data Analysis**

Data analysis is a critical phase in qualitative research, involving systematically examining and interpreting data to identify patterns, trends, and insights that address the research questions, test hypotheses, and inform decision-making. In this study, the data analysis process was vital for transforming raw data collected through document analysis, interviews, and focus group discussions into meaningful information.

Creswell (2010, p. 99) and McMillan and Schumacher (2010, p. 367) assert that qualitative data analysis is an ongoing process in which researchers seek to understand how participants construct meaning from specific phenomena. The researcher examines participants' feelings, attitudes, values, knowledge, understanding, perceptions, and experiences during this process. As Henning et al. (2013) describe, qualitative data analysis aims to elicit meaning comprehensively and systematically to explain or make sense of the research inquiry.

In this study on proverbs as tools of communication and development in Northern Sotho, qualitative analysis was crucial for answering the research questions. The methods used for analysis, including coding, thematic analysis, and discourse analysis, were tailored to the nature of the qualitative data.

### 3.15.1 Coding

Coding is a fundamental qualitative research technique that involves breaking data into manageable units. These units are typically key phrases, words, or ideas from the data set. For example, in the analysis of interviews, segments discussing how proverbs aid in resolving disputes or offering advice could be coded as “dispute resolution” or “advice-giving.” By categorising the data into codes, the researcher identifies patterns and deeper meanings, thereby addressing the research questions related to the communication functions of proverbs and their role in development.

### 3.15.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis involves identifying and analysing recurring patterns or themes within qualitative data. After coding, the researcher can explore broader themes that address the research questions. Key themes relevant to this study might include:

- **Communication:** One theme could examine how proverbs serve as tools for effective communication. Through thematic analysis, the researcher might uncover how proverbs convey social norms, values, and wisdom in Northern Sotho-speaking communities. This theme directly addresses the role of proverbs in facilitating communication in different social settings.
- **Development:** Another theme might explore the role of proverbs in community and personal development. Thematic analysis could reveal that proverbs are used in educational contexts to teach responsibility, leadership, cooperation, or contribute to socio-economic development.

### 3.15.3 Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis focuses on how language constructs meaning and power dynamics within communication. In proverbs, discourse analysis would examine how proverbs are framed within specific social contexts and how their usage reflects and reinforces societal norms and power structures. This method allows

the researcher to explore interactions and social practices, further enriching the understanding of proverbs as instruments of communication and development.

This study comprehensively explains how Northern Sotho proverbs function as agents of communication and social and cultural development, applying coding, thematic analysis, and discourse analysis. These qualitative methods facilitate the identification of:

### **3.15.3.1 How proverbs serve as vehicles for communication across generations**

The contribution of proverbs to cultural transmission, social cohesion, and community development. The combination of document and qualitative data analysis methods enables the researcher to offer a nuanced, in-depth understanding of proverbs' roles in Northern Sotho-speaking communities, thereby shedding light on their significance in communication and development.

## **3.16 Trustworthiness of the research**

Collier-Reed, Ingerman, and Berglund (2009:339) define trustworthiness as making research findings acceptable to the readers. Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2019:3) argue that trustworthiness is the extent to which a researcher convinces the reader that the research findings are credible and warrant their attention. The trustworthiness of the data is ensured by providing detailed information on the sampling method and by giving descriptions of the participants. The data collection method used to answer the research question can also be used to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. The researcher should ensure that the criterion for trustworthiness is upheld in the study.

### **3.16.1 Reliability**

Best and Kahn (2003: 277) explain, "reliability is the degree of consistency that the instrument or procedure demonstrates: whatever it is measuring, it does so consistently". This research tried to consider the merits and demerits of the research instruments used to collect the data. In addition, a combination of methods is used

for triangulation to maintain reliability and overcome weaknesses in qualitative representation by improving consistency across methods.

Researchers must employ a range of strategies to ensure the reliability of qualitative research, particularly when examining the role of proverbs as tools for communication and development. These approaches are crucial for maintaining the consistency, credibility, and trustworthiness of the findings. The following outlines several key strategies that enhance the reliability of qualitative research:

### **3.16.2 Triangulation**

Triangulation involves using multiple data sources, research methods, researchers, or theoretical perspectives to cross-check and validate the consistency of findings. This approach ensures that the results are not confined to a singular viewpoint or methodology, thereby strengthening the overall reliability of the study.

### **3.16.3 Member Checking**

Member checking entails returning the data or interpretations to participants to confirm that they align with their experiences and perspectives. This strategy enhances the accuracy of the findings by ensuring that the participants' voices are adequately represented and that the researcher's interpretations are valid.

### **3.16.4 Audit Trail**

An audit trail thoroughly documents the entire research process, encompassing decisions, data collection methods, and the steps taken during analysis. This transparency allows other researchers to study progress, facilitating the replication of findings and the verification of results.

### **3.16.5 Peer Debriefing**

Peer debriefing involves discussions with colleagues or experts to assess the research process and findings critically. This process ensures that the research is

coherent, credible, and reliable, and that the researcher's interpretations and conclusions are.

### 3.16.6 Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the researcher's awareness of biases, assumptions, and preconceptions that may influence the research process. By engaging in reflexivity, the researcher can acknowledge how their background and worldview might shape the data's analysis and interpretation, enhancing the study's objectivity.

In studying proverbs as tools for communication and development, applying these strategies is crucial to ensuring a comprehensive and reliable analysis. Proverbs often carry cultural, social, and educational messages, serving as vehicles for moral instruction, conflict resolution, and social development. To apply these strategies effectively in this domain:

- **Triangulation** involved gathering proverbs from diverse cultural or regional contexts to examine recurring themes, values, and messages. This allowed the researcher to compare proverbs across different settings and contexts, ensuring a robust and multifaceted understanding.
- **Member checking** included engaging with community members to verify the accuracy of the proverbs' representations and their applications in various aspects of communication and development. This collaborative validation ensures that the interpretations reflect the community's lived experience.
- An **audit trail** will document selecting, interpreting, and analysing proverbs, ensuring the researcher's reasoning and decisions are transparent. This will enable others to trace the steps taken during the research and assess the validity of the findings.
- **Peer debriefing** involved presenting findings to experts in fields such as linguistics, anthropology, and communication to critically assess the validity of the interpretations, identify any interpretations' validity, and identify potential biases or misinterpretations.

- **Reflexivity** is critical when studying proverbs, as they are often deeply embedded in specific cultural contexts. Researchers must be mindful of how their cultural background and worldview may influence their understanding and interpretation of the proverbs under study.

By employing these strategies, researchers ensured that the social, historical, and cultural contexts were appropriate. This will yield accurate, meaningful insights that contribute to the community's developmental projects or communication strategies.

Ensuring reliability in qualitative research, particularly in the study of proverbs, is essential for producing trustworthy and applicable findings. The strategies outlined above, such as triangulation, member checking, audit trails, peer debriefing, and reflexivity, provide depth, consistency, and rigour to research proverbs, exploring proverbs' role as powerful tools for communication and development. By adhering to these methods, researchers can generate reliable, contextually grounded, and actionable insights that span academic knowledge and practical and cultural developments.

### **3.16.7 Research validity**

Best and Kahn 2003: 277 describe research validity as "quality of a data-gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to measure what it is supposed to measure" (Best & Kahn, 2003, p. 277). The quality of a piece of research is an ethical issue, and researchers should attempt to conduct research in ways that maximise its validity. Lacking validity is unethical. In this study, the researcher followed clear procedures in design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. He carefully designed data-collection instruments and analysis procedures to keep the value of the findings consistent and relevant, and to maintain the validity of the research. He maintained the value of the findings and ensured the research data-collection instruments and analytical procedures remained consistent, relevant, and valid. Researchers suggest that trustworthiness. Being on the research sites was a powerful way to gain insight into the nature of human affairs.

In qualitative research, validity pertains to the data's accuracy, trustworthiness, and credibility, as well as the findings and conclusions derived from the study. However, it is inherently more nuanced than in social phenomena, making validity exceptionally crucial. However, it is inherently more nuanced than quantitative research. The primary objective is not to measure the precision of phenomena but to ensure that the findings authentically reflect participants' lived experiences and are firmly rooted in the data collected.

### **3.17 Types of Validity in Qualitative Research**

#### **3.17.1 Credibility (Internal Validity)**

Credibility refers to the researcher's confidence in the truthfulness of the findings. It is like internal validity in quantitative research; However, it focuses on the participants' perspectives and experiences. This aspect of validity seeks to avoid one-sided or biased interpretations.

#### **3.17.2 Transferability (External Validity)**

Transferability concerns whether the findings can be generalised or applied to other contexts, settings, or populations. While qualitative research does not aim for broad generalisation, the study's findings must hold relevance beyond the immediate research context.

#### **3.17.3 Dependability (Reliability)**

Dependability refers to the stability and consistency of the data over time and across different conditions. This aspect addresses whether the findings are repeatable under similar circumstances and whether they are context dependent.

#### **3.17.4 Confirmability (Objectivity)**

Confirmability pertains to the neutrality or objectivity of the research findings. It ensures that the results reflect the participants' perspectives, rather than being shaped by the researcher's biases, preconceptions, or preferences. This form of validity emphasises the importance of transparency in the research process.

### **3.17.5 Authenticity**

Authenticity is the degree to which research findings accurately, fairly, and impartially portray participants' perspectives. It underscores capturing participants' voices, particularly those from marginalised or less-heard groups.

Ensuring validity in qualitative research is a dynamic and iterative, requiring ongoing reflection and adjustment throughout the study. Researchers can enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of their findings by employing strategies such as triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, and peer debriefing. These methods increase the depth and reliability of the data and safeguard against researcher bias.

Researchers need to consider the contexts in which the research is conducted. Attending to the specific settings, participants, and cultural nuances ensures the findings are authentic and meaningful. By fostering dependability, confirmability, and authenticity, researchers can generate robust, meaningful outcomes that contribute valuable insights into the phenomena under study. Ultimately, the goal is to produce methodologically rigorous and socially relevant research, contributing to a deeper understanding of human experience and social dynamics.

### **3.18 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher explained that the study will use a qualitative approach. The researcher explained the sampling procedures, research design, data collection techniques, and participants. The researcher conducted focus group interviews and discussions with informants. Document analysis, including books, book chapters, research articles, conference papers, and proceedings, was used to complement information on proverbs as a communication tool in Northern Sotho. The chapter also addresses the validity, reliability, privacy, and confidentiality of participants in the study. The next chapter focuses on the presentation of findings, and the interpretation of the data findings will be discussed in detail.

## CHAPTER 4:

### DATA COLLECTION PROCESS, PRESENTATION OF THEMES AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the empirical findings of the study, derived from both semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The primary objective was to investigate the role of Northern Sotho proverbs as tools for communication and community development, specifically focusing on their usage and interpretation across two generational groups: the elderly and the youth.

Aligned with the broader aims of the study, this chapter examines the cultural significance, contemporary relevance, and practical applications of proverbs. It also compares generational perspectives to assess continuity and evolution within a changing sociocultural context. The findings are organised thematically under three interrelated categories: communication, cultural preservation, and community development. Each theme is explored through the lens of generational analysis, highlighting similarities and divergences in understanding and usage. The data were gathered using a mixed-methods approach that combined semi-structured interviews with document analysis.

The interview phase involved two purposively selected groups:

- **15 elderly participants**, recognised for their deep cultural knowledge and experience with Northern Sotho proverbs.
- **15 youth participants** identified as emerging cultural stakeholders and communities.

All participants responded to a standardised set of interview questions addressing the use of proverbs in everyday communication, their relevance in contemporary society, and their role in fostering social cohesion and community development.

In addition to interviews, secondary data were drawn from academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and postgraduate theses. This document analysis contextualised the field data within a broader theoretical and cultural framework. Fieldwork was conducted in January 2024 in Ga-Nchabeleng Village, under the Tau Nchabeleng Tribal Authority, within the Sekhukhune District (Fetakgomo Municipality). Over the three days, all 30 participants were interviewed. Each session was audio-recorded using digital recorders and supplemented with detailed field notes.

**Table 4.1: Summary of Data Collection Process**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Data Collection Methods</b>	- Semi-structured interviews - Document analysis
<b>Participant Groups</b>	- 15 elderly participants - 15 youth participants
<b>Purpose of Interviews</b>	To explore the significance, relevance, and application of proverbs
<b>Secondary Data Sources</b>	- Books - Academic journal articles - Conference papers - Theses
<b>Purpose of Document Analysis</b>	To contextualise interviews within a broader cultural and theoretical framework.
<b>Fieldwork Location</b>	Ga-Nchabeleng Village, Sekhukhune District (Fetakgomo Municipality)
<b>Fieldwork Date</b>	January 2024
<b>Data Collection Duration</b>	3 days
<b>Data Collection Tools</b>	- Digital audio recorders - Field notes
<b>Interview Consistency</b>	The same set of semi-structured questions was posed to all 30 participants.
<b>Interview Themes</b>	- Perceptions of proverbs - Daily usage - Role in communication and development

<b>Additional Discussions</b>	Group discussion with selected youth on the generational transmission of proverbs
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## 4.2 Data Collection and Contextual Overview

This section provides an overview of the data collection methods, participant profiles, and the rationale behind methodological choices. The objective was to gain insights into the role of Northern Sotho proverbs in both traditional and modern contexts through a combination of interviews and literature review.

## 4.3 Methodology

**A qualitative approach was employed, using:**

- Semi-structured interviews to gather rich, firsthand accounts from participants.
- Document analysis to support and contextualise the interview data with existing scholarship.

This dual-method strategy enabled in-depth personal narratives, and a deeper understanding of cultural functions rooted in literature.

### 4.3.1 Participants

Two purposively selected groups were interviewed:

- **15 elderly individuals**, selected for their extensive knowledge of Northern Sotho oral traditions.
- **15 youth participants**, chosen for their engagement with Northern Sotho language and cultural practices.

The interviews explored perceptions of:

- The cultural significance of proverbs
- Their relevance in contemporary settings

- Everyday application
- Their role in communication and development.

A **semi-structured interview format** was employed to ensure consistency while allowing participants to provide detailed responses.

#### **4.3.2 Document Analysis**

Secondary sources, including academic books, journal articles, theses, and conference papers, were analysed to provide theoretical depth and validate findings. This helped align participant insights with broader scholarly discourse on IKS and oral traditions.

##### **4.3.2.1 Fieldwork Context**

Fieldwork was conducted in Ga-Nchabeleng village, a site selected for its vibrant oral traditions and strong cultural identity. The event was held over three days in January 2024.

Tools used included:

- Digital voice recorders ensure accurate and complete records.
- Field notes, capturing tone, environment, and non-verbal cues to enrich the data.

Interview themes included:

- Perceptions and understanding of proverbs
- Their use in daily life
- Their role in communication and community development.

A follow-up group discussion with youth participants further explored generational transmission and contemporary reinterpretations of proverbs.

**Table 4.2: Participant Selection Overview**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Total Participants</b>	30 participants
<b>Participant Division</b>	Equal split: 15 elderly, 15 youth
<b>Selection Criteria</b>	Familiarity with and use of Northern Sotho proverbs
<b>Elderly Participants</b>	Selected for cultural knowledge and lived experience
<b>Youth Participants</b>	Selected for active engagement with language and culture
<b>Purpose of Selection</b>	To gather balanced insights from tradition-bearers and emerging cultural voices

The sample size of 30 participants was intentionally limited to allow for depth rather than breadth of coverage. The equal generational split ensured that traditional and modern perspectives were captured and could be meaningfully compared. The selection was purposive, ensuring that all participants had relevant experience or knowledge of proverbs.

The elderly participants provided valuable insights rooted in their lived cultural experiences. As custodians of oral traditions, they provided context for meanings, uses, and transmission. The youth participants were omitted simply because of their age, but also due to their active roles in sustaining or reshaping cultural identity through language, participation in ceremonies, or interest in heritage.

By engaging both the knowledge transmitters and the recipients/interpreters, the study enabled a rich dialogue on the evolving role of proverbs in a dynamic cultural landscape.

#### **4.4 Presentation and Interpretation of Field Results**

In research centred on Northern Sotho proverbs, presenting field data involves more than simple categorisation; it is a critical process of cultural interpretation. The objective is to reveal how proverbs function as communicative tools and agents of development within their social context (Creswell, 2013; Silverman, 2020).

#### **4.5 Analytical Approach**

Data drawn from semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and field notes. This allowed for a multi-perspective understanding of how proverbs are woven into daily practices and social relationships (Patton, 2015).

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was employed as the core method, enabling the organisation of data around recurring communicative and cultural themes such as moral instruction, conflict resolution, and social cohesion. Thematic analysis offered flexibility while still maintaining analytic rigour.

A distinctive element of the study was the inclusion of verbatim quotations, particularly in the original Northern Sotho language. This enhanced the authenticity and credibility of findings, preserving cultural nuance and participant voice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

#### **4.6 Contextual Integration**

Beyond thematic categorisation, contextual details such as setting, participant identities, and social dynamics were integrated into the interpretation. This added depth and situational meaning, anchoring each proverb in real-world usage (Flick, 2014).

#### **4.7 Summary of Presentation Approach**

- Use of thematic analysis to identify communicative functions
- Inclusion of original-language quotations to preserve authenticity
- Integration of context to enhance interpretive depth
- Emphasis on generational comparison and cultural continuity.

This comprehensive approach provided a nuanced, culturally grounded understanding of how Northern Sotho proverbs continue to inform communication, provide moral guidance, and contribute to community development.

**Table 4.3: Overview of Data Presentation Strategy and Analytical Approach**

Aspect	Description
<b>Purpose of Data Presentation</b>	To transform raw linguistic and cultural information into a structured and analysable form, facilitating understanding of proverbs' communicative and developmental roles.
<b>Data Sources</b>	Verbal accounts, interviews, field notes and observational records collected in naturalistic settings.
<b>Value of Data Sources</b>	Offer a comprehensive view of how proverbs function in daily interactions and community practices.
<b>Data Presentation Method</b>	Thematic analysis categorising proverbs by recurring patterns, communicative functions, or development-oriented themes (e.g., moral instruction, conflict resolution, community cohesion).
<b>Function of Thematic Analysis</b>	Helps reveal the deeper structures and meanings within proverbial usage.
<b>Use of Participant Quotations</b>	Incorporates verbatim expressions of proverbs in the original language to emphasise key points and maintain cultural authenticity.
<b>Purpose of Quotations</b>	Offers insights into participants' lived experiences and worldviews; strengthens analytical credibility and depth.
<b>Contextual Descriptions</b>	It includes detailed accounts of the research setting, participant demographics, and communication contexts.
<b>Purpose of Contextualisation</b>	Enhances understanding of the nuanced meanings of proverbs and the socio-cultural, historical, and situational factors that shape them.
<b>Outcome of Methodological Approach</b>	Enhances the study, fostering a deeper understanding of the role of proverbs in Northern Sotho communication and development.

#### 4.8 Interpretation of Data

Interpreting qualitative data is a critical phase in the research process, requiring more than just summarising responses. It involves carefully analysing the data to identify recurring patterns, key themes and significant ideas that provide answers to the research question (Creswell, 2013; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Rather than stopping at description, interpretation connects findings to broader theoretical concepts and scholarly debates. This enables researchers to situate their results within a broader

academic context, providing insights that contribute meaningfully to existing knowledge (Silverman, 2020).

A vital aspect of interpretation is considering the context in which the data were produced. Cultural, social, historical and environmental influences shape how participants express themselves and respond to interview questions. Recognising these factors ensures that interpretations reflect the participants' lived realities rather than abstract generalisations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Additionally, practical interpretation seeks to uncover the underlying meanings within participants' responses, exploring motivations, values and social dynamics that may not be immediately evident. This deeper level of analysis enriches the findings. It provides a more comprehensive understanding of the subject (Patton, 2015). Equally important is the researcher's reflexivity, the ongoing examination of how their background, assumptions, and position may influence the research process. Being reflexive improves the transparency and ethical rigour of the study, while also enhancing the credibility of the interpretations (Berger, 2015).

Interpretation transforms raw data into meaningful insights by linking individual experiences to broader theoretical and social frameworks. Combined with clear data presentation, this process enables researchers to produce findings that are both academically robust and practically relevant.

#### **4.8.1 Theme 1: Proverbs as Vessels of Cultural and Moral Knowledge**

##### **4.8.1.1 Cultural Significance and Preservation**

Elderly participants consistently portrayed proverbs as repositories of ancestral wisdom, essential for cultural continuity. Proverbs were seen not as relics of the past but as active tools for teaching and social regulation:

*“These proverbs are like seeds – they grow with time. I hope they carry them forward and teach their children, just as I have.”*

(Participant 2 – Elder, Female)

*“When young people use proverbs, they speak our language, giving us hope. It shows that the old ways are not lost.”*

(Participant 4 – Elder, Male)

These findings confirm Finnegan's (2012) assertion that proverbs are vital to the survival of oral tradition and culture.

#### **4.8.1.2 Educational and Moral Guidance**

Proverbs were seen as teaching tools that provide ethical guidance and help individuals navigate social expectations:

*“A rope holds a cow; a person is held by their words. This reminds the youth that what you say reflects your character.”*

(Participant 6 – Elder, Male)

*“Proverbs tell us how to behave. They do not shout – they guide.”*

(Participant 1 – Elder, Female)

This supports Mokgokong's (1966) and Mbiti's (1990) view that proverbs serve as concise moral frameworks passed down through generations.

#### **4.8.2 Theme 2: Generational Gaps in Interpretation and Relevance**

##### **4.8.2.1 Youth Engagement with Proverbs**

Younger participants expressed mixed feelings about the relevance of proverbs in today's digital, urbanised society:

*“They sound deep, but sometimes they no longer fit our world. It is like advice for a life that does not exist now.”*

(Participant 11 – Youth, Female)

*“My hustle does not follow a 9-to-5. That proverb about waking up early does not mean success anymore.”*

(Participant 8 – Youth, Male)

These quotes reflect the tension between traditional values and modern realities. This aligns with Owusu-Ansah (2021), who argues that traditional knowledge must evolve to remain relevant to young people.

#### **4.8.2.2 Selective Resonance**

Some proverbs still resonate powerfully with younger participants, particularly those addressing empathy, identity and judgment:

*“That one, ‘Do not judge a book by its cover,’ really hits. People judge by how I dress or talk, but do not know me.”*

(Participant 10 – Youth, Female)

*“Anyone can talk big, but your actions will show who you are. That is still true today.”*

(Participant 9 – Youth, Male)

Such responses demonstrate how certain proverbs transcend time, aligning with contemporary values like self-awareness and integrity (Gyekye, 1997; Hooks, 2000).

#### **4.8.3 Theme 3: Proverbs as Tools for Social Cohesion and Responsibility**

##### **4.8.3.1 Promoting Communal Values**

Many participants described proverbs as foundations for social unity, cooperation, and shared leadership:

*“The lion proverb teaches us: if we do not work together, even the weakest can defeat us.”*

(Participant 3 – Elder, Male)

*“A king defeats enemies, but we all must fight too. That is what that proverb means: we are in it together.”*

(Participant 7 – Elder, Female)

These insights align with Chilisa’s (2012) argument that indigenous knowledge, including proverbs, fosters participatory development and communal accountability.

#### **4.8.3.2 Ethical Frameworks for Justice and Leadership**

Proverbs were frequently cited as tools for just and inclusive leadership, especially those advocating for the rights of the vulnerable:

*“The one about orphans means that everyone deserves justice. Even the ones with no one to speak for them.”*

(Participant 5 – Elder, Male)

This reflects Ubuntu philosophy and emphasises inclusive, ethical community structures (Tutu, 1999; Gyekye, 1996).

#### **4.8.4 Theme 4: Challenges in Transmission and Modern Relevance**

##### **4.8.4.1 Erosion of Oral Traditions**

Elders voiced concern that digital lifestyles and Western influences are weakening oral transmission:

*“Some young people think these old sayings do not apply anymore because they live in a fast-changing world.”*

(Participant 2 – Elder, Female)

This observation reflects Denzin and Lincoln’s (2018) concern about cultural erosion in the face of globalisation and modernity.

#### **4.8.4.2 Digital and Emotional Disconnect**

Some youth critiqued proverbs for being emotionally inadequate in the face of modern struggles, such as trauma and mental health:

*“That proverb what does not kill you makes you stronger it just makes you feel dismissed.”*

(Participant 12 Youth, Female)

This aligns with Herman (1992) and Khumalo (2015), who argue that traditional resilience narratives can neglect emotional nuance and healing processes.

#### **4.8.5 Theme 5: Proverbs as Dynamic, Evolving Knowledge Systems**

##### **4.8.5.1 Need for Reinterpretation and Integration**

There is a shared belief among both elders and youth that proverbs must be adapted and taught with contextual relevance:

*“If we try to explain them, they will understand their timeless value.”*

(Participant 4 – Elder, Male)

*“Proverbs still matter – but only if they evolve with us.”*

(Participant 13 – Youth, Male)

This aligns with Chilisa (2012) and Owusu-Ansah (2021), who advocate integrating indigenous knowledge into modern education and civic life.

The interviews reveal that Northern Sotho proverbs serve as cultural tools, promoting moral guidance, social cohesion and intergenerational dialogue. However, their transmission and relevance face significant challenges in contemporary society. While elders view proverbs as timeless wisdom, younger generations emphasise the need for contextual reinterpretation. Despite generational differences, both groups

acknowledge the transformative power of proverbs when adapted to modern realities.

**Table 4.4: Thematic Presentation of Findings**

Theme	Sub-Theme	Group	Participant Quote	Interpretation
1. Proverbs as Vessels of Cultural and Moral Knowledge	Cultural Significance and Preservation	Elder	“These proverbs are like seeds – they grow with time. I hope they carry them forward and teach their children, just as I have.” (P2 – Female)	Proverbs are seen as tools for intergenerational cultural preservation.
		Elder	“When young people use proverbs, they speak our language, and it gives us hope. It shows that the old ways are not lost.” (P4 – Male)	Use by youth symbolises cultural continuity and relevance.
	Educational and Moral Guidance	Elder	“A rope holds a cow; a person is held by their words. This reminds the youth that what you say reflects your character.” (P6 – Male)	Proverbs function as ethical signposts and behavioural guides.
		Elder	“Proverbs tell us how to behave. They do not shout, they guide.” (P1 – Female)	Reinforces proverbs as subtle, values-driven instruction.
2. Generational Gaps in Interpretation and Relevance	Youth Engagement with Proverbs	Youth	“They sound deep, but sometimes they do not fit our world anymore. It is like advice for a life that does not exist now.” (P11 – Female)	Youth perceive a disconnect between traditional proverbs and modern realities.
		Youth	“My hustle does not follow a 9-to-5. That proverb about waking early does not mean success anymore.” (P8 – Male)	Challenges traditional productivity norms embedded in proverbs.
	Selective Resonance	Youth	“That one ‘Do not judge a book by its cover’ really hits. People judge by how I dress or talk, but they do not know me.” (P10 – Female)	Certain proverbs still align with values of identity and empathy.
		Youth	“Anyone can talk big, but your actions will show who you really	Integrity and authenticity remain timeless principles.

Theme	Sub-Theme	Group	Participant Quote	Interpretation
			are. That is still true today." (P9 – Male)	
3. Proverbs as Tools for Social Cohesion and Responsibility	Promoting Communal Values	Elder	"The lion proverb teaches us: if we do not work together, even the weakest can defeat us." (P3 – Male)	Emphasises teamwork and unity through metaphor.
		Elder	"A king defeats enemies, but we all must fight too. That is what that proverb means: we are in it together." (P7 – Female)	Reflects shared responsibility in leadership and social struggle.
	Ethical Frameworks for Justice and Leadership	Elder	"The one about orphans, it means that everyone deserves justice, even the ones with no one to speak for them." (P5 – Male)	Embeds Ubuntu values of justice and advocacy for the vulnerable.
4. Challenges in Transmission and Modern Relevance	Erosion of Oral Traditions	Elder	"Some young people think that these old sayings do not apply anymore because they live in a fast-changing world." (P2 – Female)	Elders perceive a decline in oral tradition due to digital culture.

#### 4.8.6 Findings from Elderly People's Interviews

Interviews with elders in Limpopo Province revealed that Northern Sotho proverbs are regarded as powerful cultural tools that convey moral lessons, preserve traditions and shape behaviour. Elders consistently emphasised that proverbs reflect shared communal experiences and use metaphors rooted in nature and folklore to instil values such as unity, humility and respect. Proverbs were seen not just as sayings but as oral repositories of wisdom, essential for transmitting cultural identity and bridging generational gaps.

However, participants expressed concern over the declining use and appreciation of proverbs, attributing this to the influence of urbanisation, digital media and Western cultural norms. Despite this, many elders believed that proverbs remain relevant if taught intentionally and contextualised for modern audiences as they continue to

promote dignity, social responsibility, and justice, particularly in line with the philosophy of Ubuntu.

Notably, while all elders valued proverbs, they differed in their views on their survival. Some were optimistic that younger generations could learn to value proverbs through education and media, while others feared a permanent loss if oral traditions are not actively preserved.

#### **4.8.6.1 Interpretation of Findings: Elderly Perspectives on Proverbs**

These findings address the study's core questions:

- What is the role of Northern Sotho proverbs in cultural transmission and moral instruction?
- How can proverbs remain relevant across generations in a modernising society?

##### **4.8.6.1.1 Proverbs as Ethical and Cultural Tools**

Elders consistently described proverbs as condensed moral instruction tools for guiding ethical behaviour and reinforcing cultural values. Expressions like “*A rope holds a cow, a person is held by their words*” illustrate how proverbs reinforce accountability, communal harmony and identity (Finnegan, 2012; Mbiti, 1990).

##### **4.8.6.1.2 Oral Tradition and Intergenerational Dialogue**

Proverbs are passed on mainly through **storytelling and communal engagement**, often in informal settings such as family gatherings. Elders serve as both **custodians and educators**, viewing intergenerational dialogue as critical to cultural survival (Moilola, 2014; Yankah, 1989).

##### **4.8.6.3 Cultural Erosion in the Digital Age**

Participants voiced concern that proverbs are becoming **endangered** owing to reduced oral transmission and the growing dominance of digital, urbanised lifestyles.

This aligns with broader concerns about cultural erosion in modern contexts (Semenya & Letsosa, 2013; Nothnagel, 2006).

**Table 4.5: Key Similarities and Differences in Elder Perspectives**

Similarities	Differences
All elders are essential for teaching values like unity, respect, and humility.	Some believe youth can reconnect with proverbs through formal education and media; others are sceptical about survival.
Proverbs draw heavily from nature and folklore, making them vivid and memorable.	Divergent views on preservation: oral tradition vs. integration into schools, literature and digital platforms.

#### 4.8.6.4 Emergent and Nuanced Insights

- **Proverbs and Civic Ethics:** Sayings such as *“An orphan finds justice at the gate”* reflect Ubuntu principles and extend moral instruction to include social justice and community responsibility (Gyekye, 1996; Tutu, 1999).
- **Ecological Knowledge:** Elders highlighted proverbs that teach stewardship of land and nature, indicating embedded environmental ethics often overlooked in mainstream discourse (Moilola, 2014).
- **Proverbs as Cultural Resistance:** Teaching and using proverbs was viewed as resistance against cultural erasure, giving urgency to their continued use (Mpanza, 2018).

#### 4.8.6.5 Connections to Literature

- **Cultural Identity:** Consistent with Mphahlele (2020), Finnegan (2012), and Mbiti (1990), elders affirmed proverbs’ role in cultural continuity and identity.
- **Ubuntu and Ethics:** Tutu (1999) and Tangwa (2004) support the idea that proverbs convey community-based moral reasoning rooted in African ethical frameworks.
- **Modern Challenges:** Appadurai (1996) and Poux (2001) argue that traditional knowledge systems must evolve to survive in digitised societies, a view echoed by participants.

#### **4.8.6.5 Conclusion: Elderly Perspectives in Context**

Elderly participants regard Northern Sotho proverbs as living instruments of moral, cultural and ecological knowledge. Their concern for cultural erosion is tempered by a belief that with adaptive transmission methods such as formal education, media integration, and intentional storytelling, proverbs can remain a force in contemporary society.

#### **4.8.7 Findings from Youth Interviews**

Interviews with Northern Sotho youth revealed a critical yet engaged relationship with traditional proverbs, folklore and IKS. While participants value these traditions for their moral guidance, cultural identity and ancestral wisdom, they also question their relevance in a rapidly changing, globalised society. Rather than rejecting these traditions, youth are actively reinterpreting and adapting them to reflect more diverse and inclusive experiences. Proverbs, for example, are increasingly reshaped through digital platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and memes, where storytelling and cultural commentary blend with humour, activism, and art. These platforms serve as modern “digital fireplaces”, new communal spaces for cultural continuity.

Participants expressed renewed interest in indigenous knowledge, particularly regarding environmental ethics and community-centred values. Digital tools are used to access, share, and teach these systems, often in creative and collaborative formats. There is a shared hybridisation across all three domains, proverbs, folklore and indigenous knowledge, where tradition meets technology to form evolving cultural expressions.

##### **4.8.7.1 Interpretation of Findings: Youth Engagement with Cultural Heritage**

These findings respond to the research question:

How do contemporary youth engage with Northern Sotho proverbs, folklore, and indigenous knowledge in the context of cultural continuity and change?

The findings suggest that youth are not passive recipients of tradition but active cultural agents. Their engagement is marked by critical reinterpretation, creative adaptation and digital reinvention, allowing traditional knowledge to remain relevant in a modern context.

#### 4.8.7.2 Key Patterns and Insights

- **Evolving Relevance:** The youth appreciate the ethical and cultural value of proverbs, but challenge outdated or exclusionary aspects, especially those that conflict with modern understandings of identity, work and mental health (Finnegan, 2012; Mawere, 2010; Khumalo, 2015).
- **Digital Cultural Revival:** Platforms like TikTok and YouTube are not merely entertainment spaces but tools for cultural preservation, echoing literature on digital folklore and storytelling (Alver, 2017; Blank, 2018).
- **Reclaiming Indigenous Knowledge:** The youth show a deepening respect for ancestral wisdom, particularly in areas like land, ecology and communal values, mirroring calls in the literature for environmental and cultural sustainability (Battiste, 2002; Nyong et al., 2007).

**Table 4.6: Similarities and Differences with Literature and Elders' Views**

Similarities	Differences
The youth and elders see proverbs as tools for cultural identity and moral instruction.	The youth are more likely to reinterpret or critique proverbs, especially those that appear outdated or emotionally dismissive.
Both data and literature confirm the importance of oral traditions in transmitting values.	The youth emphasise digital media as new modes of cultural storytelling, while elders favour oral and communal transmission.
Shared emphasis on adapting tradition to preserve its relevance.	Literature tends to treat folklore as a static archive, whereas youth view it as fluid and performative.

#### 4.8.7.2 Notable and Unexpected Findings

- **Mental Health Awareness:** Some youth questioned proverbs that suggest suffering leads to strength, arguing instead for nuanced understandings of

trauma and vulnerability, a perspective largely absent in the literature but increasingly vital in modern discourse (Khumalo, 2015).

- **Digital Spaces as Cultural Arenas:** The idea of TikTok as a "modern fireplace" offers a striking metaphor for how oral traditions are migrating into digital spaces, creating new modes of shared learning and cultural bonding.

#### **4.8.7.3 Connections to Scholarship**

- The youth adaptation of proverbs supports Finnegan (2012) and Mawere (2010)'s view of oral traditions as dynamic, not static.
- Their creative use of digital platforms aligns with Alver (2017) and Blank (2018), who see technology as enabling cultural reinvention.
- Respect for indigenous ecological knowledge echoes the work of Battiste (2002), Nyong et al. (2007), and Kovach (2009), highlighting the importance of community-rooted and ethical knowledge sharing.
- Engagement with proverbs for developmental communication extends prior research (Serudu, 1993; Raselekoane, 2014), suggesting new ways of integrating cultural forms into contemporary communication strategies.

#### **4.8.7.4 Conclusion: Youth as Cultural Innovators**

Contemporary Northern Sotho youth are reshaping tradition, using digital tools to reinterpret proverbs, revitalise folklore and reconnect with indigenous knowledge. Their approach balances cultural preservation and innovation, signalling not the decline but the transformation of heritage in an increasingly globalised and digitised world. These findings affirm and extend scholarly debates while providing empirical evidence of how young people sustain cultural relevance through creative, community-rooted practices.

#### **4.8.8 Analysis of Data from Document Analysis**

This study analysed key literature to explore how Northern Sotho proverbs serve as tools for communication and development (C4D). Scholars such as Serudu (1993),

Masenya (2010), and Phiri et al. (2015) highlight the cultural, social and gender implications of proverbs. For instance, some proverbs reinforce traditional gender roles, while others expose societal injustices. Mphasha (2016) and Montle (2021) reveal the legal and anti-stereotypical functions of proverbs, while Seanego (2021) and Rakoma (1995) emphasise their preservation amidst modern misuse.

Comparative studies from Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya (Achebe, Ngũgĩ, Soyinka, Tutuola) demonstrate that African proverbs widely support cultural identity, social cohesion and development communication. However, in South Africa, the use of proverbs in C4D remains under-researched (Burton, 1998; Raselekoane, 2014), creating a gap that this study sought to fill.

Although proverbs often promote wisdom and harmony, they can reinforce harmful norms or be misinterpreted. Examples like “*Nonyana phakuphaku e bea lee le tee*” and “*Monna ke thaka o ya naba*” illustrate how proverbs communicate lessons on focus, responsibility and leadership.

In conclusion, while previous studies offer valuable insights into the cultural significance of Northern Sotho proverbs, this research focuses on their practical role in development communication, contributing to academic knowledge and real-world development strategies.

#### **4.8.8.1 Interpretation of Findings: Analysis of Northern Sotho Proverbs in Communication for Development (C4D)**

##### **4.8.8.1.1 Relation to the Research Questions**

The core aim of the research was to explore how Northern Sotho proverbs function as tools for communication and development (C4D). The document analysis directly supports this objective by revealing how various scholars have previously engaged with Northern Sotho proverbs to highlight cultural, social, gender and legal issues. However, a focused exploration of proverbs in *development communication* highlights a clear gap that this study aims to fill.

#### 4.8.8.1.2 Patterns, Trends and Similarities

Several patterns emerge from the reviewed literature:

- **Consistent Scholarly Interest in Cultural and Social Roles:** Scholars like Serudu (1993), Masenya (2010), and Phiri et al. (2015) have all examined proverbs as carriers of cultural values, with a focus on how they reflect and reinforce societal norms and gender roles.
- **Proverbs as Tools for Social Commentary:** The works of Masenya and Montle, for example, use proverbs to critically examine issues like gender inequality and cultural stereotyping, especially of women.
- **Preservation and Relevance of Proverbs:** Authors such as Rakoma (1995) and Seanego (2021) emphasise the importance of preserving proverbs in their original form and warn against their distortion in modern media.
- **Pan-African Perspectives:** The integration of examples from Nigeria (Achebe, Tutuola, Soyinka), Kenya (Ngũgĩ), and Ghana (Awoonor) reveals a broader African consensus on the power of proverbs as communicative tools that carry deep cultural significance.

#### 4.8.8.1.3 Differences and Gaps Identified

- **Regional Disparities:** While West and East African literature show a rich and mature integration of proverbs in development and literary discourse (e.g., Achebe, Ngũgĩ, Soyinka), South African literature, particularly concerning C4D, remains comparatively underdeveloped (Burton, 1998; Raselekoane, 2014).
- **Functional vs. Descriptive Approaches:** Most South African scholarship to date is descriptive, focusing on the *meaning* and *cultural value* of proverbs rather than their *practical application* in C4D frameworks. This study shifts toward a functional approach.

#### 4.8.8.1.4 Unexpected Findings

- **Potential Misuse and Distortion:** A notable and unexpected theme is the modern misuse or distortion of proverbs, particularly on social media (Seanego, 2021). This concerns preservation and semantic integrity in digital spaces, which may undermine their developmental potential.
- **Legal and Judicial Application:** Mphasha's (2016) work reveals that proverbs may also hold weight in legal reasoning and traditional courts. This dimension broadens their application beyond cultural or moral instruction and into formal governance.

#### 4.8.8.1.5 Connection to Literature

of pan-African perspectives reinforces that proverbs are not merely linguistic artefacts, but active tools for development and communication. Ngũgĩ's (1994) assertion that language and oral tradition are foundational to cultural identity and development aligns with this study's premise that Northern Sotho proverbs can be strategically employed in modern development communication. Ademowo and Balogun's (2017) view that language is central to development discourse further supports the argument that proverbs, as metaphorical linguistic devices, play a critical role in shaping attitudes, transmitting values, and influencing behaviour.

#### 4.8.8.1.6 Avoiding Unsupported Generalisations

Rather than claiming all proverbs are beneficial or relevant in modern contexts, this study highlights nuanced implications. For instance, while proverbs like "*Monna ke thaka o a naba*" promote responsibility and decisiveness, others like "*lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi*" may perpetuate harmful gender expectations, especially when uncritically interpreted. These examples demonstrate that proverbs can both support and undermine development goals, depending on how they are contextualised and applied.

This document analysis reveals that Northern Sotho proverbs are deeply embedded in cultural and social structures, offering rich communicative potential. However, their application in C4D remains insufficiently explored in context. Drawing on local

and pan-African literature, this study demonstrates that proverbs are more than oral traditions; they are strategic tools for engagement, education and development, provided they are critically and contextually applied. This insight sets the stage for the following research phase, which will further examine how these proverbs can be operationalised in development projects and communication strategies targeting local communities.

#### **4.9 The Role and Function of Northern Sotho Proverbs**

Northern Sotho proverbs occupy a central place in the cultural, communicative and developmental life of Northern Sotho-speaking communities. These proverbs are more than idiomatic expressions; they encapsulate the community's collective wisdom, moral values and social norms. As vehicles of IKS, Northern Sotho proverbs are crucial for preserving cultural heritage, guiding behaviour and fostering individual and communal development (Kgobe, 1998; Finnegan, 2012).

These proverbs perform essential communicative functions rather than being regarded as decorative or straightforward sayings. They offer moral instruction, promote social cohesion and reinforce values such as respect, humility, perseverance and ethical conduct. In doing so, they contribute to shaping the character and worldview of individuals and communities alike (Mphahlele, 2002).

##### **4.9.1 Proverbs as Moral and Ethical Guides**

Northern Sotho proverbs serve as a moral compass within society. They convey ethical standards and expected behaviour in concise, memorable language, often rooted in metaphor. These proverbs instruct one on navigating life's challenges with integrity, offering insights into virtues such as patience, honesty and hard work. By encouraging introspection and self-regulation, they play a critical role in personal development and social harmony (Mulaudzi, 2004).

Proverbs that deliver advice often emphasise the importance of learning from experience, particularly the wisdom of elders. They emphasise values such as

foresight, discipline, and accountability, enabling individuals to make informed decisions. This advisory function supports intergenerational knowledge transfer and ethical reflection (Mönnig, 1967).

#### **4.9.2 Proverbs as Warnings and Cautionary Messages**

A significant subset of Northern Sotho proverbs functions as cautionary or warning messages. These proverbs draw on historical, environmental and social observations to alert individuals to potential dangers or undesirable outcomes. By embedding lessons learned from past experiences, they serve as preventative tools that help individuals avoid repeating mistakes or falling into harmful patterns of behaviour (Finnegan, 2012). These "warning signs" are frequently employed to guide social conduct, offering context-specific advice on navigating complex interpersonal or societal dynamics. As such, they enhance communal resilience by equipping members with the wisdom to act prudently (Ramaila, 2010).

#### **4.9.3 Proverbs and Social Values: Wealth, Poverty, and Aspiration**

Northern Sotho proverbs also shape communal attitudes toward wealth, poverty and aspiration. Proverbs concerning wealth often caution against greed and arrogance, emphasising social responsibility. They suggest that true wealth lies in material possessions, moral integrity, and contributions to community (Kgobe, 1998).

Similarly, proverbs addressing poverty and ambition provide cultural insights into how individuals are expected to respond to adversity and strive for a better life. They promote the values of diligence, hope and self-improvement, while discouraging envy and defeatism (Ntsoane, 2011). These proverbs foster a balanced worldview that recognises the material and spiritual dimensions of human well-being.

#### **4.9.4 Proverbs and Family Dynamics**

The role of the family as a fundamental unit in Northern Sotho society is strongly reinforced through proverbs. These expressions underscore the importance of kinship, mutual support and respect for familial roles and responsibilities. Proverbs

related to family life encourage interdependence, emphasise the duty of care among relatives, and promote unity within the household (Mphahlele, 2002). Such proverbs are frequently invoked in domestic settings to teach younger generations about their obligations and to reinforce social expectations surrounding family life. In doing so, they ensure the continuity of cultural norms and strengthen the fabric of community life (Mönnig, 1967).

#### **4.9.5 Proverbs and Broader Societal Concerns**

Beyond the personal and familial domains, Northern Sotho proverbs also address broader societal themes such as justice, solidarity, governance and communal responsibility. These proverbs advocate for fairness, collective effort and ethical leadership. They articulate a vision of society grounded in shared values, where individual well-being is inseparable from communal prosperity (Ramaila, 2010).

In this way, proverbs promote civic consciousness and social accountability. They serve as instruments of informal governance, reinforcing norms and encouraging behaviour aligned with the common good.

#### **4.9.6 Proverbs within Indigenous Knowledge Systems**

Within the IKS framework, Northern Sotho proverbs are a rich repository of cultural wisdom and philosophical insight. They reflect guidance on living in harmony with others and the natural world. As oral literature, these proverbs function as educational tools, transmitting knowledge and values across generations (Finnegan, 2012; Mulaudzi, 2004).

Through their sustained use in everyday communication, storytelling and ritual, these proverbs help to maintain cultural continuity and strengthen collective identity. They are central to Northern Sotho heritage, offering a uniquely African perspective on life's challenges and responsibilities.

#### **4.10 Introduction to Thematic Interpretation of Proverbs**

This section presents an in-depth thematic analysis of selected Northern Sotho proverbs collected through interviews, focus groups and document analysis. These proverbs are more than linguistic expressions; they are condensed repositories of IKS, reflecting cultural values, social norms and philosophical principles embedded in African oral traditions.

The proverbs are categorised into nine thematic areas that emerged from the data: moral values, cautionary advice, tolerance and perseverance, wealth and poverty, aspiration, family, solidarity and governance, and indigenous knowledge and communication. Each theme is linked to relevant scholarly literature that demonstrates how these oral forms serve as tools for communication, development, education, and social cohesion.

By analysing proverbs through these categories, the study highlights their enduring relevance in guiding behaviour, promoting ethical conduct and supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer in traditional and modern contexts. This thematic breakdown also illustrates how proverbs operate within frameworks such as Ubuntu, communal ethics and developmental communication, making them powerful instruments for social transformation.

##### **4.10.1 Proverbs Related to Moral Values**

- “A di re go šika le manamane di ete di amuša.”

This proverb teaches that children must maintain respect and honesty in the company of elders. Such proverbs serve as instruments of moral instruction in African communities, promoting ethical behaviour from a young age (Gyekye, 1997; Mphahlele, 2002).

- “Phuthiana ya boya bontlha magola ka go ikilela.”

This proverb cautions against immoral actions, emphasising that peace is the reward of virtuous living. Proverbs like this reinforce the idea that moral

conduct is socially rewarding, a principle deeply embedded in African communal ethics (Ramose, 2002).

#### **4.10.2 Proverbs Related to Warning Signs and Advice**

- “Molomo ke kgaitšedi ya motho.”  
This expression highlights the crucial role of speech in fostering social cohesion. As Finnegan (2012) points out, many African proverbs serve as oral codes of conduct, warning of the consequences of careless or harmful speech.
- “Ngwana llela naka ya mukhura sehlang le mo nee.”  
This highlights the importance of empathy and careful discernment when responding to needs. The proverb aligns with African ethics of care (Tutu, 1999).

#### **4.10.3 Proverbs Related to Tolerance and Hard Work**

- “Seepamodi se epa se kgonamile.”  
This proverb is a metaphor for how circumstances shape behaviour. African philosophy encourages judging actions within their context, a key tenet of Ubuntu that promotes understanding over condemnation (Ramose, 2002).
- “Namatelele e fetšwa ke go ngwatha.”  
This supports the African pedagogical approach of patient guidance and socialisation through gentle but firm intervention (Odora Hoppers, 2002).
- “Kgolekgole go iwa ke pelotheri.”  
This proverb, an example of Ubuntu solidarity, reflects the communal value placed on mutual support during hardship (Letseka, 2013).

#### **4.10.4 Proverbs Related to Wealth, Riches, and Poverty**

- “Le kgatšhago lehumo le kganya ka modulo.”  
This conveys the transience of fame and encourages humility, resonating

with African philosophies that warn against materialism and pride (Gyekye, 1997).

- “Mpša ge e nailwe ga e na mong.”

A proverb that emphasises the value of guidance. African worldviews often conceptualise individuals needing community structure to function correctly (Mbiti, 1969).

#### **4.10.5 Proverbs Related to Aspiration and Consciousness**

- “Mmameriri ya tubatse, tšhwene ya mašia legare rata go beola dingwe.”

This proverb reflects the generosity that arises from abundance, aligning with *Ubuntu's* principles of caring for others (Tutu, 1999).

- “Kgabo re lle hlakaume tša botšhwene ra tšama re tšhoga megwaša.”

This illustrates human tendencies to sympathise but avoid danger, speaking to moral dilemmas around action versus empathy (Mphahlele, 2002).

#### **4.10.6 Proverbs Related to Motivation, Patience, and Perseverance**

- “Mokgathatšhemo ya lehwi o kgatha a holofetše.”

This proverb aligns with the African ethic of hope and perseverance through communal efforts, even in the face of hardship (Gyekye, 1997).

- “Kodumela moepathutse ga go lehumo le tšwago kgauswi.”

Here, the message concerns the rewards of ambition and dedication, values esteemed in IKS development and sustainable livelihoods (Odora Hoppers, 2002).

- “Kgole go iwa ke ba maatla.”

Reflects structural power imbalances and the influence of the strong, illustrating African insights into social power dynamics (Letseka, 2013).

#### **4.10.7 Proverbs Related to Family Blood Relationships**

- “E kitimile kgale thamagale mmala wa yona ke wo mokhunou.”  
This proverb conveys the burden borne by those responsible for family well-being, underscoring African communal family values (Mbiti, 1969).
- “Bana ba tšhipa la kgaogana le tlo hwela megotleng .”  
A strong call to maintain family ties, this proverb cautions against abandoning communal safety nets (Finnegan, 2012).

#### **4.10.8 Proverbs Related to Solidarity, Conflict Resolution, Social Justice and Good Governance**

- “Mollwane wa lerumo ga o selwe.”  
A reminder that wealth requires vigilance reflects the African work ethic and the burdens associated with leadership and success (Gyekye, 1997).
- “Monna ke peu, ga a sware manenolo.”  
A statement of interdependence: man, as seed, requires nurturing. This aligns with *Ubuntu* philosophy and African notions of social reproduction (Ramose, 2002).
- “Monwana o tee ga o rone nta.”  
An endorsement of teamwork, this is one of the most widely cited African proverbs that illustrates the importance of collective effort (Letseka, 2013).
- “Le ge o ka re molemi, o ka se ke wa phala babedi ke letšema.”  
This proverb builds on the same principle: unity and cooperation are more potent than individual ability.

#### **4.10.9 Proverbs on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Development and Communication**

- “Rutang bana ditaola le se ye natšo badimong.”  
This aligns with IKS educational theory, emphasising intergenerational knowledge transfer (Odora Hoppers, 2002).

- “Dithaka ge di fedile di boela ka lapeng.”

A powerful statement about the value of home and origin, this reflects the cyclical nature of African philosophy regarding identity and belonging (Mbiti, 1969).

**Table 4.7: Merged Themes Mapping Proverbs to Overlapping Functions**

Theme	Proverb	Function / Key Message	Reference
<b>Moral Values</b>	“A di re go šika le manamane di ete di amuša.” <b><i>Even a bundle of sticks tied together can break a strong tree.</i></b>	It teaches respect and honesty towards elders, providing moral instruction from a young age.	Gyekye (1997); Mphahlele (2002)
	“Phutiana ya boya bontha magola ka go ikelela.” <b><i>A small gathering of ants can move a large load through perseverance and determination.</i></b>	Warns against immoral actions; peace rewards upright living.	Ramose (2002)
<b>Warning Signs and Advice</b>	“Molomo ke kgaetšedi ya motho.” The mouth is a person’s necklace.	It highlights the importance of speech in social cohesion and warns against careless speech.	Finnegan (2012)
	“Ngwana llela naka ya mukhura sehlang le mo nee.” <b><i>A child cries until it is given what it wants.</i></b>	Emphasises empathy and careful discernment in responding to needs.	Tutu (1999)
<b>Tolerance, Hard Work &amp; Patience</b>	“Seepamodi se epa se kgonamile.” <b><i>The tortoise digs because it has reached a suitable spot.</i></b>	Circumstances shape behaviour; it promotes understanding over condemnation ( <i>Ubuntu</i> ).	Ramose (2002)
	“Namatelele e fetšwa ke go ngwatha.” <b><i>A lizard is caught by biting.</i></b>	Supports patient guidance and gentle socialisation.	Odora Hoppers (2002)
	“Kgolekgole go iwa ke pelotheri.” <b><i>The traveller reaches a distant place.</i></b>	Reflects mutual support during hardship ( <i>Ubuntu</i> solidarity).	Letseka (2013)
	“Mokgathatšhemo ya lehwiti o kgatha a holofetše.” <b><i>The thorny</i></b>	Encourages hope and perseverance through	Gyekye (1997); Ramose (2002)

	<b><i>bush on the hill has grown thick.</i></b>	communal efforts despite hardship.	
	“Kodumela moepathutse ga go lehumo le tšwago kgauswi.” <b><i>Learn from a neighbour’s misfortune, for wealth does not come from close by.</i></b>	Rewards of ambition and dedication; sustainable livelihoods.	Odora Hoppers (2002)
<b>Social Values (Family, Solidarity, Governance)</b>	“E kitimile kgale thamagale mmala wa yona ke wo mokhunou.” <b><i>It ran long ago; its colour is that of a wildcat.</i></b>	Highlights the burden of family responsibility and the importance of communal family values.	Mbiti (1969)
	“Bana ba tšhipa la kgaogana le tlo hwela” megotleng.” <b><i>Children of the same mother may quarrel and break pots.</i></b>	Calls for maintaining family ties; warns against abandoning communal safety nets.	Finnegan (2012)
	“Mollwane wa lerumo ga o selwe.” <b><i>The spear’s shaft is never left behind</i></b>	Wealth requires vigilance; it comes with the burdens of leadership and success.	Gyekye (1997)
	“Monna ke peu, ga a sware manenolo.” <b><i>A man is seed; he does not hold onto clods.</i></b>	Man as seed needing nurturing; social interdependence ( <i>Ubuntu</i> ).	Ramose (2002)
	“Monwana o tee ga o rone nta.” <b><i>One finger cannot kill a louse.</i></b>	Endorsement of teamwork and collective effort.	Letseka (2013)
	“Le ge o ka re molemi, o ka se ke wa phala babedi ke letšema.” <b><i>Even if you say you are a farmer, you cannot plough two fields simultaneously.</i></b>	Unity and cooperation are more potent than individual ability.	
<b>Wealth, Riches and Poverty</b>	“Le kgatšhago lehumo le kganya ka modulo.” <b><i>The light of wealth shines through the window.</i></b>	Warns against materialism and pride; encourages humility.	Gyekye (1997)
	“Mpša ge e nailwe ga e na mong.” <b><i>When a dog is beaten, it has no owner</i></b>	Emphasises the need for guidance and community support.	Mbiti (1969)
<b>Aspiration and Consciousness</b>	“Mmameriri ya tubatse, tšhwene ya mašiale garee rata go beola dingwe.” <b><i>The crafty goat and the monkey, with many tricks, like to steal from others</i></b>	It reflects generosity from abundance and caring for others (the <i>Ubuntu</i> principle).	Tutu (1999)

	“Kgabo re lle hlakaume tša botšhwene ra tšama re tšhoga megwaša.” <b><i>The baboons howl loudly at night but fear the dogs.</i></b>	It illustrates both sympathy and a desire to avoid danger; it presents a moral dilemma between action and empathy.	Mphahlele (2002)
<b>IKS Development and Communication</b>	“Rutang bana ditaola le se ye natšo badimong.” <b><i>Teach children manners even in the wilderness.</i></b>	Emphasises intergenerational transfer of knowledge in Indigenous Knowledge Systems.	Odora Hoppers (2002)
	“Dithaka ge di fedile di boela ka lapeng.” <b><i>When the weeds are finished, they return home.</i></b>	Reflects the cyclical philosophy of home, origin, and identity.	Mbiti (1969)
<b>Social Power Dynamics</b>	“Kgole go iwa ke ba maatla.” <b><i>The strong ones reach far away.</i></b>	Reflects power imbalances and the influence of the strong within society.	Letseka (2013)

#### 4.10.9.1 Reassessment of Thematic Categorisation and Identification of Gaps

While categorising proverbs into distinct thematic clusters (Sections 4.3.1–4.3.9) offers analytical clarity, a closer examination reveals substantial thematic overlap. This challenges the rigid exclusivity of the current classifications and highlights the multidimensional nature of African proverbial knowledge. Ramose (2002) and Mbiti (1969) argued that African oral traditions are rooted in holistic and relational worldviews, in which knowledge domains are fluid, interconnected, and contextually responsive.

#### 4.10.9.2 Examples of Thematic Overlaps

The following examples illustrate how individual proverbs resist singular thematic classification and instead reflect multiple dimensions of African thought:

- “Kgolekgole go iwa ke pelotheri” (Section 4.3.3: Tolerance and Hard Work) is equally relevant to Section 4.3.8 (Solidarity and Good Governance). The proverb reinforces the principle of mutual dependence during complex

journeys, a core tenet of *Ubuntu*, the ethic of "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" (Letseka, 2013).

- “Bana ba tšhipa la kgaogana le tlo hwela megotleng” (Section 4.3.7: Family Relationships) also resonates with Section 4.3.8 (Social Solidarity) and Section 4.3.2 (Advice and Warnings). It serves as a caution against isolation from family and offers a broader commentary on communal belonging and existential vulnerability.
- “Monwana o tee ga o rone nta” (Section 4.3.8: Solidarity and Governance) is fundamentally about collective action, but its implications also extend to Section 4.3.1 (Moral Values) and Section 4.3.9 (Indigenous Knowledge Systems). It reflects ethical interdependence, cooperation and the communal logic central to IKS-based problem-solving.
- “Rutang bana ditaola le se ye natšo badimong” (Section 4.3.9: IKS and Communication) bridges Section 4.3.1 (Moral Instruction) and Section 4.3.7 (Family). The proverb promotes intergenerational knowledge transfer and positions moral cultivation as a foundational responsibility in traditional pedagogy. Its relevance to current debates on culturally responsive curricula in African education systems.

#### **4.10.9.3 Thematic Fragmentation as a Conceptual Gap**

These overlaps underscore a critical conceptual gap in the thematic structuring of proverbs: the assumption of discrete, non-intersecting categories does not accurately reflect how proverbs operate within African oral cultures. Proverbs often function simultaneously as moral teachings, advisory frameworks, tools of governance and expressions of psychosocial resilience (Odora Hoppers, 2002).

This thematic fragmentation risks oversimplifying proverbs into single-issue interpretations, diminishing their cultural polyvalence and interpretive richness. As such, a more nuanced methodological approach is necessary.

#### **4.11 Synthesising New Insights: Proverbs as Developmental Instruments**

The insights generated from the thematic analysis firmly address the central research question: *How do Northern Sotho proverbs function as communicative tools within development discourse?* The findings affirm that these proverbs are not merely linguistic devices but function as value-based communicative frameworks that convey ethical principles, guide behaviour, and shape social interactions. This aligns with and extends the literature on IKS (Mphahlele, 2002; Nkondo, 2007), which positions proverbs as vehicles for transmitting generational wisdom.

What distinguishes this study, however, is the emphasis on the practical application of proverbs in development contexts. While existing scholarship acknowledges their cultural and moral significance (Finnegan, 2012; Ramagoshi, 2001), this study reveals their relevance to contemporary challenges, including youth unemployment, leadership development, gender equity, and participatory governance. Proverbs promoting perseverance, foresight and communal responsibility offer culturally legitimate foundations for localised development strategies, an underexplored area in current literature.

This analysis challenges the romanticised and sometimes uncritical treatment of indigenous expressions by highlighting the risks of misinterpretation or rigid application, especially concerning gender dynamics (Montle, 2021; Seanego, 2023). This critical perspective moves beyond the descriptive scope of earlier studies and introduces a reflexive lens that underscores the need for context-sensitive engagement with cultural material.

In synthesising these insights, the study bridges the gap between indigenous knowledge and contemporary development theory, affirming that sustainable development must be culturally rooted and ethically grounded. Northern Sotho proverbs serve as developmental instruments that inform policy, education, and social transformation when interpreted in dialogue with communities and are aligned with present-day needs. This synthesis also challenges development practitioners to reframe communication strategies in a transformative way.

#### **4.12 Conclusion**

This chapter presented and analysed the empirical data gathered through interviews and document analysis, focusing on Northern Sotho proverbs for development. The findings confirm that these proverbs continue to play a vital role in expressing cultural values, social norms, moral instruction, gender roles, and legal principles within Northern Sotho communities (Serudu, 1993; Ramohlale, Mogoboya & Chauke, 2021). While many proverbs promote constructive values such as responsibility, discipline, and leadership (Phiri, Mulaudzi, & Heyns, 2015), others have been shown to reinforce problematic stereotypes, particularly along gender lines (Masenya, 2010).

Notably, the chapter highlighted a notable gap in the South African scholarly landscape regarding the integration of proverbs into Community-Based Development (C4D) frameworks. Compared to countries like Nigeria and Kenya, where indigenous oral traditions are more visibly integrated into development discourse (Achebe, 1958; Burton, 1998; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1994; Raselekoane, 2014), South African literature remains underdeveloped in this regard. This highlights the relevance and originality of the current study.

The insights presented here provide a foundational understanding of how proverbs function across generations and cultural settings. They also set the stage for a deeper exploration of the theoretical and practical implications of these findings. Chapter 5 will critically examine how these cultural tools can inform and enrich development communication strategies, drawing from African cultural theory and contemporary C4D frameworks.

This chapter presented and analysed data gathered through document analysis, focusing on Northern Sotho proverbs as tools for communication and development. The findings revealed that proverbs significantly express cultural values, social norms, gender expectations, and legal principles within Northern Sotho communities (Serudu, 1993; Ramohlale, Mogoboya & Chauke, 2021). Scholars have demonstrated that while some proverbs promote positive values, such as

responsibility, focus, and leadership (Phiri, Mulaudzi, & Heyns, 2015), others may perpetuate harmful stereotypes, particularly those related to gender (Masenya, 2010).

The chapter also highlighted a notable gap in South African literature regarding the application of proverbs in Community-Based Development (C4D), in contrast to more extensive insights from other African contexts, such as Nigeria and Kenya (Burton, 1998; Raselekoane, 2014; Achebe, 1958; Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1994). This gap underscores the relevance and timeliness of the current study.

These insights lay the groundwork for the next chapter, which critically interprets the findings, discusses their implications for development communication, and explores how Northern Sotho proverbs can be effectively integrated into modern Community, Communication, and Development (C4D) strategies.

## CHAPTER 5:

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a detailed analysis and interpretation of the research findings. It examined the data in consideration of the study's objectives and research questions, providing insights into the issues explored throughout the research process.

This final chapter comprehensively synthesises the key findings and discusses them in relation to the study's objectives and existing literature. It presents concluding remarks that reflect on the research from its inception to the completion of data analysis, highlighting the extent to which the research questions were answered. Additionally, the chapter outlines methodological limitations encountered during the study and offers practical and scholarly recommendations. Doing so consolidates the study's contributions and identifies potential directions for future research.

#### 5.2 Summary of Research Chapters

This research was structured into five chapters, each contributing to the study's development, execution, and conclusion. The following is a summary of each chapter:

- **Chapter One** introduced the study by presenting the background of the research problem, the objectives, and the research questions. It also outlined the study's scope and significance, laying the foundation for the inquiry.
- **Chapter Two** provided a review of relevant theoretical and empirical literature, establishing a conceptual framework for the study. It also identified gaps in the existing literature that the research sought to address.
- **Chapter Three** described the research design and methodology, including the sampling strategies, data collection procedures, and data analysis

techniques. It also discussed ethical considerations and acknowledged the study.

- **Chapter Four** presented and analysed the research findings. It identified key themes and patterns in the data and discussed how these findings addressed the research questions and objectives.
- **Chapter Five** offers a critical discussion of the findings within the context of the reviewed literature. It draws conclusions based on the evidence, discusses the research, and offers recommendations for practice and future academic inquiry.

This chapter sets the stage for the study by emphasising the importance of preserving cultural heritage amid globalisation and technological advances. The study focuses explicitly on Northern Sotho proverbs, which are vital elements of South Africa's Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). It explores the challenges these proverbs face due to modernisation and globalisation, as well as their role in communication and the transmission of cultural values. The background highlights post-apartheid South Africa's efforts to promote Indigenous languages, including Northern Sotho, through various government policies. Proverbs, deeply embedded in South Africa's oral tradition, serve as tools for preserving cultural values and fostering community cohesion. However, the impact of modernisation and globalisation poses a threat to their survival.

The problem statement identifies the Northern Sotho youth and their cultural heritage. This disconnection, exacerbated by external influences, poses a threat to the preservation of Northern Sotho proverbs. The study aims to examine the role of elders and institutions in passing on this knowledge and identify barriers to preserving these proverbs.

Key definitions include:

Proverbs: Expressions of cultural wisdom, often metaphorical, that reflect societal values (Mbiti, 2019).

Folklore: Traditional beliefs, myths, and practices passed down orally (Ngubane, 2018).

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS): The knowledge accumulated by Indigenous communities, usually transmitted orally (Ndamase, 2019).

Communication: The process by which knowledge and cultural values are passed within a community (Van Wyk, 2016).

The study aims to explore how Northern Sotho proverbs function in communication and IKS development, particularly among the youth. Objectives include identifying challenges to the preservation of these proverbs, exploring how they communicate cultural values, and evaluating the impact of modernisation and globalisation.

The research questions focus on the barriers to preserving Northern Sotho proverbs, the effectiveness of transmission mechanisms, the influence of Western traditions, and the role of government in preserving cultural heritage (Khumalo, 2021).

The rationale emphasises the study's relevance to policymakers, heritage authorities, and cultural practitioners. The findings are expected to contribute to discussions on cultural sustainability, the revitalisation of Indigenous languages, and the preservation of cultural heritage in South Africa (Pooe, 2018; UNESCO, 2020).

The literature review examines existing research on folklore, proverbs, communication, and IKS. It acknowledges gaps in research on the practical application of proverbs in cultural development, particularly in the context of South Africa's modernising society (Mphahlele, 2018).

The study employs a critical realist theoretical framework to examine the power dynamics that influence cultural preservation (Bhaskar, 2008). The methodology is qualitative, utilising interviews, document analysis, and participant observation to gather data. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, will be followed (Babbie, 2010).

The study area is Ga-Nchabeleng, a village in Limpopo Province where Northern Sotho is widely spoken, making it an ideal location for studying the role of proverbs in communication and cultural development (Mokoena, 2020).

In conclusion, the chapter reiterates the importance of Northern Sotho proverbs in maintaining cultural identity and ensuring the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. The study aims to offer valuable insights into the preservation and revitalisation of these proverbs, contributing to the broader discourse on cultural sustainability in South Africa (Pooe, 2018; UNESCO, 2020).

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the scholarly literature that informs the investigation into the role of Northern Sotho proverbs as tools for communication and development. The chapter examines theoretical, linguistic, cultural, and developmental perspectives, illustrating that proverbs are integral to African oral traditions and deeply embedded in the communicative and cultural practices of indigenous communities (Finnegan, 2012; Mbiti, 1991).

The review begins by outlining the linguistic nature and structure of proverbs, emphasising their metaphorical and symbolic properties. Proverbs are compact, formulaic expressions that convey complex messages, moral lessons, and communal values in a succinct and memorable form. In Northern Sotho, these expressions serve as linguistic tools for persuasion, guidance, and education.

The chapter then examines the communicative function of proverbs, highlighting their use across various social settings, such as family discourse, public speech, storytelling, judicial proceedings, and traditional leadership. Proverbs are used to avoid confrontation, convey criticism, express collective wisdom, and foster respectful and culturally acceptable dialogue (Mekoa, 2011; Yankah, 1994).

The literature also explores the developmental implications of proverbs. They are shown to promote values essential for community building, such as respect, cooperation, discipline, and accountability. Proverbs are practical pedagogical education that enhance moral reasoning and cultural literacy among learners.

Furthermore, scholars argue that proverbs can be mobilised in development communication strategies to foster behavioural change, promote civic engagement, and address social challenges such as conflict, gender inequality, and leadership ethics (Chilisa, 2012; Hoppers, 2002).

The chapter also reviews critical debates around the relevance of proverbs in modern society. While some scholars highlight their continued importance and adaptability, others caution that the oral transmission of proverbs is endangered by urbanisation, digitalisation, and the marginalisation of indigenous languages in formal education and media. It also establishes a strong theoretical and contextual basis for the study by critically engaging with existing literature on the linguistic, cultural, and developmental roles of proverbs. The review confirms that Northern Sotho proverbs are not merely rhetorical flourishes, but culturally significant tools that facilitate communication, transmit values, and support community development.

The chapter emphasises that proverbs serve as an indigenous knowledge system, deeply rooted in communal experience and capable of addressing contemporary challenges. They provide an ethical framework for behaviour, a communicative strategy for resolving conflict, and a pedagogical resource for educating future generations.

However, the literature also reveals pressing concerns about the sustainability of proverbial knowledge in a rapidly changing society. Due to language shift and modernisation, the declining use of proverbs among young people presents a cultural challenge that must be addressed through preservation, documentation, and integration into formal and informal educational settings.

Ultimately, the literature review supports the study's central thesis that revitalising and strategically using Northern Sotho proverbs can contribute meaningfully to culturally grounded communication and sustainable development. It also identifies gaps, particularly in empirical research on the practical application of proverbs, which this study sought to fill.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology employed to examine the role of proverbs in communication and development within Northern Sotho communities. The study adopts a qualitative research design, favouring an ethnographic or case-study approach to capture the rich cultural and linguistic dimensions of proverb use. A purposive sampling strategy, complemented by snowball sampling, targeted knowledgeable individuals, including elders, teachers, and community leaders.

Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis, ensuring that personal narratives and contextual use were captured. Thematic and narrative analyses were employed to identify patterns and extract deeper meanings from the data. Ethical considerations were thoroughly observed, emphasising informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for cultural norms. While the methodology is robust and culturally appropriate, the chapter acknowledges areas for improvement, such as providing more detailed descriptions of data collection tools and a more comprehensive discussion of potential limitations.

The chapter also presents a well-structured and culturally sensitive methodological framework that effectively supports the study's aim of exploring Northern Sotho proverbs. The chosen qualitative approach is well-suited to uncovering the nuanced, context-dependent meanings of proverbs in oral tradition. Although there is room for greater transparency regarding limitations and analytical procedures, the chapter successfully establishes a reliable foundation for the subsequent analysis and discussion of findings.

Adopting a qualitative research design that emphasises ethnographic, or case study elements has enabled an in-depth engagement with the lived experiences and cultural knowledge of key community members (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The use of purposive and snowball sampling methods ensured that participants with relevant and profound cultural insights were included, thereby enhancing the credibility and richness of the data. Furthermore, the combination of semi-structured

interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis allowed for a multidimensional understanding of proverbs in both spoken and written contexts (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Thematic and narrative analyses were suitably chosen to unpack the layered meanings embedded in proverbs and draw connections between individual perspectives and broader cultural functions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Ethical considerations, including informed consent and cultural respect, were central to the research design with best practices in systems (Chilisa, 2012).

Nonetheless, the chapter would benefit from further elaboration on the development of data collection instruments and a more critical reflection on limitations such as researcher bias and access to participants. Addressing these aspects in greater detail would enhance the study's transparency and academic rigour.

In sum, Chapter 3 establishes a solid methodological foundation for analysing how proverbs function within Northern Sotho communities, both as communicative tools and vehicles of cultural development.

Chapter 4 presents and interprets qualitative data from Northern Sotho-speaking participants regarding the use of proverbs in communication and development contexts. The proverbs are thematically categorised, covering areas such as wisdom, moral instruction, conflict resolution, and community development, which enables a coherent and meaningful analysis of their functions.

Participant voices are enhanced through direct quotations and paraphrased responses, thereby enriching the presentation of the data. This also illustrates the living nature of proverbs as tools for communication within families, schools, churches, and community meetings. The use of proverbs in these settings reflects their continued relevance in expressing complex ideas, offering guidance, and maintaining social order without confrontation, which aligns with the communicative strategies typical of oral cultures (Finnegan, 2012).

The chapter highlights several key findings:

- **Proverbs as Communicative Devices:** They articulate wisdom and critique in an indirect yet impactful manner, reflecting what Samovar et al. (2017) describe as “high-context communication” in traditional societies.
- **Moral and Social Development:** Proverbs instil cultural values such as humility, respect, diligence, and communal cooperation, reinforcing their role in informal education and socialisation (Mbiti, 1991).
- **Conflict Resolution:** Elders and leaders employ proverbs to mediate conflicts subtly and respectfully, showcasing their function in traditional justice and community harmony.
- **Educational Function:** Proverbs are central to intergenerational knowledge transfer and oral pedagogy, supporting arguments made by Vansina (1985) about the epistemological importance of oral traditions.
- **Developmental Messaging:** Certain proverbs promote civic values like unity, accountability, and collective responsibility, which are integral to grassroots and sustainable development efforts.

The chapter is well-structured, flowing from data presentation to analysis. However, clearer thematic subheadings and deeper comparative insights, especially between rural and urban uses or generational perspectives, would have enriched the analytical depth and interpretive clarity. It illustrates how Northern Sotho proverbs are vital for communication, education, conflict resolution, and development. The thematic organisation of the data and the integration of participant narratives underscore the proverbs' ongoing relevance in contemporary society. The analysis confirms the study's central thesis: that indigenous knowledge systems, specifically proverbs, are not static relics but active, contextually adaptive instruments that contribute to community cohesion and culturally rooted development (Chilisa, 2012; Hoppers, 2002).

By connecting traditional wisdom with contemporary developmental challenges, the chapter affirms the role of proverbs in shaping attitudes, guiding leadership, and

promoting social harmony. It demonstrates that indigenous oral traditions inform culturally appropriate communication and participatory development strategies.

To further enhance the chapter's impact, future research could explore generational shifts in the understanding and use of proverbs and compare their use across rural areas. Nevertheless, the chapter provides robust empirical evidence and thoughtful interpretation, offering a strong foundation for the study's conclusions and practical recommendations.

Chapter 5 concludes the study by synthesising the main findings in alignment with the research objectives. It affirms the central argument that Northern Sotho proverbs are dynamic communication and community development tools. The chapter offers a cohesive narrative that connects the cultural, communicative, and developmental roles of proverbs within Northern Sotho-speaking communities.

The findings demonstrate that Northern Sotho proverbs perform multiple, interrelated functions. They serve as culturally embedded communication strategies that convey communal wisdom, shape moral understanding, and guide social behaviour. In traditional and modern contexts, proverbs influence decision-making, foster social harmony, facilitate intergenerational education, and reinforce leadership values.

This study highlights the continued relevance of IKS in contemporary society. Examining how proverbs are used in everyday interactions, ranging from familial discussions to public leadership, makes a meaningful contribution to linguistics, African cultural studies, and development communication (Chilisa, 2012; Hoppers, 2002; Finnegan, 2012).

However, the chapter also identifies significant challenges. Modernisation, language shift, urbanisation, and globalisation contribute to a noticeable decline in the understanding and usage of proverbs, especially among younger generations. This cultural shift, which emphasises the continuity of indigenous knowledge, underscores the need for active preservation and revitalisation efforts.

This research concludes that Northern Sotho proverbs are not simply rhetorical or stylistic devices; they are functionally significant and culturally rich instruments for communication and development. They encapsulate indigenous knowledge, ethical guidance, and communal norms that are crucial for maintaining social order, transmitting values, and fostering participatory governance.

Proverbs remain vital across multiple social spheres, particularly in education, leadership, moral instruction, conflict resolution, and traditional justice. Their flexibility and adaptability across oral and modern platforms demonstrate their value in an evolving socio-cultural landscape.

The study reaffirms that preserving and integrating indigenous knowledge systems, particularly proverbs, into formal structures such as education, governance, and development planning is essential for sustainable, culturally grounded progress. Northern Sotho proverbs serve as a bridge between tradition and transformation, reinforcing the relevance of oral tradition in addressing contemporary challenges. To ensure the continuity and relevance of Northern Sotho proverbs in modern society, the following areas are recommended for further scholarly exploration:

#### 1. Systematic Documentation and Digital Preservation

Explanation:

Given the oral nature of proverb transmission, future research should focus on creating comprehensive digital archives of proverbs. These should include written records, audio narrations, and video demonstrations by native speakers to preserve the linguistic and contextual richness of proverbs. This initiative would support cultural preservation and intergenerational learning (Vansina, 1985).

#### 2. Integration into Formal Education Curricula

Explanation:

Proverbs convey potent cultural and moral teachings that are suitable for incorporation into school curricula. Future studies should investigate strategies for integrating proverbs into language, life orientation, and history subjects to promote indigenous identity, ethical reasoning, and social values among learners (Mekoa, 2011).

### 3. Use in Media and Popular Culture

Explanation:

To revitalise interest among younger generations, research should investigate the use of proverbs in popular media, such as music, film, social media platforms, and storytelling podcasts. These modern formats can help sustain the relevance and appeal of traditional wisdom (Barber, 1997).

### 4. Comparative and Cross-Linguistic Studies

Explanation:

Comparative studies between Northern Sotho and other African or global languages can offer valuable insights into universal human values and culturally specific knowledge systems. Such research enhances intercultural understanding and supports theoretical advancements in indigenous epistemologies (Mbiti, 1991).

### 5. Examination of Proverbs in Addressing Social Issues

Explanation:

Proverbs often reflect and shape perceptions of gender roles, justice, environmental stewardship, and leadership. Future research should critically analyse how these expressions reinforce or challenge contemporary social norms and explore how they might be reinterpreted to promote inclusivity and social justice (Chilisa, 2012).

### 6. Role of Proverbs in Community Development Practice

Explanation:

Further studies could evaluate how proverbs are used or could be used in practical community development initiatives. These may include health education, civic engagement, economic empowerment, or local governance. Such research would reveal the tangible applications of oral traditions in supporting sustainable grassroots development (Hoppers, 2002).

### **5.3 Final Reflection**

Northern Sotho proverbs represent far more than linguistic artefacts; they are comprehensive frameworks for ethical behaviour, cultural identity, and social cohesion. As African societies navigate modernisation and globalisation, protecting, revitalising, and applying indigenous knowledge systems, including proverbs, is essential for cultural sustainability.

Efforts to document, teach, and adapt proverbs for modern relevance will ensure that this oral heritage remains a vibrant, evolving force in shaping ethical, educated, and cohesive communities. Proverbs can continue to inspire and guide future generations through strategic integration into education, media, and development practice.

### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

While this study offers valuable insights into the communicative and developmental functions of Northern Sotho proverbs, several limitations should be acknowledged to contextualise the findings and guide future research. These limitations are outlined below:

#### **5.4.1 Geographical and Cultural Scope**

The research was geographically confined to selected rural and peri-urban communities within the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Although these areas are rich in cultural traditions and linguistic diversity, they do not represent the full spectrum of the Northern Sotho-speaking population. Notably, the study did not

include urban centres or diaspora communities, where the use and relevance of proverbs may differ owing to modernisation, multilingualism, and shifting cultural practices.

Additionally, Northern Sotho comprises various dialects, including Sepedi, Khelobedu, and Setlokwa, that may influence how proverbs are formulated, interpreted, and applied in different contexts. This linguistic variation was not fully explored, which limited the generalizability of the findings across the broader Northern Sotho linguistic and cultural landscape (Finnegan, 2012).

#### **5.4.2 Sample Size and Demographic Representation**

The study employed a purposive sampling strategy, involving a relatively small number of participants. Although the sample included a range of community members, including elders and traditional leaders, it may not fully represent the Northern Sotho-speaking population. Key demographic groups, such as youth, women, and individuals from diverse educational backgrounds, may have been underrepresented.

Given the oral nature of proverbs, perspectives from diverse age groups and social strata are essential for a holistic understanding. The limited sample size, therefore, restricts the extent to which the findings can be generalised to the broader community (Mieder, 2004).

#### **5.4.3 Emphasis on Oral Data and Informal Contexts**

The study primarily relied on oral data collection methods, including interviews, storytelling sessions, and focus group discussions. While effective for capturing lived experiences and indigenous knowledge, these methods excluded other significant platforms where proverbs are actively used, such as written literature, radio broadcasts, educational materials, political discourse, and social media.

The absence of data from these formal and contemporary settings may limit our understanding of the broader communicative and rhetorical roles of proverbs in modern Northern Sotho society (Mazama, 2003).

#### **5.4.4 Language and Translation Challenges**

Many Northern Sotho proverbs are culturally embedded, metaphorically complex, and linguistically nuanced. Translating these proverbs into English during interviews or the final analysis posed significant challenges. Certain idiomatic and symbolic expressions lack direct English equivalents, which may have contributed to the loss of semantic richness or subtle meanings (Norrick, 1985).

This issue also affects Sotho, who may not fully grasp the cultural and moral significance of the proverbs discussed in this study.

#### **5.4.5 Temporal Limitation and Cultural Shifts**

The findings presented in this study reflect the use and perception of Northern Sotho proverbs at a particular point in time. However, the function and prevalence of proverbs are constantly evolving owing to technological change, digital communication, and globalisation. Younger generations may favour contemporary forms of expression, such as memes, emojis, and hashtags, over traditional proverbs. This temporal limitation means that the study provides only a snapshot, and not a longitudinal view, of how proverb usage may be changing or declining over time (Boadi, 1972).

#### **5.4.6 Potential Researcher Bias**

As is often the case in qualitative research, the potential for researcher bias must be acknowledged. The researcher's linguistic competence and cultural familiarity with Northern Sotho may have facilitated data collection but could also have influenced the data. Subjective interpretations may have shaped how specific responses were analysed and presented.

Although strategies such as member checking and peer debriefing were employed to enhance the reliability of the findings (Creswell, 2013), it is not possible to eliminate all forms of bias in this type of research.

### **5.5 Ethical and Cultural Sensitivities**

Engaging with IKS necessitated careful ethical consideration. Some proverbs may be linked to sacred traditions, restricted knowledge systems, or hierarchical social structures. Participants may have chosen not to disclose certain culturally sensitive information or may have been constrained in their responses owing to social norms, particularly regarding gender and age roles (Chilisa, 2012). These dynamics could have influenced the scope, depth, and openness of the information shared during data collection.

In conclusion, while the study makes a meaningful contribution to Northern Sotho proverbs as tools for communication and development, its scope and methodological limitations warrant careful consideration. The restricted geographical focus, limited sample size, reliance on oral data, translation challenges, and cultural sensitivities all affect the extent to which the findings can be broadly applied. Future research should incorporate a broader range of regions, demographic groups, and methods that capture the evolving, multi-modal nature of proverb uses in modern society to gain a fuller picture.

### **5.6 Recommendations for Future Research**

Considering the findings and the limitations outlined, the following recommendations are proposed to deepen and broaden research on the role of proverbs in Northern Sotho culture and communication:

#### **5.6.1 Widen Geographical and Sociocultural Scope**

Future studies should encompass a broader geographical range and include communities in urban, peri-urban, and diasporic contexts. This will help reveal how

migration, urbanisation, and linguistic contact influence the use and reinterpretation of proverbs.

### **5.6.2 Adopt a Mixed-Methods Approach**

Incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research methods can offer more nuanced insights. Surveys can provide statistical data on the usage of proverbs and attitudes, while ethnographic methods can capture deeper meanings and contextual variations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### **5.6.3 Investigate Intergenerational Transmission**

Research should explore how proverb knowledge is transmitted or lost across generations. This includes studying how digital technologies, formal education, and shifting cultural values affect the role of proverbs in shaping identity and moral instruction (Yankah, 1995).

### **5.6.4 Analyse Proverbs in Digital Communication**

With increased access to digital media, proverbs are often recontextualised in memes, hashtags, and online storytelling formats. Future studies should investigate how Northern Sotho proverbs are preserved, adapted, or commodified in social media environments, such as WhatsApp, TikTok, and YouTube.

### **5.6.5 Evaluate Educational and Curriculum Integration**

There is a need to examine the pedagogical value of proverbs in the school curriculum. Future research could assess how teachers and learners use proverbs in literacy instruction, moral education, and life skills training. This aligns with African-centred education frameworks (Asante, 1990).

### **5.6.6 Create Comprehensive Archives and Databases**

Digital archiving projects should be initiated to record and preserve Northern Sotho proverbs, including their origins, meanings, variations, and contexts of use. These

efforts could be community-led and supported by academic institutions, contributing to heritage preservation and linguistic research.

### **5.6.7 Undertake Cross-Cultural and Comparative Studies**

Proverbs are a universal linguistic phenomenon. Comparative studies involving other South African languages (e.g., isiZulu, Setswana, Xitsonga) or other Bantu-speaking cultures can reveal shared themes such as kinship, morality, gender, and authority.

### **5.6.8 Examine Proverbs in Development Discourse**

Further inquiry should investigate how proverbs are used in community development settings, such as health communication, environmental education, gender equality campaigns, or conflict resolution initiatives. This would position proverbs as cultural artefacts and tools for sustainable development (Nsamenang, 1992).

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This study has examined the challenges and barriers to the preservation and transmission of Northern Sotho proverbs, focusing on their role in communicating cultural values, the effectiveness of current succession planning mechanisms, and the impact of modernisation and globalisation. The findings have provided a comprehensive understanding of the obstacles facing Northern Sotho proverbs and their cultural significance in South African society.

Firstly, the main obstacles to the preservation and use of Northern Sotho proverbs among the youth have been identified. The rapid shift towards modernisation, coupled with the increasing dominance of globalised media and Western cultural practices, has contributed to a disconnection from indigenous knowledge systems. The younger generation's engagement with Northern Sotho proverbs is limited, and the influence of technology and social media has further exacerbated this detachment. Additionally, the loss of intergenerational communication and a lack of

structured educational frameworks to teach these proverbs are significant barriers (Linden, 1991; Leshilo, 2014).

Secondly, the role of Northern Sotho proverbs in transmitting cultural values such as language, community cohesion, respect for authority, and time consciousness is crucial. These proverbs traditionally served as important tools for socialising young people and fostering a sense of belonging within the community. However, the diminishing use of proverbs in daily life has weakened these cultural values, particularly among young people who are more inclined to adopt Western lifestyles and values (Chilisa, 2012).

Regarding the effectiveness of current mechanisms for transmitting indigenous knowledge, the findings suggest that existing succession planning efforts are insufficient. There appears to be a lack of targeted educational initiatives and community-based programs to ensure the transmission of Northern Sotho proverbs. While some elders still retain this knowledge, passing it on leaves the younger generation with limited opportunities to engage with their heritage (Linden, 1991; Rakoma, 1995).

The study also found compelling evidence of the displacement of indigenous cultural values by Western traditions. The increasing influence of Western media, education, and lifestyle has overshadowed traditional forms of knowledge transmission. This shift has contributed to a decline in the use and relevance of Northern Sotho proverbs, especially in urban areas where Western influences are most prominent. As a result, the cultural wisdom embedded in these proverbs is at risk of being lost, further perpetuating the disconnection between the youth and their cultural heritage (Chilisa, 2012; Leshilo, 2014).

Lastly, the capacity of government institutions to support the preservation of traditional cultural knowledge is limited. While there are some initiatives aimed at promoting indigenous languages and cultures, these efforts are often fragmented and underfunded. Government policies and institutions need to play a more active role in creating educational frameworks and cultural programs that can support the

revitalisation of Northern Sotho proverbs and other indigenous knowledge systems (Leshilo, 2014).

In conclusion, the study confirms that Northern Sotho proverbs are a vital aspect of South Africa's indigenous cultural identity. However, the challenges of modernisation, globalisation, and insufficient transmission mechanisms pose significant threats to their preservation and relevance. To preserve these proverbs and the cultural values they represent, targeted efforts must be made to integrate their use into modern education systems, media, and community practices. The role of government institutions in supporting these efforts is also critical in ensuring that Northern Sotho proverbs remain a living part of the nation's cultural heritage for future generations.

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## APPENDIX A: UNISA ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Appendix A  
Ethics.docx



### COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

18 July 2023

Dear Ms Paulina, Kekana

NHREC Registration # :  
Rec-240816-052  
CREC Reference # :  
7950179\_CREC\_CHS\_2023

**Decision:**  
Ethics Approval from 18 July 2023 to  
18 July 2024

Researcher(s) Name: Ms. P. Kekana  
Contact details: [7950179@mylife.unisa.ac.za](mailto:7950179@mylife.unisa.ac.za)  
Supervisor(s) Name: Dr FM Kanyane  
Contact details: [kanyafm@unisa.ac.za](mailto:kanyafm@unisa.ac.za)  
Co-Supervisor(s) Name: Prof P. Phaahla  
Contact details: [phaahla@telkomsa.net](mailto:phaahla@telkomsa.net)

**Title: Proverbs as tools for communication development in Northern Sotho.**  
Degree Purpose: Masters

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 low 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.



University of South Africa  
Pretoria Street, Muckleneuk, Rose, City of Tzaneen  
PO Box 302 UNISA 0003 South Africa  
Telephone: 27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: 27 12 429 4150  
[www.unisa.ac.za](http://www.unisa.ac.za)

Figure 1

## **Appendix B: Consent to participate in the study.**

### **CONSENT FORM**

#### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

Ethics clearance reference number: NHREC Registration #: Re240816052

Research permission reference number: 7950179\_CRECHS\_CHS\_2023

Title of the Research: Proverbs as tools for communication and development in Northern Sotho

Student Number: 07950179.

Contact details: 0725805490.

#### **Participant Invitation Letter**

My name is Paulina Kekana. I am a Research Coordinator and a master's student at the University of South Africa. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled "*Proverbs as Tools for Communication and Development in Northern Sotho.*" The study is supervised by Prof. Phaahla, with Dr Kanyane as the co-supervisor.

This study explores the role of indigenous proverbs in the daily lives of the Northern Sotho community. It aims to initiate new discussions about how proverbs contribute to communication and community development. The research will involve both older adults and younger people from villages. Sixty participants will be selected: thirty adults with strong knowledge of indigenous proverbs, and 30 youth who represent the future custodians of these cultural expressions.

The research will assess how government departments have succeeded or failed in promoting Northern Sotho proverbs and identify areas that require improvement. The findings will serve as a reference for future researchers interested in Indigenous knowledge systems, especially regarding proverbs.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw without penalty. Your identity will remain anonymous, and all information provided will be confidential.

I invite you to participate in a virtual focus group discussion lasting 30–40 minutes. While your participation is not mandatory, I appreciate your support in contributing to this valuable study.

Participants were selected based on their ability to speak Northern Sotho and familiarity with Northern Sotho proverbs. The study will involve interviews with older adults aged fifty-five and above and youth aged 18 to 35 from local villages. The interviews will be conducted in a way that allows participants to express themselves in their own language, ensuring a comfortable, practical communication process.

Participation involves no risk, and no financial compensation will be provided. However, every effort will be made to ensure that your constitutional rights to dignity and safety are upheld throughout the research process.

By agreeing to participate, you consent to the use of the information you provide for academic research. You will also be asked any questions regarding the study. The findings may be presented at scholarly conferences or published in journals or books, but all participants' identities will remain confidential.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Sincerely,

**Paulina Kekana**

Research Coordinator & master's Student

University of South Africa

Paulina Kekana

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'PKE' followed by a flourish.


Signature

## APPENDIX C: TURNITIN REPORT

The screenshot displays a Turnitin report interface. At the top, there are two tabs: 'Top sources' (selected) and 'All Sources'. The main heading shows '19%' in large blue font, with 'Overall Similarity' below it. A list of five sources is shown, each with a colored circle containing a number, the source name, the source type, and the similarity percentage. A small profile picture of a person is visible next to the first source. At the bottom left, a dark grey box contains the text 'Page 1 of 213'.

Rank	Source	Source Type	Similarity
1	uir.unisa.ac.za	INTERNET	<1%
2	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za	INTERNET	<1%
3	University of South Africa on 2025-10-08	SUBMITTED WORKS	<1%
4	hdl.handle.net	INTERNET	<1%
5	books.aosis.co.za	INTERNET	<1%

Page 1 of 213

Top sources  All Sources 

1	<b>uir.unisa.ac.za</b> INTERNET	5%
2	<b>researchspace.ukzn.ac.za</b> INTERNET	5%
3	<b>hdl.handle.net</b> INTERNET	4%
4	<b>repository.up.ac.za</b> INTERNET	4%
5	<b>core.ac.uk</b> INTERNET	3%
6	<b>University of South Africa on 2025-10-08</b> SUBMITTED WORKS	3%
7	<b>ulspace.ul.ac.za</b> INTERNET	2%

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## APPENDIX D: EDITING CERTIFICATE

### **EDITING AND PROOFREADING CERTIFICATE**

22 Osche Street

The Reeds

Centurion

0157

03 September 2025

#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This certificate serves to confirm that I have edited P Kekana's dissertation titled, **"PROVERBS AS TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN SOTHO."**

I found the work easy and intriguing to read. Much of my editing basically dealt with obstructionist technical aspects of language, which could have otherwise compromised smooth reading as well as the sense of the information being conveyed. I hope that the work will be found to be of an acceptable standard. I am a member of Professional Editors' Guild.

Hereunder are my contact details:



Jack Chokwe (PhD – University of Leicester (United Kingdom))

Contact numbers: 072 214 5489

[jackchokwe@gmail.com](mailto:jackchokwe@gmail.com)

Professional  
**EDITORS**  
Guild



