

The Effects of Bullying: A Comparison of Northern Sotho Folktales and Real Life Situations



Seleka Maria Tembane¹ 

¹ Department of African Languages, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

Bullying occurs when an individual is subjected, repeatedly over time, to negative actions perpetrated by others who possess greater physical, social, and intellectual power. Bullying is an extremely challenging situation for anyone. It induces feelings of dread and degradation and frequently makes one feel worthless. Since time immemorial, bullying has been a common practice in all societies and this is reflected in folktales. This article addresses the danger of bullying and its impact on real-life situations as compared with situations in folktales. The present article analysed the manner in which folktales might offer lessons on the consequences of bullying, such as moral and social punishment, and how these lessons might influence societal attitudes toward bullying in the Northern Sotho-speaking community. The Functional Attitude Theory was employed as a framework because bullies in the folktale and in real-life situations adopt attitudes that are essential to their psychological benefit. Data was analysed using a descriptive qualitative approach. Secondary data such as published books, dissertations, articles, and theses were used as methods of data collection. The study revealed that there are different lessons employed in folktales to prevent bullying in societies. It is therefore recommended that additional works of literature in African languages be produced to educate societies about the possible negative effects of bullying. This study might shed light on how cultural narrative-shaped attitudes can be used to lessen bullying. Employing storytelling as a teaching method in schools may aid in dispelling unfavourable preconceptions or antagonistic attitudes that contribute to bullying.

Correspondence

Seleka Maria Tembane

Email:

Etembasm@unisa.ac.za

Publication History

Received:

25th February, 2025

Accepted:

16th May, 2025

Published:

18th June, 2025

Keywords: *Bullying, Societal Attitudes, Physical Power, Negative Actions, Social Punishment*

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a widespread problem that impacts people of various ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultural traditions. It can take many different forms, ranging from social, intellectual and emotional manipulation to physical aggressiveness, and its effects can be severe and enduring. Bullying occurs when someone is subjected to damaging behaviours over an extended period by those with greater social, physical, or intellectual power.

Bullying is a concern, particularly in schools, workplaces, educational institutions and society in general.¹ Bullying induces feelings of dread and degradation and frequently makes one feel worthless. Studies have shown that bullying can result in low self-esteem, criminality, psychological stress, substance misuse, academic failure, suicide, social anxiety, loneliness, peer rejection, depression, and

¹ Eve M. Brank, Lori A Hoetger, and Katherine P Hazen, "Bullying," *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 8, no. 1 (2012): 213–30.

school dropout.² The analogy between folktales and real-life circumstances is an intriguing way to examine bullying.

Little has been investigated concerning the comparison of bullying in folktales and real-life situations in Northern Sotho. The goal of this study is to examine how folktales may teach moral and social lessons about the negative effects of bullying and how these teachings may affect how people in the Northern Sotho-speaking society see bullying in general. Folktales demonstrate how immorality has existed in society since the dawn of time.³ Even though folktales are as old as the hill, people have observed that they offer explanations that are in line with everyday life and address real issues regarding life in general and human nature in particular.⁴

While the researcher grew up, her mother used to narrate folktales to her and the family in the evenings while they were seated around the fire. Folktales were narrated as an education to reprimand certain behaviours. Some of the folktales displayed bullying as their plot.

This article illustrates how bullying in real-life contexts can occasionally be depicted through folktales. The focus is on folktales from Northern Sotho that express various perspectives on bullying. Examples of folktales which displayed bullying as their plot are *Serite wee* and *mmutla le ditšhwene* 'hare and baboons'. These two folktales formed the basis of discussion for this article. The lessons on bullying should be included in school children's literature to overcome bullying from an early age.

The study reviews various pieces of literature from other researchers who have investigated the topic. The review of existing documents will be supported by the author's own knowledge of the folktales – autoethnography. Data from the published existing documents and auto-ethnography related to the topic was interpreted using thematic analysis. To verify validity, sources discussing folktales related to bullying were examined to identify recurring themes. To guarantee the quality and reliability of the data used in this article, the researcher gathered the data herself from pre-existing records. This is due to the fact that a reliable data source is relied upon to yield consistency. This article's findings will be applicable in multiple contexts because it will be published to reach the public and other researchers' outcomes under similar conditions, ensuring that the data is accurate and steady. The study then makes recommendations based on the discussions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The research conducted by Ramohlale, Chauke, and Molotja explores the role of food as a central plot element in three distinct folktales. The study highlights how food serves not only as a tangible necessity but also as a symbolic medium through which broader cultural, moral, and survival themes are conveyed.⁵ By analysing these folktales through the lens of food, the authors uncover how food is intricately linked to the development of characters and the unfolding of narratives. The researchers argue that in the selected folktales, food plays a pivotal role in illustrating the complexities of human relationships, power dynamics, and survival strategies. Food-related acts—such as sharing, hoarding, or the scarcity of resources—are used to reflect deeper societal values and the moral decisions of characters. This inclusion of food, whether as a symbol of abundance, a catalyst for conflict, or a mechanism for resolution, aligns the folktales with themes of morality, ethical decision-making, and the balance between individual desires and community needs. As compared to Ramohlale, Chauke and Molotja's research which investigated the role of food as a plot in the three folktales, this study focuses on two folktales that explore bullying as the main theme.

² Mustafa Eşkisü, "The Relationship between Bullying, Family Functions, Perceived Social Support among High School Students," *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 159 (2014): 492–96.

³ Refilwe M. Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al., "Child Abuse in Setswana Folktales," *Early Child Development and Care* 177, no. 4 (May 2007): 433–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430600989072>.

⁴ Lekau Eleazar Mphasha, "Folktales Reveal the Cultural Values of the Community: A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis," *The Anthropologist* 19, no. 1 (2015): 295–302.

⁵ Isaac M Ramohlale, O.R Chauke, and T.W. Molotja, "Exploring the Role of Food in the Plot Development: A Study of Makgamatha (1994) Folktales," *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice* 30, no. 5 (2024): 5277–82.

Tshabalala conducted a comprehensive real-life experience study examining the pervasive issue of bullying within nursing institutions.⁶ Bullying in healthcare settings, particularly within nursing, has been a long-standing concern that negatively impacts both individuals and the overall work environment. Research sheds light on the prevalence, consequences, and potential solutions to this issue, offering recommendations aimed at mitigating the harmful effects of bullying in nursing.⁷ The research reveals that bullying can take various forms, including verbal abuse, physical intimidation, and undermining professional competence. Compared to Tshabalala's research which investigated bullying in nursing institutions, this article does not focus only on bullying which takes place in folktales and real life experiences.

Mphasha researched the role of folktales in revealing the cultural values of a community and how one can structure the analysis using a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) framework to better understand the impact and implications of folktales on the transmission of cultural values.⁸ Mphasha argues that through folktales, younger generations learn about the moral, ethical, and practical values held by the community, such as respect for elders, community solidarity, and justice. The stories are not only entertaining but also serve as moral lessons.⁹

According to Mphasha research provides valuable insights into the importance of folktales in maintaining and transmitting the cultural values of a community. Using a SWOT analysis, we can see that while folktales possess significant strengths in preserving cultural heritage, there are challenges related to their adaptation to modern contexts. Nonetheless, there are considerable opportunities to ensure that folktales continue to serve as an essential vehicle for cultural transmission if there is proactive engagement with new technologies and strategies to overcome threats such as cultural erosion and loss of oral traditions.

In contrast to Mphasha, who used SWOT analysis to examine the significance of folktales in exposing societal cultural values, this article provides new information to the younger generation and to Northern Sotho-speaking communities in general regarding the negative effects of bullying as depicted in folktales and in actual circumstances.

Masuku explored the influence of folktales on homophobic behaviour. In her article, she indicates that conflict participants may see themselves as warriors or opponents of their "enemy," and they may be motivated to keep fighting since it gives them a highly desirable role.¹⁰ Furthermore, as disputes over moral principles sometimes entail assertions of prestige and authority, parties may have a strong incentive to undermine, harm, or destroy their perceived opponents. This is particularly evident in communities where traditional gender norms are deeply ingrained and where deviance from these norms is perceived as a threat to social cohesion and hierarchy.¹¹ By presenting themselves as defenders of tradition, individuals may feel justified in engaging in homophobic actions to preserve their cultural and social status. Masuku's article suggests that addressing these issues requires not only challenging the prejudices embedded in such cultural narratives but also shifting the power structures that perpetuate these harmful beliefs.

This paper offers insights into how folktale narratives about bullying, in contrast to real-life events, can influence societal morality and social values, in contrast to Masuku, who investigated the influence of folktales on homophobic behaviour. Drawing on the work of Juvonen and Graham, this study explores the dynamics of power, aggression, and victimization within bullying contexts. The authors highlight that bullying typically involves an imbalance of power, where the bully, often physically

⁶ Mathildah Tshabalala, "A Framework for the Management of Nurse Educator Bullying in Nursing Education Institutions" (University of South Africa, 2023).

⁷ Tshabalala, "A Framework for the Management of Nurse Educator Bullying in Nursing Education Institutions."

⁸ Mphasha, "Folktales Reveal the Cultural Values of the Community: A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis."

⁹ Mphasha, "Folktales Reveal the Cultural Values of the Community: A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis."

¹⁰ Norma Masuku, "Folklore and Its Influence on Homophobic Behaviour in the Zulu Culture: A Brief Analysis of Umamba Kamaquba," *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 25, no. 3 (2015): s128–37.

¹¹ Masuku, "Folklore and Its Influence on Homophobic Behaviour in the Zulu Culture: A Brief Analysis of Umamba Kamaquba."

stronger or more socially influential, uses this advantage to intimidate, dehumanise, or demoralise the victim.¹²

The work of Juvonen and Graham contributes to the understanding of bullying as a complex social phenomenon that hinges on power differentials and the psychological impact of aggressive behaviours. Their insights align with broader research on the implications of bullying and the need for four multi-layered interventions aimed at reducing both the occurrence and consequences of bullying in various environments. Similar to Juvonen and Graham, who investigated bullying in various settings, this article examines the relationships between victimhood, aggressiveness, and power in bullying situations while concentrating on folktales and real-world problems.

The article "Child abuse in Setswana folktales" by Malimabe-Ramagoshi, Maree, Alexander and Molepo published in *Early Child Development and Care*, explores the representation of child abuse within the context of Setswana folktales.¹³ These authors aim to critically examine how traditional African stories convey messages about child abuse, its prevention, and its implications on societal norms. The study found that child abuse is depicted in a variety of forms within the folktales. This includes physical punishment, emotional neglect, and situations where children are mistreated by parents or caregivers.¹⁴ The presence of such themes in the stories highlighted the tension between societal ideals of family and the harsh realities of abuse.

In contrast to Malimabe-Ramagoshi, Maree, Alexander, and Molepo, who studied Setswana folktales to show how physical punishment and emotional neglect can result from child abuse, this article was crucial in educating the communities about appropriate behaviour and social expectations through folktale narration.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Functional Attitude Theory, developed by social psychologist Daniel Katz in 1960 suggests that attitudes serve different psychological functions for individuals.¹⁵ Functional attitude theory was used as a framework because the attitudes that bullies adopt, both in the folktale and in real life, are important and crucial to their psychological well-being. Functional attitude theory examines how various attitudes—whether defensive, utilitarian, or value-expressive—affect social behaviours like bullying.¹⁶ The moral lessons from folktales could be used as a cultural tool to promote better attitudes, lessen bullying, and create healthier social settings.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection, interpretation, and analysis were carried out utilising a qualitative approach. Data was gathered, examined, and contrasted from diverse sources to identify recurring themes that would bolster the study's validity.¹⁷ The qualitative data was collected and analysed using tools such as published books, articles, dissertations, thesis and internet-sourced data.

DISCUSSION

Folktales, passed down through generations, often contain narratives of struggle, conflict, and bullying. Many of these stories feature protagonists who face bullying or mistreatment, whether from larger-than-life villains or from social groups. These tales, though fictional, often reflect real human experiences, and they offer valuable insights into societal attitudes toward power, dominance, and empathy.

There is undoubtedly a connection between folklore and actual events. This connection is founded on the idea that behaviours and viewpoints that are shown in folktales can also be seen in some actual

¹² Jaana Juvonen and Sandra Graham, "Bullying in Schools: The Power of Bullies and the Plight of Victims," *Annual Review of Psychology* 65, no. 1 (January 3, 2014): 159–85, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115030>.

¹³ Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al., "Child Abuse in Setswana Folktales."

¹⁴ Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al., "Child Abuse in Setswana Folktales."

¹⁵ Daniel Katz, "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1960): 163–204.

¹⁶ Christopher Carpenter, Franklin J Boster, and Kyle R Andrews, "Functional Attitude Theory," *The SAGE Handbook of Persuasion: Developments in Theory and Practice* 2 (2013): 104–19.

¹⁷ Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne E. Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design*, 7th ed. (Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2001).

circumstances. Folk literature reflects the thinking and real-life social traditions of the time.¹⁸ Nkomo, et.al., support Madimabe-Ramogoshi, et al. by indicating that through folktales children learn about life in general including bullying, politeness, marriage, family, work, food, and cheating.¹⁹ Bullying takes place in different forms such as verbal, cyber and physical. Bullying can also take place online, with victims being tormented on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and others.²⁰ This suggests that kids could become victims of cyberbullying or become bullies themselves. Cyberbullying is a growing kind of violence that represents the moral decay plaguing young people in current times, even though it is never depicted in folktales.²¹

The study investigates and evaluates the issue of bullying as it appears in both contemporary real-life circumstances and traditional cultural narratives (Northern Sotho folktales). To better understand bullying's effects on both individuals and communities, the study compared how bullying is portrayed in folktales with how it appears in modern society in the following section. The plot of each Northern Sotho selected folktale is presented, discussed and analysed.

Bullying depicted in the folktale *Serite wee*

Serite wee folktale falls under talking beast stories. According to Malimabe-Ramagoshi, et al. in *talking beast stories*, animals (and other creatures) talk like human beings.²² In most cases, these stories contain lessons that imply that courage, independence and resourcefulness are rewarded. Livestock has long been a symbol of wealth in traditional communal settings, denoting the possession of a man who, as the head of the family, would defend it closely and order others to watch them. Respect both within and outside the family increased with the size of the head of the herds.²³

In the folktale of *Serite wee*, the old lady called Serite had a herd of cows that were left by her deceased husband. Because of her being old, she was assisted by village boys. The boys as the shepherds of the cows, used to go out with the cows in the morning and came back in the afternoon. Serite who was aware of the bad things which could happen to the cows and the boys in the veld, instructed the boys to call her should anything happen to them. Serite taught the boys a song *Serite wee! Serite wee! kgomo di a ya! 'Serite wee! 'Serite cows are being taken or are captured'*. The word *wee* in Northern Sotho (not limited to it) is a *lelahlelwa* 'interjection' used to call a person. Such as in *mma wee!*, *sesi wee!*, *Mologadi wee!*, etc.

Serite had a long, strong tooth which she used as a weapon to defend herself and the cows. One day when 'shepherd boys' were out in the bush with cows, they were approached by the boys from the other village, who physically bullied them and took the cows. Remember that a bully most of the time targets a person (victim) who is weaker than her/him and who is powerless. Because the 'shepherd boys' (victims) were weaker or powerless against the 'other village boys (bullies)', they started calling Serite by singing the song:

'Serite wee!

Serite wee!

Kgomo di a ya!

Serite wee!'

The song was repeated until Serite responded. Serite responded by going to boys while singing the song:

'Phuru senokane,

Phuru senokane sa matekwa!'

She sang the song repeatedly until she arrived at the scene. Serite used her long, strong teeth to fight the bullies while singing the song:

'Phuru thobo,

¹⁸ Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al., "Child Abuse in Setswana Folktales."

¹⁹ Puleng S Nkomo et al., *Lehlotlo Folklore Anthology (Sepedi)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

²⁰ Siziwe Mandubu, "Folklorisation and the Emergent Moral Degeneration: A Functionalist Approach," *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 30, no. 1 (March 15, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.25159/1016-8427/6898>.

²¹ Mandubu, "Folklorisation and the Emergent Moral Degeneration: A Functionalist Approach."

²² Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al., "Child Abuse in Setswana Folktales."

²³ Ramohlale, Chauke, and Molotja, "Exploring the Role of Food in the Plot Development: A Study of Makgamatha (1994) Folktales ."

*Phuru thobokothoboko,
Phuru thobo!*

Serite then took the cows away from the village boys.

However, the incident of bullies (other village boys) attacking the victims (shepherd boys) when they were in the veld continued, even if the bullies were fought by Serite. Until the day, Serite decided to kill them all.

This folktale can be compared with real-life situations where a person who has more power or is stronger than others in communities (especially in schools and workplaces) bullies those who are weaker. The 'other village boys' can be compared to 'powerful or stronger people' both being bullies and 'shepherd boys' being compared with 'powerless or weaker people' who are victims. In bullying situations, 'bullies' attack 'victims' with the aim of taking with force something they want to possess. In bullying, any form of aggression can be used for different purposes.²⁴ In *Serite wee* folktale, the purpose was for the 'other village boys' to take all the cows from the 'shepherd boys' while in real-life situations the bullies may bully someone for material things such as books, lunchboxes, cell phones, clothes, etc. It is important for the victims of bullying to seek any form of help, regardless of their gender. Folktales often used songs as a means of expression, therefore the "shepherd boys" sang a song to ask for assistance. In real-life situations, help can be obtained from support groups in schools, work and societies.

Some of the bullies continue abusing the victim even if the victim seeks help or tries to avoid the situation. This aggressive behaviour of the bully forces the victim to use other means of defence such as using a weapon. In the '*Serite wee*' folktale, in the end, Serite killed the bullies (other village boys) because they did not stop taking cows from the 'shepherd boys'. Serite started by just fighting with them (other village boys) but they kept on attacking the 'shepherd boys'. At school, a learner who is a victim often runs away after school to avoid being bullied. In many cases, the bully will still chase the learner or even use others to chase that learner. After a while, the victim gets tired of being bullied because even bystanders most of the time do not offer help. The victim then defends him/herself to get away from the bully. Sometimes the victim will use the weapon to kill the bully, or the victim might commit suicide.

Bullying depicted in the folktale *mmutla le ditšhwene* 'hare and baboons'

Bullying is characterised as acts or behaviours directed towards an individual who finds it difficult to defend themselves. It can take the form of physical or non-physical personal harm or harassment.²⁵ The folktales about the hare are generally enjoyed by children because the hare most of the time is seen as a hero who can trick, fight, murder, and even bully big animals such as the lion, hyena, elephant, and baboon among others. *Mmutla 'hare'* is a small animal which is mostly used in folktales to teach children about different behaviours. In their study of moral degeneration in Setswana hare folktales, Boya and Ramagoshi analysed the behavioural themes such as tricks, murder and violence and bullying which depict a greater potential of exposing the audience to behaviour associated with the degeneration of morality.²⁶ Folktales about hares were told to children as a means of teaching them good morals and to also correct misbehaviour.

Ramohlale, Chauke and Molotja argue that food has always been the motivating factor for characters in Northern Sotho and many other African folktales to go out on their encounters, which has facilitated the development of the folktales' plots and, ultimately, the delivery of significant culturally instructive themes.²⁷

One day hare went out to hunt for food. On the way, hare thought of a trick, as he is always a trickster. The hare used his small size and speed to trick other animals, especially the bigger and slower ones. He first lured a lion into getting on top of the hut, and then he fastened the lion to the hut. While the lion was nailed to the top of the hut, the hare picked and ate meat one at a time. Even if the lion

²⁴ Juvonen and Graham, "Bullying in Schools: The Power of Bullies and the Plight of Victims."

²⁵ Tshabalala, "A Framework for the Management of Nurse Educator Bullying in Nursing Education Institutions."

²⁶ Thapelo Boya and Refilwe Ramagoshi, "Moral Degeneration in Setswana Hare Folktales: An Analysis of Behavioural Themes—Tricks, Murder and Violence," *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 32, no. 2 (2022): 15-pages.

²⁷ Ramohlale, Chauke, and Molotja, "Exploring the Role of Food in the Plot Development: A Study of Makgamatha (1994) Folktales."

refused to consume the flesh, the hare continued to eat. The lion struggled to free himself till he lost his power and died.

Then the hare removed the skin of the lion intending to wear it to bully other animals. The hare went to the baboons' place where he found baboons busy preparing food for their festival. One of the foods they were preparing was the traditional beer. The hare pretended to be a lion and bullied the baboons by instructing them one by one to put their fingers in the hot traditional beer by saying "*hina ka se, o hine ka se* 'put this one and put this'! Then the baboons will reply with pain and fear *ke a swa rakgolo* 'I am burning grandpa'. The word *hina* is just the folktale language used by the lion meaning 'put'. The hare used the lion's skin and the language to bully baboons. He continued with his instruction to all the baboons. The reason is, that if all baboons burned their fingers, by the time they discovered that it was not a lion but a hare, they would all be in pain and not be able to fight him back. Baboons were not aware that the guest was a hare, they thought it was a lion and all animals feared the lion which is why they called him *rakgolo* 'grandpa'. One day the smaller baboon realised that the bully was not the lion but the hare because sometimes the hare took off the lion's skin as it was heavy, and the smaller baboon noticed that. The smaller baboon told the elder baboons who also started checking this behaviour secretly, until one day they found the hare without the lion's skin, the skin was down. The baboons chased the hare but because of its speed, he ran away and the baboons could not catch him. In this folktale, the hare is the bully and the baboons are the victims.

In real-life situations, people who bully others pretend to have power and are strong by altering their physical appearances or their voices. For example in school situations, most of the time, bullies are learners who are physically fit and those who have high-pitched voices, with which they threaten the victims with *lešata* 'noise'. More often than not, bystanders are afraid of the bully because of those features. Bullies who have those qualities actually act strong, but if the victim ever learns how to defend themselves by fighting back, the bully will "run away." By intimidating others, bullies generally trick people.

In the folktale of *mmutla le ditšhwene* 'hare and baboons', the hare displayed the character of a trickster by tricking the lion into climbing on the top of the hut, then a murderer by nailing the lion on the hut until the lion dies and finally a bully by harassing the baboons with the lion's skin. This folktale emphasises the dynamics of power and control in bullying, where the bully maintains social or physical superiority by using their influence on the victim to create authority.

Discussion Summary

The study has revealed that bullying is a form of personal physical violence or harassment directed at someone who finds it difficult to protect themselves. In the two folktales discussed above, bullies used intimidation in the form of physical violence and physical power. Bullying in real life and in folktales is frequently characterised by an imbalance of power between the parties involved. Power might be characterised by physical strength, elevated social standing, or group members against an individual. Popular and dominating bullies exert control over their peers and the willingness of onlookers to help the victim.

There are methods/strategies used to prevent bullying and to deal with bullies. One of the methods is to report the bully to an adult like in the folktale of *Serite wee*. Is better to be an upstander than a bystander. An upstander takes a positive action to help the victim. In the folktale of *mmutla le ditšhwene* the small baboon helped other baboons by observing the behaviour of the hare until it found out that it (the hare) was not a lion. By being an upstander the victim might be saved. Based on the comparison, the study may offer insights into how to address bullying-related difficulties in modern situations or indicate ways that folktale cultural wisdom might enrich contemporary anti-bullying measures.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recently, much focus has been placed on contemporary bullying in schools and workplaces. The roots of bullying can be traced back through history and culture in folktales. By examining the way bullying is portrayed in folktales—whether through characters like the helpless victim or the malevolent aggressor—and comparing it to real-life situations, society can gain a deeper understanding of how bullying is both

a universal and timeless phenomenon. Storytelling offers a unique opportunity to explore the roots of bullying behaviour, societal responses to it, and the moral lessons that can be derived from these age-old stories. This comparative study seeks to illuminate how these narratives, both fictional and real, shape perceptions of bullying, its consequences, and potential pathways to resolution. Therefore, it is recommended that more contemporary literature in African languages should be written to educate schools and communities about the potential harm that bullying can do. It is also suggested that strategies to address bullying behaviour be devised, which might involve using literature, especially children's literature, to educate social and emotional skills.

CONCLUSION

Folktales have been playing an important part in African communities, especially in Northern Sotho speaker's communities. The stories which differ in content and tone involve various elements such as entertainment, education, humanity, results of actions, poverty, unemployment and other issues. In this way, folktales give people a collection of values, beliefs and attitudes plus certain already set patterns of behaviour. Their cultural values open the minds of the people to their immediate surroundings and the world in general. Many things that have been overlooked get new meaning and new dimensions. Folktales help the communities at all levels including the eradication of bullying.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author declares that there are no financial or personal relationships which have inappropriately influenced the writing of this study. The study is solely written by the author.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boya, Thapelo, and Refilwe Ramagoshi. "Moral Degeneration in Setswana Hare Folktales: An Analysis of Behavioural Themes—Tricks, Murder and Violence." *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 32, no. 2 (2022): 15-pages.
- Brank, Eve M, Lori A Hoetger, and Katherine P Hazen. "Bullying." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 8, no. 1 (2012): 213–30.
- Carpenter, Christopher, Franklin J Boster, and Kyle R Andrews. "Functional Attitude Theory." *The SAGE Handbook of Persuasion: Developments in Theory and Practice* 2 (2013): 104–19.
- Eşkisü, Mustafa. "The Relationship between Bullying, Family Functions, Perceived Social Support among High School Students." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 159 (2014): 492–96.
- Juvonen, Jaana, and Sandra Graham. "Bullying in Schools: The Power of Bullies and the Plight of Victims." *Annual Review of Psychology* 65, no. 1 (January 3, 2014): 159–85.
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-010213-115030>.
- Katz, Daniel. "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (1960): 163–204.
- Leedy, Paul D., and Jeanne E. Ormrod. *Practical Research: Planning and Design*. 7th ed. Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2001.
- Malimabe-Ramagoshi, Refilwe M., Jacobus G. Maree, Daleen Alexander, and Maisha M. Molepo. "Child Abuse in Setswana Folktales." *Early Child Development and Care* 177, no. 4 (May 2007): 433–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430600989072>.
- Mandubu, Siziwe. "Folklorisation and the Emergent Moral Degeneration: A Functionalist Approach." *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 30, no. 1 (March 15, 2021).
<https://doi.org/10.25159/1016-8427/6898>.
- Masuku, Norma. "Folklore and Its Influence on Homophobic Behaviour in the Zulu Culture: A Brief Analysis of Umamba Kamaquba." *Southern African Journal for Folklore Studies* 25, no. 3 (2015): s128–37.
- Mphasha, Lekau Eleazar. "Folktales Reveal the Cultural Values of the Community: A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis." *The Anthropologist* 19, no. 1 (2015): 295–302.
- Nkomo, Puleng S, Thebe J Segooa, N.I Phala, and Phillip P. Phokwane. *Lehlotlo Folklore Anthology*

(Sepedi) . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press , 2015.

Ramohlale, Isaac M, O.R Chauke, and T.W. Molotja. “Exploring the Role of Food in the Plot Development: A Study of Makgamatha (1994) Folktales .” *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice* 30, no. 5 (2024): 5277–82.

Tshabalala, Mathildah. “A Framework for the Management of Nurse Educator Bullying in Nursing Education Institutions.” University of South Africa, 2023.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Seleka Maria Tembane is a lecturer at the University of South Africa (UNISA). She is lecturing Sesotho sa Leboa to undergraduates and Honours students. She supervises Masters and Doctorate students. To develop and encourage multilingualism, she has translated documents (from English to Sesotho sa Leboa) for many institutions. Amongst her translation is a Sesotho sa Leboa novel *Megokgo ya Bjoko* by O.K Matsepe to English ‘Tears of the Brain’. Dr Tembane’ s specialised fields are: terminology development, sociolinguistics and traditional literature. She has presented papers in conferences and published an article in an accredited journal. She is an external moderator and examiner/assessor of several higher institutions and act as a reviewer of accredited journals. She is a member of Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) as Sesotho sa Leboa NLB and serve in SaDiLAR as Sesotho sa Leboa terminology quality assurer. She has published one article in an accredited journal and one book chapter. She has read papers in SAFOS and ALASA conferences.