

ANTHROPOMORPHISM AND SOCIAL ISSUES IN SELECTED NAMIBIAN  
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH STUDIES

OF

THE UNIVERSITY OF NAMIBIA

BY

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APRIL 2022

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## Abstract

This study explored the use of anthropomorphism in selected Namibian children's literature texts. The texts that formed part of the analysis were obtained from the anthology, *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) retold by Jennifer Davis, and *Mbinda* (1998) by Izona Bock. The aforementioned texts were selected because of their use of anthropomorphised animals to address social issues in the Namibian society. The stories analysed were from different tribes such as the Khoisan people, the Ovambo, the Kavango the Herero, Nama and the Damara. The stories are of a folklore nature; thus, they tell the stories from the cultural perspectives of the Namibian people. The study aimed to explore how anthropomorphism as a literary technique is used to communicate social issues in the selected Namibian's children literature. The analysis of the data was guided by the folklorist theory, as well as primary and secondary sources on the Namibian and African cultures. The study is qualitative literary research and employed thematic analysis of the selected short stories. From the analysis, it was revealed that social issues such as discrimination, environmental destruction, crime, corruption, abuse and poverty are some of the prevalent problems raised in the various societies in Namibia. The study further revealed that most of the social issues are the consequences of the colonial legacy, the mismanagement of the country's resources and a disregard for culture. Moreover, the analysis appeared to suggest that possible solutions to the problems could be an inclusion of traditional methods as well as the revival of the spirit of *Ubuntu* in Namibian societies. Finally, the researcher recommends further studies of children's literature that explore possible imaginative solutions to social issues currently faced in Namibia.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor and mentor, Dr Nelson Mlambo. This study would not have been possible without your guidance and support. I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my siblings: my sister, Clare Sikena and my brother, George Sikena. You two are the real MVPs. It was a tough time for me but you saw me through.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my beautiful mom, Florence Siyambango. My greatest love and inspiration.

## Declaration

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Mercy M. Mubuyaeta

06/28/22

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## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### **1.1. Introduction**

The chapter serves as an introduction to this study on anthropomorphism and social issues in selected Namibian children's literature. The chapter opens with the background of the study, followed by the statement of the problem, then objectives of the study, followed by the significance of the study, the limitations, delimitations, the outline of the study and finally the conclusion.

### **1.2. Background of the study**

Barton and Barton (2017) proffer that children's literature is an imperative tool in understanding the culture, norms, values, expectations and beliefs of a people since it is a medium through which cultural lessons and norms are transferred to the young generations. Africa has a rich oral literature catalogue which is increasingly being adapted for print as a way of spreading the stories to a larger audience (Sone, 2018). Print is only one of the most effective presentations that African authors use to record their stories, and relatedly, Yenika-Agbaw (2011) identified the following styles as some of the effective methods of presenting stories: bilingual picture books, graphic novels and YouTube videos (p. 27). The advancement of modern technology is said to be integral in the process of preservation and accessibility of the children's literature as the social landscape of the continent is constantly evolving from the time the when oral presentation was the most common, if not the only available method of

storytelling. Sone (2018) further argues that literature, especially of the folklore kind, “[teaches] critical and analytical thinking while at the same time stimulating the imagination and promoting ethical values” (p. 1), which is important for Namibia and Africa as a whole’s development as children are sensitised to the social issues within their locales. Grant the study aim to explore social issues presented in Namibian children’s literature via anthropomorphism, however, given the shared social and political history of most African countries; and the negative legacies of imperialism through the evils of corruption, poverty and the slow pace of development, in the grand scheme of things what applies to Namibia may apply to Africa and vice versa. Thus, Namibia in particular and Africa, in general are used interchangeably in some cases.

Though folklore and all things associated with it are greatly embraced and celebrated in African societies, the term folklore itself appears to carry a negative connotation in some African academic circles. According to Herskovits (2018), while folklore is synonymous with a long history of literature and culture upheld by non-city dwellers in Europe; in Africa the concept is thought to infer from the oral literature of the primitive and non-anglicised Africans. For this reason, Herskovits (2018) explicates that, some scholars would prefer the term ‘narrative’ in place of ‘folklore’. The researcher for this study however sees no conflict in the usage of the term folklore; as an avid reader of a wide range of literature, with a keen personal interest in genres concerned with fantasy and magic the term ‘folklore’ brings up feelings of warmth and adventure. The term exudes cultural grounding and appreciation. As such, the term folklore is used throughout the present research.

In most Bantu societies, children's literature seems to be mainly dominated by the folk genre. The stories are usually told by one person who makes sounds and at times even acts out sequences for his or her audience; the audience also partakes in storytelling process by singing along with the narrator if the story calls for it (Ihueze, 2015). According to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs [IWGIA] (n.d.) Namibia is a country mostly populated by Bantu groups such as the Ovambo, Ovatjimba, Ovatwa, Herero, Lozi, Subiya, Mafwe, Kwangali and Himba, to mention a few, therefore it can be expected that these storytelling practices of singing along and acting out scenes occur here as well. Moreover, folklore goes beyond make-believe stories to keep children entertained; as Martinez-Rivera (2017) notes, folklore is the intersectionality of history, oral narratives and cultural expression. Therefore, it can also be speculated that children's literature serves hedonistic and didactic purposes as well as fulfilling the important task of cultural transmission.

Burke and Copenhaver (2004) note that stories condition children with certain ideals and lessons which may have a life long-lasting impact on a child, and these ideals are informed by the culture of that society. Thus, it may suffice to say that lessons from children's literature line are societal and culturally influenced, therefore, how the child learns to negotiate social issues such as discrimination, disability and poverty is in most cases influenced by their immediate cultures. This line of reasoning may appear as a liner process in the western context, where children in formal learning environments being exposed to children's literature that are around in their homes is the norm. Yet for immigrant children, and children in the African context; the situation is a bit complex. This is because the children's literature they are exposed to in schools is that from the socially and economic dominant western cultures, and in most, cases they have limited access to their own cultures' literature even at the home. In later sections, it will be

explored why the matter of cultural exposure is critical to a child's development and their ability to grow into being valuable members of their respective society.

Some social issues may be perceived as sensitive or taboo, writers resort to subtle literary techniques to express themselves, one of which is anthropomorphism which forms a central in to this study. Anthropomorphism is described as giving nonhuman entities humanlike qualities (Epley et al., 2007). Anthropomorphism is similar to personification, however, according to Delbaere et al. (2011), personification tends to mean things figuratively or metaphorically for instance, 'thunder roared in the distance', while anthropomorphism allows the objects to literally act in ways that a human does, for example when the animals speak and wear human clothes. Furthermore, anthropomorphism is easily observed in stories of the folklore kind.

For this study, the researcher analysed nine selected short stories from the anthology *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) retold by Jennifer Davis, and the short story *Mbinda* (1998) by Izona Bock, which all use anthropomorphism to address issues that children may grapple within a more simplified manner which is also in line with the societal norms and beliefs. *Mbinda* (1998) is presented as bilingual picture story book, the stories are written in English and French side by side. While also accompanied by drawings provided by Paul Malubila. Whereas *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) is presented as a picture book with sketches by Libby Costandius that draw inspiration from the various Namibian cultures the stories were collected from.

Through non-human entities, Burke and Copenhaver (2004) note that can be able to comprehend the urgency of the matter on their terms. Scholars such as (Burke & Copenhaver,

2004; Derby, 1970) concur that this technique provides a safe space that functions as a window through which the child can learn about the world around him or her. Thus, Derby (1970) concludes that since anthropomorphism allows people to transfer human experiences onto other items or entities, it may be the lens through which humans can make sense of their role in the universe. In other words, anthropomorphic literature is a vessel through which humans explore life from the perspective of their environments.

The perspective of the environment cannot be ignored as the natural environment shapes the literature of the people who reside there. This is evident from the type of fauna and flora present in the stories. For instance, stories from Africa may feature lions while stories from Norway may feature wolves; while the message of the story could be similar. However, there are cases where cultural differences have it that the stories would be in contrast, this can be attributed to the different world view the culture in a particular society subscribes to. These different governing philosophies guide what stories are told to children, the manner they are told and the possible solutions to the societal problems experienced. In addition, worldview can even influence what is to be determined as a societal problem.

### **1.3. Statement of the problem**

Namibia has a rich canon of tales that use animals as the main characters, either to teach children lessons or explain certain phenomena. As concurred by Chinua Achebe, literature is not only written to entertain but also to educate the masses on societal issues (Etim, 2004), thus the issue of concern in this proposed study is with regards to how anthropomorphism, a largely

un-investigated phenomenon within Namibian children's literature, helps authors to present issues of importance to children through the use of stories. However, there is little information which is known about the anthropomorphism and social issues in children's literature in Namibia. Therefore, the rationale of this study is to cover gap which was overlooked by previous researchers.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study were to:

- 1.4.1 Examine the means through which social issues are presented in the selected short stories;
- 1.4.2 Analyse the significance of animals in the selected stories as well as in the society; and
- 1.4.3 Evaluate the ways in which the messages are conveyed through the use of the animals.

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The study makes a contribution to the body of Namibian children literature as well as the concept of anthropomorphism in Namibian literature. Furthermore, the researcher hopes that the study popularises the study of children's literature in Namibia, as Chitando (2017) declares that regardless of its richness and creativity, children's literature remains under-represented in the African context. The researcher further hopes that this study encourages readers, school teachers and curriculum developers to view Namibian children's literature as an integral tool in promoting reading culture among the children, as well as being a source of cultural

knowledge and medium of stimulating morals required for building a composed and steadfast nation.

Moreover, the use of the folklorist theory opens an avenue of exploring the knowledge ingrained in the various Namibian cultures and potential this knowledge has in addressing a number of social issues that plague the country. This is of significance as Namibia is relatively a new independent country that is still grappling with negotiating the colonial past and structuring itself in a modern global village.

## **1.6 Limitations of the study**

The study was confined to the investigation of societal issues through anthropomorphism in selected stories from *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) as retold by Jenifer Davis, and *Mbinda* (1998) by Izona Bock. Hence the findings cannot be generalised to other literary works which may share similar themes. Furthermore, the study used materials that were available and accessible to the researcher and that which is inaccessible was not considered. In addition, the study was informed by the folklorist theoretical framework.

## **1.7 Delimitations of the study**

The scope of the study was limited to eight short stories from the anthology *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) and one short stand-alone short story *Mbinda* (1998). This was to ensure the collection of manageable data; also, one theoretical

framework was used to inform the study for insightful analysis. There are a number of Namibian folklore tales that address social issues, however this study only focused on the stories that utilised the anthropomorphic literary technique from *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* anthology and *Mbinda* (1998). For these reasons, the findings and conclusions reached in this study cannot be generalised to other similar literary texts.

## **1.8 Outline of the chapters**

The present study is organised into five chapters and outlined as follows; chapter one is the introduction which includes the orientation of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study, the significance of the study, the limitations and delimitations of the study. There after follows chapter two which covers the literature review and the theoretical framework. This chapter which includes the relevant literature by academics in the field of children's literature and anthropomorphism, previous studies that are similar to the present study as well as the gaps identified ending off with a discussion on the folklorist theoretical framework.

Chapter three comprises of the research methodology, it outlines the research design, population, samples, procedure, and data analysis that were used in undertaking of the study as well as the research ethics adhered to in order to maintain the integrity of the study. Chapter four presents the data analysis and presentation of the findings obtained from the short stories in *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) and *Mbinda*

(1998). Chapter five states the conclusion and recommendations as observed from the study.

And finally, the references of the sources consulted for the study.

## **1.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter introduced the study, gave the background to the study, thereafter the statement of the problem. The chapter also listed the research objectives, included the significance of the study, furthermore; the limitations and delimitations of the study were identified. The following chapter encompasses the literature review as well as the theoretical framework which guided the study.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the review of literature on the subject of children's literature, social issues, anthropomorphism, and the symbolism behind certain animals in the African and Namibian cultural contexts. The literature consulted the folklorist theory which gave evidence and detailed analysis about the folklore in this study. The literature reviewed provided a foundation upon which the arguments raised in the research objectives were anchored. The study also examines the means through which social issues were presented in the selected short stories. The literature also consulted numerous researchers to analyse the significance of animals in selected stories as well as in the society. Finally, the study consulted previous researchers to evaluate the ways in which the messages are conveyed through the use of the animals.

### **2.2 Literature review**

This section focuses on the reviewed literature concerning anthropomorphism, folklore ideologies in presented in children's literature. The section will also include state of children's literature in Africa, children's rights symbolism in the form of animals utilised in the stories,

ending with a preview of previous similar studies as an effort to showcase the gap the present study attempts to fill.

### **2.2.1 Anthropomorphism, folklore and children's literature**

As indicated before (in chapter one, section 1.2), anthropomorphism is a literary technique in which non-human entities are given human like qualities as they act the role of characters in a story (Epley et al., 2020). Anthropomorphism is not only limited to literature, it extends to other items such as clothing, stationary, advertising and even everyday conversation; for instance, when a person says their cat is moody. In addition, the anthropomorphisms are important to children because it create clear, imaginative characters that children can copy from and this was supported by Fustich (2016) who postulated that anthropomorphism is abundant in in items targeted to children more than adults, such as cartoon shows, stationery with anthropomorphic characters and clothes.

Flood (2017) claimed that the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature is not a new phenomenon. Beginning from the years of oral literature in most civilisations there has been a presence of human-like animals in most stories, from Aesop's fables in Greece, the talking animals in the German fairy tales, to Anansi the spider tales in Africa. Anthropomorphism can also be found in riddles, poems, songs, plays, stories and art, all which are categorised under the folklore umbrella. Folklore is a term that was coined by John Thoms in 1846 according to Kondi (2018), Kondi (2018) further speculates that John Thoms settled on the term folklore as it was seen to describe the stories of the folks in the rural parts of England. Today, there exists

even urban folklores because folklorists have accepted that Folklore gives wisdom to understand different world views. It showcases all problems and successes happened in every culture and throughout different periods of history. Gupta (2013, p. 7) proffered that “folklore literature is a constituent of myths, legends, fairy tales, animal tales, riddles, proverbs, ballads, chants, and songs.” In addition, Adie and Afo (2018) advocated that folklore was an oral nature and the tales was told by gifted people like teachers who impressively narrative skills that would help the development of children. It is even possible to infer that folklore tales brought together members of a family or community for entertainment purposes.

Folklore is a considerably rich with concerns of the people and may also reveal the possible solutions to the problems. It is for this reason that the concept of folklore is imperative to this study concerning social issues as presented in Namibian children’s literature. Chengcheng (2020) postulated that folklore cannot be contained in one box as it has multiple faces; but the creativity of folklore indicated that a young human mind, when nurtured effectively with positive literature and life teachings, has the capacity to mature into a creative and critical thinking mind to solve numerous problems experienced in the society.

However, Richards (2013) postulated that tales were made to show the events which are happening in real life and these tales express the inequality between men and women, inequality between whites and blacks which brought suffering, tragedy, and the fear of the unknown among back people. In addition, folklore is transmitted from one generation to another, enriching young people with norms, values, beliefs, imagination, creativity and it comparing similarities and differences that arise in particular cultures and how these contribute to human experience at large. (Pulimeno, et al. 2018).

Folklore is a considerably rich with concerns of the people and may also reveal the possible solutions to the problems. It is for this reason the concept of folklore is imperative to this study concerning social issues as presented in Namibian children's literature. In addition, as a general premise, folktales forming the personality amongst the members in the community since it is assumed that personality is significantly informed by culture. This means that folklore as children's literature provides effective and positive life teachings which helps to shape individual personalities in the communities. Moreover, folklore develop children creativity in various ways, while others extend children's knowledge in a number of phenomena they encounter and interact with in their environment and beyond. Therefore, as children learn from the events and characters they encounter in the books, their emotional intelligence and imagination develops too which helps to counter the problems they encounter in their communities (Kangira, 2021). African folklore is a powerful pedagogical tool for communicating the people's knowledge and wisdom. Far from being a mere source of entertainment, the story helps to sharpen the people's creativity and imagination, to shape their behaviour, to train their intellect and to regulate their emotions (Tuwe, 2016).

### **2.2.2 Philosophies and ideologies in children's literature**

Van Ditmars (2017) suggested how a child would attempt to solve the societal problems is dependent on the philosophies, ideologies and beliefs followed by the society they grow up in. Unfortunately, it is rare for a community to strictly follow one political philosophy exclusively. This is because other factors such as religion, social class, race and cultural beliefs come into

play. Thus, in a multicultural society, people support different philosophies. Glicken (2010) noted that due to this conflict in ideologies, people react at a slow pace towards solving social issues that arise, since one proposed solution may not appeal to the opposing side. Moreover, van Ditmars (2017) states that it becomes challenging for members of a society to openly criticise their perceived opponent's views and justify their own beliefs especially when it comes to communicating these ideologies to children. Therefore, the use of anthropomorphism in children's literature becomes an inexplicit medium for authors and publishers to advance their philosophies without making it too obvious and creating conflict among the people.

### **2.2.3 Social issues as depicted in folklore**

The present study concerns itself with social issues as they are presented in Namibian children's literature through the means of the anthropomorphism literary technique. In Africa, literary scholarship, particularly the folklore has continued to serve as the voice of the dispossessed, oppressed, hungry and neglected individuals in various nations of the continent from colonization till date (Ngozi (2017, p 19). Malaba (2015) remarks that, just like in most African countries, Namibia's proclamation of independence drew the attention of many disgruntled folktales in different anthologies to "express the ongoing need to fight for equality, freedom and an end to exploitation in social and domestic spheres" (p. 55).

The first question to answer is: how do people realise that a problem has become a fully-fledged social issue? According to Mahoney (2003), as cited in Glicken (2010), the problem has to meet the following four criteria (p. 7):

1. The condition or situation must be publicly seen as a social problem because of a public outcry;
2. The condition must be at odds with the values of the larger society which means that the dominating norms and values in the society must be respected by the minorities in order to prevent the possibilities of conflicts.
3. Most people must be in agreement that a problem exists because there are many problems which exist in societies such as poverty, exploitation of other people, inequality and other unacceptable behaviours which could cause multiple problems.
4. And there must be a solution to a social problem for instance social inequality can be solved by promote equality among men and women, white and blacks to mention the few.

Katsonga-Phiri et al. (2017) believed that children tend to be the most affected by unresolved social problems and this results in an adverse effect on mental and physical of people. The situation is further intensified by the stigma surrounding mental health in most societies. Equally, Staszack (2008) reports that undiagnosed and untreated physical and mental illnesses promote discrimination among community members; this causes more divides than necessary and a lack of harmony. This possible reality was explored in Dhantal and Rani's (2018) paper on *Black Beauty* which discussed the topic of rape and how it was portrayed in the novel. Dhantal and Rani (2018) likened the taming of the horse called Ginger to an act of rape since

the men tasked with handling and adorning her with the necessary equipment for riding are described as violent in the manner they pushed Ginger around, forcibly holding her in place and eventually riding her. Dhantal and Rani (2018) further add that after this ordeal Ginger is said to become somewhat bitter to other humans and horses around her and it is only after she finds a new home where her new owner treats her with respect and tenderness does she shed the armoury of rudeness and spite.

Furthermore, Dhantal and Rani (2018) recognise that Black Beauty himself suffers from an untreated foot injury, and the humans who encounter him shrug off his injury to lameness. Thus, he is treated badly due to his deformity, he is incapable of being the best horse he can be due to the ill-treatment he receives regardless of his loving and intelligent nature. This shows that untreated psychological problems, have just as profound consequences as the physical afflictions. And when both are not addressed and treated, they can easily destroy the great potential an individual might have. It is then rather quite unfortunate that a number of Namibian children may be facing such a reality daily and this is caused by inequality, domestic issues gender issues which have never been addressed up to date (Mushonga, 2018).

As much as this sounds as an urgent matter; there is still a need to first recognise which path to follow when resolving these problems or even preventing them from occurring, as stated before, people tend to have affinities for different social and political philosophies and ideologies. Glicken (2010) stated that there are four major political philosophies that govern social issues in communities, namely:

1. Libertarianism

2. Conservative
3. Communism
4. Socialism

The relationship between political philosophies, culture and social issues, is a dynamic one and it is an inescapable truth that the factors influence each other (Malaba, 2015). Granted other sub factors such as gender, age, and even the state of the country also come into play. For instance; it could be predicted that a Christian middle class family residing in the financially well-off parts of town would raise a son who will easily adopt the conservative ideology his family subscribes to and go forth to seek a life partner with similar views and continue the tradition. Whereas, a daughter of a blue-collar family living in a poverty and crime ridden side of town with limited basic facilities such as health care and quality education is more likely to hold communist/socialist ideologies (kazavanga, 2018 & Richards, 2013). However, this generalisation is not quite simple, in some cases it speculated that the level of formal education tends to also affect one's political view (Malaba, 2015). Crash Course (2015) speculates that people who receive higher education are most likely to be more aware of gender and social inequality and discrimination and thus be inclined to be liberals. Herein, it becomes notable why there is quite an interest in the type of literature that children in their formative years are exposed to, because it can be inferred that these early teachings become part of the child's foundation in how they perceive and understand their world.

Fustich (2016) supposes that children's literature is no place for adults to communicate and propel their ideologies, nor teach children about their society's morals and expectations; they are of the belief children's literature is purely for entertainment. Reese (2000) however, argues

that this movement is an idealistic which value imagination. Reese (2000) observes that language is abundant with symbols and motifs, fortunately or unfortunately; depending on the school of thought one follows, literature, especially of the folklore kind will be riddled with symbols and motifs that reinforce the desired beliefs. It can also be speculated that as language and societies evolve, certain images, symbols or motifs in a story can take on a new meaning. Thus, it becomes impossible for any story to remain void of any ideologies, or philosophy even if the author never intended such a purpose. The decision by Seuss Enterprise to discontinue the publishing of six Dr Seuss' books due to their alleged problematic racial portrayals is an illustration of this (Watts & Asmelash, 2021). Watts and Asmelash (2021) notes that the six books are: *And to Think I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (1937), *If I Ran the Zoo* (1950), *McElligot's Pool* (1947), *On Beyond Zebra!* (1955), *Scrambled Eggs Super!* (1953) and *The Cat's Quizzer* (1976). The debate is on whether Dr Seuss intended to be racist or the language and symbols used in the stories were merely a product of his time as such the present-day readers should not read the stories with modern lens which are in accordance with the current socio-political environment.

According to Delbaere et al. (2011), anthropomorphism is usually capable of producing positive reactions in the receiver of the message. However, Fullmer (2017) recognised that in a few places talking animals and the literature that features them are frowned upon. Fullmer (2017) stated that the reasons for this may include religious reasons, such as in the case of Jews and Muslims and their attitude towards pigs, or political reasons.

### **2.2.4 Children's literature in Africa**

Written African children's literature has its roots in oral literature. The writing and publication process is relatively new to the story telling art in Africa, but Granqvist and Martini (2001) acknowledge that the few that have been published have received attention in the academic circles by being analysed, critiqued, reviewed and studied. Moreover, folklorists Herskovits' (2018) stance that folklore cannot necessarily be claimed by an individual who performs the song, play, or tells the story; for they are merely agents who act out a communal intellectual property. The author further stated that most of the oral literature is part of a community's shared history and art, thus it is for this reason that many stories cannot be claimed by one person and an 'author' can only take 'complier' status.

It is this methodology subscribers of the devolutionary approach to folklore study are seeking to legitimise in the field. Koner (2013) postulated that stories could not actually breathe, but they can animate and change with social class of the story teller and the listener which evolves with the people. However, it cannot be denied that seeking the oldest versions of the stories is a somewhat important task as they still hold vast knowledge that remains important in understanding the people and also makes it easier to trace the changes the people have undergone as the story has been modified. The original version of folktales is a futile task this is because humans are forever engaging with each other and this results in cross culture transfer which may influence a certain story (Koner, 2013). It can even be observed that in a homogenous society; a story will tend to change in accordance with happenings within the society; e.g., political and military coups, plagues, natural disasters or even technological advances.

During the 1980s, African children's literature lacked visible representation in academic circles and school settings as Africa moved into the early 2000s, indicated that the studying of African children's literature was gaining traction (Granqvist & Martini; 2001). However, in most African schools, the children's literature of choice was mainly dominated by western children's literature. Which was a worrying reality as Chinweizu (1999) as cited in Reese (2013) "What kind of people we become depends crucially on the stories we are nurtured on." (p. 35). Thus, if the children grow up on western culture stories, in the long run it creates a scenario in which the children will be confused as to how they negotiate their identities moulded by their formal education and their identities as stipulated in their societies as they have been nurtured on foreign concepts not necessarily observed in their immediate surroundings. A situation that Frantz Fanon identified clearly by naming *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Therefore, the minimal presence of children's literature by African authors in school settings is not one to take lightly. It has devastating effects on the wellbeing of the African child, and the African populace as a whole. Granqvist and Martini (2001) emphasise the importance of exposing African children to literature written for them by their own people as it is a rich source of cultural transmission, moreover, the stories communicate the African child's role in their communities and better equips them with the confidence required to be valuable members of society. It is quite intriguing how there are so many African stories known by African elders; yet very few find their way into books. As the narrative held is that there are few African children's literature authors.

Western children's literature authors are usually widely known and their life story may have some effect on how their books are read and received (Osa 1985). Meanwhile, African

children's literature authors hardly receive any recognition; they appear to be faceless artists. Osaki (2004) stipulates that, African children's authors also deserve admiration and respect for the effort they put in shaping future minds, however, bibliography database is main challenges which is missing from several published stories. While this may be true, the researcher is of the opinion that instead of an author database, they should be a tribal or cultural database cataloguing the tribe who tell the story. Which may seem as a more viable and sound suggestion as the folklore literature encompasses cultural and indigenous knowledge of the people.

### **2.2.5 Children's literature and children's rights**

The 1959 United Nations' Declaration of the Rights of the Child included a decree that called for children to have access to education that is in line with the child's native culture (Osa, 1995). The significance of this principle cannot be over emphasised, especially in relation to Africa's history with colonialism. Osa (1995) observed that when missionary schools were first established and colonialism was on the onset; the type of literature available to those who attended schools was mainly European inspired as it carried European ideals, values, and characters. Furthermore, according to Osaki (2003) this occurrence is still observed in most parts of Africa, where learners are first introduced to western children's literature in the early grades and eventually read African literature at higher grades. Which was not entirely out of place since some of the purposes of colonial education was to anglicize African citizens just sufficiently enough for him or her to relate more to the European culture than his or her native culture. In essence, colonial era literature contributed greatly to the creation of the 'other'. Therefore, Granqvist and Martini (2001), claim that the presence of African children's literature signifies a society in which an African child is nurtured and made aware of their rights, and is

made aware of what is expected of them due to these rights. Children's literature that celebrates their natural surroundings, their skin, their songs, the norms, their food, their beliefs and the heroes of their history (both fictional and non-fictional) counterattacks the othering process.

When one delves into the issue of the 'other', children's rights and literature, it becomes apparent why it would be petitioned for children to have education and literature that reiterates their values and culture as a whole. To begin with, the concept of the 'other', according to Ingram (2012) was instrumental in colonising the new world; imperialist had to instil the illusion that non-European people were culturally, intellectual and financially inferior to their European counterparts. The 'other' is described as the notion of making people on the fringes of society believe that their way of life or being is abnormal or unusual, even alien, in contrast the in-crowd (Ingram, 2012). As Ingram (2012) reiterates, the in-crowd assumes the role of 'enlightening' the socially marginalised to the extent that they, too adopt the in-crowd's belief system and way of being; as a result of this 'enlightening'; the natives may consciously or subconsciously disassociate themselves from their native culture and begin to view it as primitive or backwards. Thus, there rises a situation in which certain faction of the native people associate easily with the European culture yet they are not accepted as equals by the people of European descent. And simultaneously, they cannot fully relate to their fellow natives who are rooted in their indigenous culture since the rooted natives may view the anglicised as cultural betrayers. This all gives rise to the prevalence of discrimination and inequality in the African multicultural settings.

According to Todres and Higinbotham (2013), children's rights are essential to a community's development and peace as the children eventually become adults. As such, it can be inferred

that children without rights or oblivious to their rights become adults who have little understanding of their rights, therefore, being quite susceptible to discriminatory acts. While children who are aware of their rights from a young age have a better chance of becoming adults who are able to function within their rights in a society thus leaving little room for negative social issues to affect the community on a grand scale. Todres and Higinbotham (2013) also note that the childhood experience is to a lesser extent influenced by the literature available to the child therefore it is imperative for a child to have access to literature that validates their being, and makes them aware of the rights they possess as children and eventually the rights and responsibility they will be accorded when they reach adulthood. It can then be implied that the children with this knowledge may make a better transition into their adulthood; unlike those left to their own ways without guidance.

It is amendable of the United Nations to charter rights for children to have education which does not down play their cultures or the achievements of their native people. Moreover, it has been identified that children's literature is a sure effective way to ensure cultural transmission (Osa, 1995). Thus, Staszak (2008) notes that children who are exposed to native literature from a young age, grow up feeling empowered and less likely to look down on their culture whilst admiring another culture to the extent of developing an 'inferiority complex'. It should go without saying that if one is consumed with self-hatred that is drawn from the social climate in their society; that individual may find it hard to be a valuable and caring member of their society. They may subconsciously act out in ways that enable discrimination and oppression. For a country like Namibia that faced numerous years under colonial rule in which genocide ensued, and segregation along the racial lines was the norm; whatever tools the parents, community leaders, teachers and even political leaders can employ to rehabilitate the nation

at large from these psychological scars is of importance. And children's literature is one of those tools, yet it receives little endorsement.

### **2.2.6 Conceptualising children's literature?**

There are two schools of thoughts who have attempted to clarify what children literature should be defines as, the anti-definers and definers (Gubar, 2011). Gubar (2011) goes on to say that the anti-definers contend that children's literature as a genre cannot be boxed-in according to a few recognisable traits that can be spotted across all texts that are said to fall under children's literature. Gubar (2011) explains that the anti-definers feel that partitioning children's literature versus adult's literature is a pointless endeavour since what constitutes as children's literature varies from one culture to the next and one-time period to the next. Gubar (2011) furthermore states that as of the 1970s what currently is widely accepted as children's literature in the academic circles has been influenced by the western ideals of what is considered childhood. If one follows this path, certain books published in the earlier century-when childhood was a different concept- will fall out of the genre. Not only that, but Gubar (2011) realises that this line of thinking tends to marginalise other less dominant culture's literature for children as they may not mirror what is thought to be a child from a mainstream western perspective. For these reasons, antidefiners according to Gubar (2011) suggest scholars ought to rather look at children's literature not only as a clear-cut genre on its own but as a family, held together by certain links.

Meanwhile, Osa (1985) proffers that children's literature is defined by its target audience; which is the child. This definition may appear to be straightforward however it raises some problems of its own to start with, how do scholars then categorise texts initially written for adults which were abridged, simplified and censored for children, such as in the case of the Grimm brothers' tales? And secondly what of texts written for adults which children began to read and enjoy? One may be tempted to suggest that children's literature could be literature written by children, which of course is a troubling definition as it eliminates almost, if not all, classics ever written from Dr Seuss to Charles Dickens who are all adult men who wrote children's stories.

A clear-cut definition that is agreed upon by all involved parties remains elusive, and according to Mourad (2005), this is because academia is yet to establish the traits of children's literature that can accommodate texts written in different time periods when the notion of childhood differed. But it may not need to be so. All the contested definitions offer certain wisdom and enlightenment on what children's literature was, is, and has the possibility to be. Hence, the researcher reached the conclusion that children's literature is literature written to encompass the values of a society in a manner that may appeal to the youngest of the society and in a language that is suitable for children.

### **2.2.7 Animals used in African children's literature**

Fustich (2016) indicated that anthropomorphic characters are usually known by their colloquial name in a story; i.e., a lion character will be called Lion, and a jackal will be called Jackal and so forth. Fustich (2016) further claims this is done to frame the animal or character in the

context of the story where aspects such as gender, race, social standing or religion are not necessary to the plot but can be acknowledged in the case where they are of relevance to the story. (Ihueze,2015) Claimed that sometimes certain animals due to their qualities and characteristics are used as symbols for particular human traits or even natural phenomena. The symbolic status of the animal and the qualities attributed to it are dependent on a people's belief system, environment, history and religion. These afore mentioned features according to Schmind (2012), are what Ferdinand de Saussure notes are the sign, signifier, and signified, de Saussure emphasised the fact that there is no tangible connection between the word and the entity itself as it exists in the world. This is why a given animal would carry conflicting statuses and names in various societies, as the external factors aforementioned; affect a people's perception. A simple example of this would be the perception of an owl; in the western context it is perceived as a wise bird thus it has come to be synonymous with wisdom in most western art, film and popular culture. Meanwhile in an African context, an owl is usually seen as an omen of death or sickness, as such in an African story or film; the sight of an owl adds an eerie atmosphere to the story.

Cultural knowledge of wild animals encompasses their migratory patterns, their hunting patterns, their strengths and weaknesses; this knowledge is then used to create generalised ideas and beliefs about the animals and apply human characteristics to the animals; thus anthropomorphising the animals and turning them into symbols for certain qualities. Jon Solo (2021) gives an example of the mythology of Hercules and the Nemean lion, and how the lion came to be used in marking tombs of important people. It is said that during the killing of the Nemean lion, which was one of his twelve labours, the Greek hero lost one of his fingers while slaying the lion. In the aftermath, the locals built the severed finger a tomb and adorned the tomb with a statue of a lion.

In Africa, Namibia particularly, Crandall (2002, p. 293) observed that “The folklore of the Himba of North-western Namibia exhibits certain features common to the folklore of many African peoples, including depictions of the tortoise as a wise creature, the jackal as a clever one, and the hyena as hapless and slow-witted, as an animal easily exploited and bested by its fellows”. These similarities may be as a result of different tribes or cultures coming into contact and engaging in an exchange of knowledge; or it could possibly be a case of coincidence.

Udechukwu (2019) notes that great animals such as the buffalo and lions are thought to be representative of God on earth, thus they are associated with security, wisdom and power. Interestingly, through personal information with George Siken (2021), the researcher was made aware that the MaLozi people who reside in Western Zambia and North-east Namibia, believe that in instances where people are to make a long journey through the forest an elder of the clan would ask the ancestors to provide protection and guidance for the travelling group. And it is said during the night, a lone lion would occasionally appear to the group and walk a short distance in front of them, and when they were to set up camp the same lion would prowl around the site growling as if to scare off potential predators or enemies. Toure (2018) provides additional support on this notion by stating that “In Africa, the lion, like all other felines, are also believed to possess special powers of protection” (para. 4). Toure (2018) also adds that “The lion is also considered ‘the beast of a thousand omens’ by African healers: if a man travelling sees a lion crossing his path from left to right, it’s considered that he will acquire wealth by his journey’s end” (para. 7).

Another animal associated with a higher power is the spider, this character was popularised by the western Africa folklores of Anasi the spider. He is said to be a wise yet cunning being (Udechukwu, 2019). Udechukwu (2019) further reports, the Akan and Ashanti people revere the spider as a wise and great God. Through personal talks with George Siken (personal communication, 2021) the researcher came to know that in the MaLozi people's mythology there is also mention of the spider, the most popular story concerning spider goes:

‘Once upon a time Nyambe (God) lived on earth with all his creations, all was well until the animals constantly came to him with complaints about how he had created them, the fights that would erupt between the creations. This went on until one day Nyambe grew tired of it. Nyambe contemplated how he could once again live in peace. Spider feeling pity for his creator he suggested a plan. He would spin a web that would take Nyambe and his wife to the heavens after that spider's eyes would be plucked out so that he would not be able to show the other animals the way Nyambe went up. They went about it and Nyambe escaped. To this day spider still weaves webs, but because he too doesn't remember location Nyambe ascended on, he weaves them all over the place just in case Nyambe would like to come down and visit his creations again.’

Udechuhwu (2019), further notes that the tortoise and chameleon are harbingers of death, as such it seen as an extremely bad omen when a chameleon falls on an individual; for this reason, it is observed that some people tend to avoid sitting directly under a tree. Also, Udechuhwu (2019) adds that seeing a tortoise tipping over onto its back is sign of horrible things to come. Moreover, Udechuhwu (2019) notes that the apparent observed characterises; either observed or attributed to an animal, can be highlighted through the animal acting out certain human

rituals, for instance placing an animal such as a tortoise in white cloth which are usually worn by the wise and prophetic in most African societies. This is done to put emphasis on the story's lesson or meaning.

### **2.2.8 Previous similar studies conducted on anthropomorphism in children's literature**

As stated previously in chapter one, section 1.3, most studies conducted on the topic of anthropomorphism in children's literature are usually by western scholars and usually on western texts. Below are a few of some studies that have been tackled the issue of anthropomorphism in children's literature.

Firstly, is Markowsky's 1975 study that suggested that the publishing of *Black Beauty* (1877) was an integral factor in encouraging new found respect for anthropomorphism in children's literature and literature as a whole in the academic circles. Markowsky's (1975) study titled "*Why anthropomorphism in children's literature*", concluded that the animals in children's literature are said to be there for the purpose of children to easily identify with the characters. Anthropomorphism adds a whimsical element not only to the stories but to real life as well. In the sense that, for some people after reading about anthropomorphic characters there is a lingering sense of wonder that do animals actually talk when humans are absent, this may trigger the reader to show more compassion to animals and humans around them. Thus, anthropomorphic characters encourage people to be better in their day to day lives.

Moreover, Markowsky (1975)'s study also showed that the use of images and symbolism helps to propel the story faster, there is little need for the story's exposition or character exposition and growth. General knowledge of the animal and illustration is all that is required in some cases to bring the reader up to speed, for example, an illustration of an eagle circling some chicks, and a mother hen rushing to shield her chicks already shows the reader that the eagle is a predator wanting to snatch up one of the vulnerable chicks and the mother hen is attempting to shield and protect her young. This can be the surface level interpretation of the story to the child, but as the child grows older and they learn more about their language, culture and surroundings; the story gains a profound interpretation. For instance, when HIV/AIDS was at its peak in the region of Zambezi the locals would refer to the virus and disease as 'simbandembande' which is a name for predatory birds who prey on small animals; especially chicks, thus the story can eventually be read as that of a mother attempting to shield her vulnerable children from people who may try to engage them in activities that would put their health and lives at risk. But this realisation can only actualise if one is aware of the symbolism or cultural significance that the animals in the story carries. Hence why the advocacy for Namibian children to read stories that include animals they are aware of in their surroundings, rather than foreign animals.

Ganea et al. (2014) in their study, "*Do cavies talk? The effect of anthropomorphic picture books on children's knowledge about animals*", declared that the quality of the illustration and paper have an effect on the engagement of the child and the book. It was found that better quality illustration promoted better and positive engagement, thus eagerness to read and learn more from the text. While the lower quality illustration stirs less interest for child to read the text.

This perspective supports Osa (1985)'s observation that one of the obstacles that hinders children's literature in Africa is the lack of or minimum availability of artists who can produce high quality illustrations, and have them printed on high quality paper using high quality printing materials. Osa (1985) further notes that this creates a situation in which the children are less eager to read the local story books and more likely to read western story books which will obviously use western animals and exhibit western ideals. This results in less indigenous and societal knowledge being passed down to the younger generation. This indicates that aesthetics also play a role when it comes to children and their parents or caregivers choosing story books.

Furthermore, Ganea et al.'s (2014) study showed interest in uncovering if anthropomorphism has any influence on how the young reader receive and decode information about animals in the stories that utilise the anthropomorphism technique. Their study added an element of ecocriticism, and ecocriticism which is concerned with the environment's wellbeing is in line with social issues that arise from environmental destruction such loss of shelter, food and water sources; aspects that the researcher tackled in the present study (Andimba, 2017). This shows that the use of anthropomorphism is vital in introducing children to the wild animals and the environment as well.

This realisation was also observed in Diew-Loth's (2018) study "*Tradition or Translation? Anthropomorphism in Nuer literature*". The study's focus was on the Nuer people of South Sudan and their anthropomorphic folklore literature that had been translated into English so it

can reach a wider audience. Diew-Loth (2018) notes that the Nuer people's literature was structured in such a way that both animals and humans are on equal footing. There is an erasure of the trope of humans as the species at the top of the hierarchy to the more realistic picture that entails that humans are also just another of the many species that occupy earth. In addition, Diew-Loth (2018) states that the Nuer's literature shows that humans are also at the mercy of mother nature's forces, this realisation is a much-needed humbling wakeup call that humanity needs in relation to the environmental destruction.

### **2.3 Theoretical framework**

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a theoretical framework is the model via which the researcher will analyse the gathered data. While a framework, as defined by Noori (2021), reads as "the structure and support that may be used as both the launching point and the ongoing guidelines for investigating a research problem" (p. 20). Thus, it may be concluded that a theoretical framework is a systematic strategy a researcher employs when undertaking a study to ensure the study provides practical results to present to his or her peers.

Kivunja (2018) advises that a theoretical framework functions as a guide from the great thinkers in the field of study on:

- What to look for in the data;
- How to interpret the data;
- How to make connections or recognise relationships between the observed subjects;
- and
- How to structure and relay the findings via a discussion.

The aforementioned aspects are applied in accordance with the folklorist theory. The folklorist theoretical framework was used as a guideline on how to extract data from the selected stories and interpret and display the findings.

### **2.3.1 Folklorist theory**

The folklorist theory concerns itself with the production, presenting and documentation of stories that fall under the folklore theory. According to Winick (2014), in 1846, William John Thoms grew concerned about the effect that rapid transportation and communication systems had on the folklore as told in rural areas; thus the folklorist theory was created as a lens to observe and document folklore for publication. Winick (2014) further claims that initially, the theory was meant to inform folklorists how to better capture the literature as told by the natives, with little interference from the researcher as possible, for studying purposes. However, Winick (2014) reports that with time the theory has evolved to also include methods on how analyse the collected stories for purposes of better understanding the culture of the people. In each case, Gencarella (2011) acknowledges that the theory appears to be dragging its feet with this evolution, hence the lack of folklore literature in humanities studies that seek to evaluate the current social environments; in a way that other theories such as feminism are making waves and solidifying themselves as prominent theories that can govern a literary study. Baron (2016) speculates that this delay may have been caused by the early folklorists' reluctance on expanding what was accepted as folklore and the methods of deconstructing and analysing the stories.

It is the researcher's understanding that the short stories used in this study are a practical example of what William J. Thoms aimed to achieve with this theory. In the preface of the book, Jennifer Davis informs the reader, all the short stories *from The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) were collected from the diverse cultural backgrounds in the rural parts of Namibia and she repackaged them in English for easy access to most children, and adults who may not necessarily speak the native language of the people from which the story originates. On the other hand, *Mbinda* (1998) by Izona Bock, is the result of the cultural and reading awareness programme by the Namibian Ministry of Basic Education and Culture and the French Mission for Co-operation and Cultural Action. The aforementioned stories capture the cultural essence of the people, this includes but not limited to: the names of the characters and places in the story (if applicable), and the artefacts displayed in the story. The documentation and presentation of the stories is academically credible and preserves and dignifies the cultures presented. It is for this reason Oring (1976) declared that folklorists are social scientists who examine the nuanced aspects that contribute to a society's functioning as they are presented in the stories most aligned with tradition and culture.

Guided by the study's objectives, the researcher will attempt to uncover the function of anthropomorphism in the stories as well as in the society, as children's literature; especially of the folklore kind, and culture are closely tied and often intersect to the extent that the two complement each other. As Kondi (2018) reports, anthropologist Franz Boas integrated the fields of anthropology and folk literature as a means to better understand a people's beliefs on a range of issues including the cosmos, creation, and social harmony. It can be said folklore is the closest we can get to time travelling and understanding the human mind its comprehension of the human's place in the universe.

Chakraborty (2018) claims that Boaz subscribed to the notion that the human experience transcends nature, physical barriers, language barriers, space and time; what's more, there are connections to all the aforementioned factors that when studied side by side social scientists are able to gain better insight into humanity. Which is lot of what linguistic anthropology in itself is about, taking time to uncover the people's living system and slowly attempt to understand life from their perspective by studying their language use. According to Bascom (1953), children's literature, especially the folklore genre, is in line with one of the recognised branches of anthropology, namely the cultural anthropology. Bascom (1953) emphasises that, "folklore, however, falls squarely within the fourth field, cultural anthropology, which is concerned with the study of customs, traditions, and institutions of living peoples" (p. 283). As such it can be inferred that it is a folklorist's duty to dissect these stories that observe societal problems are expressed to the younger generation as well as suggestions of solutions. By this reasoning, this study shall attempt dissect the language and literary devices used in the short stories in an effort to reveal the problems identified in Namibian children's literature.

Thus far, it has been established that folklore is more than just entertainment for the society members, it also serves an integral role of ensuring that a society's life process is maintained through perpetuating the norms, values, expectations, thus social and cultural preservation (Oring, 1976). Lewis (2010) posits that though William J. Thoms holds an integral position in the field of folklore as the person who coined the term and laid the foundations of the discipline; it is Sir George Laurence Gomme whose work has had a more profound impact on the discipline. Thus, his contributions will also be discussed in this section. Gomme's approach to folklore incorporated a sociological, ethnological and historical perspective (Lewis, 2010).

Gomme's 'social institution' study approach to folklore is suitable for a folklore study based in an African country. Due to the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, and the colonial past and after effects on the language and literature of the people. Gomme (2012) declares that folklore is an intersection of history and psychology; that is to say folklore tales tell of the events that happen but after they have been filtered by the human mind, conceptualised and expressed through tales, riddles, songs and poems, to name a few, in a way that is both fascinating and educational. Gomme (2012) further encourages people to critically examine the barriers between what is deemed as myth and factual history; because in some cases a myth may be an occurrence that has been overly romanticised, but yet still possess some truth in it. Herskovits (2018) speculates that in mainstream history African myths are easily accepted as myths; yet European myths are treated differently, researchers approach their study in a manner that leaves room for the story to actually be real. It is such scenarios and realities that drove Gomme (2012) to conclude that when studying folklore, taking into account the people and their shared political and social history makes a major difference on the results that the study will produce. Granted it can be speculated that the way he expressed these views may have an air of prejudice to them. However, this reality does highlight why African native folklore should be documented and studied in accordance to the histories of the people and not from an outsider's perspective.

Herskovits (2018) makes mention of the harmful stereotypes in the study of folklore, especially by non-African scholars. The lack of understanding the social, religious and political complexities of the various African cultural groups tends to produce unfounded claims. Osa (2001) recommends for readers and scholars alike to understand that African stories are meant to represent the African reality for the African audience as such they should be read with this in mind if one is to truly appreciate the artistry and the message as presented in these stories.

A relevant notion in studies concerning linguistic anthropology, as it can be expected that approaching a study of another culture with preconceived notions tends to discredit a study from the start as Talhem (2019) takes note. However, it should be noted that resources to document each culture or tribe's history and life style is challenging; in Namibia one of the most well documented group is the Khoisan- and this is only possible due to their alleged unique culture and history as the oldest inhabitants in the region thus more international aid and research prospects are available and conducted on them, respectively. Furthermore, Talhelm (2019) identifies the following as possible obstacles that seem to negatively affect the findings of studies concerning indigenous people:

- The instruments or questions asked were from the western point of view;
- Language barriers;
- The colonial past of the countries;
- And the dynamic of association between a European (descendant) researcher and a native study subject.

Thus, Gomme's (2012) suggested that modern folklorists should then work on removing methods that perpetuate discrimination via adhering to stereotypes of the people and a culture they are to study and rather focus on developing better methods that takes into account the past experiences of these people and the current realities they live, as well as the possible factors that contribute to the life style.

Talhmén (2019) also observes that scholars slump non-western civilisations into a category that appears to romanticise and idealise the indigenous people, taking away from the reality that

there are social struggles faced by these indigenous people which actually affects how they live. It can be implied that when it comes to native people and the problems they face and possible solutions for them, the pendulum tends to swing from either blaming the imperialists and the negative aspects of their colonial legacy or seeking modern influenced western ways to address these issues. In these cases, it can be observed that there is very little room for cultural solutions to be heard.

Furthermore, Gomme (2012) indicated that the pursuit of folklore studies took much inspiration from the fields of geology and archaeology. Gomme (2012) further reasoned that just as the lowest layers at an excavation site contains remnants of the 'original' artefacts the natives used prior to outside culture contact; the same can be said about folklore, the most basic and ancient versions of the story would reveal a people's old customs, norms or values (Lewis, 2010). Thus, this approach allows a folklorist to study stories in a comparative manner so as to reveal the ways the particular culture has evolved and which core values, norms and customs tend to remain even in the present or current versions of the stories. However, it is in this regard that the study of European children's literature is relatively easier, because the written accounts can track how the story has changed and when studied in accordance to the social and political happenings at a specific moment in time, the reasons for these changes are easy to isolate. Yet in the African context, as discussed previously in chapter two, section 2.2.4, there is not a lot of folklore documented on paper, most of the collections from earlier centuries were recorded by missionaries and explorers through the help of translators. Diew-Loth (2018) concurs that African stories that are retold or translated from a local African language to English may often lack the essence that gave the story its 'Africanness'. Thus, the need for a well vested translator and a skilled artist who will be able to breathe life into the translated version on paper. This of

course calls for African folklorists to capture and document as many written and vocal recorded accounts of African folklore in the way that Jennifer Davis and Libby Costandius did with *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibian* (1993).

Luthin (2002) subscribes to the notion that moving back in time when examining African literature, it can be realised that most African stories were meant to be performed, therefore capturing that performative aspect of the stories is a mammoth task to perfect on paper. The author may give the lyrics of a song a character is singing, in the local language in some cases; but the harmonisation, tempo, and rhythm of the song will still remain unknown to the reader. However, the modern anthropological folklorists are concerned with the data collection from the stories and reporting the findings instead of developing new methods of recording the nuanced aspects of a folklore. This was supported by Tuwe (2016) who added that the study of the African oral storytelling or narrative performance has been confined to mostly anthropological compilations and/or translations of different types of folk tales.

African stories feel more like a performance as the story teller is sure to make motions and sounds to carry along the story and invite the audience to sing along when possible so as to engage them, for this reason Ihueze (2015) noted that verbal and visual recordings in particular are important when it comes to documenting folklore. The author further stated that in the traditional way of African story telling the narrator's voice, mood, and demeanour mattered; the time, weather, season when the story was being told matters; the audience's participation by singing along, expressing gasps or laughing as the story was told mattered. All these factors and much more were part of the ambience that brought the stories to life. Therefore, it may be concluded that in as much as print media is currently useful in the recording of African folklore;

perhaps a much better suited alternative or at least supplementary format of recording and publishing is audio and video. These formats even prove to be much more substantial when it comes to translated texts; it allows the listener (reader) to hear the pronunciation of the local words, get the harmony of the songs thereby allowing them to better understand and appreciate the story being told.

As the situation is now though, print media is most dominant and most accessible to the young readers of Africa. Yet the growth of technology and accessibility to the internet is seeing some traction in the recording of African folklore as audio or videos and being shared on online platforms for the masses to access and enjoy. Thus, it can be inferred that the folklorist theory provides a significant view, not only in a selected culture's experience but the human experience as well. Equally important, folklorists use the modern tools initially thought to endanger a piece of the human experience and actually preserve it for both didactic and hedonistic purposes.

### **2.3.2 Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed what children literature is, the current status of children's literature in Africa and its significance to the well-being of the African and Namibian child. It was revealed that one school of thought called the definers believe children's literature is literature meant to appeal to young readers. Whilst the other camp, the anti-definers believe children's literature cannot be boxed as the idea of childhood and subjects meant for children constantly evolve and the audience is not constant. There was also a discussion on the animals that are observed in

Namibian children's literature. It was revealed that the relationships the locals have with these animals; and perceptions of them are influenced by factors such as whether the animal possess a threat to them or their livestock, the role of the animal in the environment, and observable characteristics of the animals that are similar to those in humans.

Furthermore, in literature people of a culture tend to use animals that they allocate symbolic meanings to. Moreover, it was realised that there are several conditions that should be met for problem to be recognised as social concern; not only that but people have varying ideologies or beliefs they use in dealing with said problems.

The chapter also discussed the folklorist theory which is attributed to be founded by William J. Thoms. The theory was further enriched by the works of Franz Boas who reasoned anthropology and folklore complement each other, as folklore is like moving back in time excavating and analysing the language and symbols that have influenced a certain group.

Gomme's ethnological method to folklore studies highlighted the problem of studying folklore from a western perspective and importance of looking into the literature and history of a people with limited outside interference. An objective William J. Thoms sought to achieve via documenting rural England folklore in the face of industrialisation.

The next chapter, is methodology. It presented the research design, sample, population, and the procedure in which the present study was conducted.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter (Chapter 2) focused on the theoretical framework and literature review. The theoretical framework for the present study is the folklorist. This chapter (chapter 3) focuses on the methodology and considers aspects such as the approach and design, population and sample as well as data analysis and ethical considerations.

### **3.2 Approach and design**

The present study utilised a qualitative approach as the research intended to analyse the use of anthropomorphism in Namibian children's literature to address certain social issues. Creswell (2009) asserted that qualitative approach is most suitable when conducting studies that revolve around human behaviour and experiences that compound to the human experience. As this study focused on literature and cultural values, which were almost impossible to examine nor discuss in numerical forms; qualitative approach allows for a better in depth analysis of the texts and extended discussion and reporting of the findings.

Furthermore, Creswell (2012, p. 293) stated that research design is a plan a researcher consulted in their research process; the plan includes how to gather, analyse and interpret the collected

data bringing the study process to a completion. Because a chosen research design would follow a system already established by fellow academics for purposes of data extraction, and reporting of the findings, a study that complies with a research design has better integrity and credibility in the field of study.

Neuman (2014) asserted that, for a literature based study, that lack fixed measurements and ready established equations, it was only logical to use a research design that allows data to be collected from texts and descriptions as depicted in the selected texts by the author and artists. Lawrence further adds, qualitative research findings usually presented in a manner that is thematic and draws a broad view from the available data.

### **3.3 Population**

According to Bhattacharjee (2012), a population is the sum of all items that meet a certain rank to be included in a study. Identifying a population is key to a credible research paper as it warrants focus and leaves little to no room for a research to include specimens which may hinder a production of information relevant to the topic of study. Alvi (2016) also noted that, it is imperative for specimens to actually meet the standard initially identified by the researcher.

The main standard the researcher was looking for in the case of this present study is was children's literature written by Namibian authors with the key features of anthropomorphic animals addressing social issues or problems identified in Namibian communities.

### 3.4 Sample

The researcher conducted a purposive sampling technique to select the following texts: *The Stolen Water and other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) by Jennifer Davids and *Mbinda* (1998) by Izona Bock. The afore mentioned texts were selected because they were the only children's books written by Namibian authors which were available at the bookshops the researcher visited, within a reasonable price range that would make them affordable to all social classes; this aspect was important as the researcher believed that it would be sounder to see what messages are contained in texts that could be accessed by a multitude of readers. Moreover, the selected books also were the only ones with anthropomorphic animals and stories pertaining to social issues.

The researcher chose not to use texts available on online platforms as these texts were only available to a few privileged with access to internet and electronic devices. Furthermore, given the time the researcher would require with the books for data extraction and analysis; it did not prove feasible to borrow books from community and school libraries.

### 3.5 Procedure

The study employed a thematic analysis, to enable this; the researcher conducted a close reading of the selected texts to gather data; noting important scenes, style, symbols, motifs, key words and quotes. These were then sorted according to the themes in relation to the research questions.

Furthermore, supporting relevant secondary sources such as journals, research papers, and conference publications relating to the topic of the study. The folklorist theoretical framework was used to inform the analysis. The information gathered in the literature review was also used as a guide in the research process. From all this, the researcher was then able to form conclusions and recommendations for further research.

No research instruments were used the present study, as it is of a literary analysis nature.

### **3.6 Data analysis**

The researcher conducted a thematic analysis on the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis is an appropriate method for a study that seeks to gain in-depth insight from a given data set and categorise the patterns that reveal themselves. In a study that is based cultural values in a society as expressed through language, thematic analysis thus proves to be an ideal method in the pursuit of the shared meanings in these Namibian children short stories.

As such the data collected after critical readings of the stories was conducted, was reduced into groupings that were easier to organise and sort out according to the research questions as previously identified as to:

- Examine the means through which social issues are presented in the selected short stories;
- Analyse the significance of animals in the selected short stories as well as in the society; and

- Evaluate the ways in which the messages are conveyed through the use of animals.

The organised data was then displayed by means of an extended text. There was no sensitive information that had to be stored and discarded later as this was a literary study using published novels in the public domain.

### **3.7 Research ethics**

The researcher sought permission to conduct the research from UNAM Research Ethics Committee. Permission was granted as evident by the Ethical Clearance Certificate displayed in the appendix section of the study. No human participants were involved as the study was based on fictional characters found in stories available to the public. Furthermore, the research adhered to the university's referencing guidelines by providing citations and a reference list using the APA seventh edition referencing style. Objectivity on the part of the researcher was maintained by using the folklorist theory to analyse the extracted data.

### **3.9 Chapter summary**

Chapter three's main concern was on the procedures taken in the undertaking of the study. Moreover, the population as well as the sample for the research were indicated. The next chapter (chapter four), will discuss the critical and in-depth analysis of the selected novels: *The Stolen Water and other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1998) and *Mbinda* (1998). The analysis will be informed by the folklorist theory and the reviewed literature in chapter 2.

## CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE SHORT STORIES

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter focused on the analysis and discussion of the data obtained from, *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) as retold by Jennifer Davis with illustrations provided by Libby Costandius and *Mbinda* (1998) with illustrations done by Paulo Malubila. *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* contributes eight short stories as the book is an anthology, and *Mbinda* (1998) is a stand-alone short story. Analysis and the discussion was guided by the literature reviewed in chapter two, and other secondary sources. Moreover, the folklorist theory framed the analysis and discussion of the stories.

The synopsis of each short story was provided first, then followed by the analysis and discussion. Below are the objectives of the study as identified in chapter one, which were to:

- Examine the means through which social issues are presented in the selected short stories;
- Analyse the significance of animals in the selected short stories as well as in the society; and
- Evaluate the ways in which the messages are conveyed through the use of animals.

## **4.2 “The Water Snake” story synopsis**

“The Water Snake” short story was originally coming from the Nama people. The tale tells of a girl called Absas who was summoned by a water spirit to surrender herself to it or there would be dire consequences to ensue. Initially, the clan considers abandoning the land as they did not want to surrender Absas to the spirit, but the girl decided to sacrifice herself in order to save her people and their land from a drought that threatened to destroy them all and their way of life.

### **4.2.1 “The Water Snake” discussion and analysis**

In most African beliefs, especially those of the Bantu-speaking people, snakes are associated with water, the ancestors, the ancestral realm, rebirth (reincarnation) and healers. Rakotsoane (1996) advocated that the rivers happen to be one of the places the Bantu people regard to be sacred. The author added that, it was also believed some rivers also served as residences or in the very least the entrance to the ancestral realms. Thus, it is the only fitting creature which is regarded as special and divine which would be served as guardian for the said river and gatekeeper to the ancestral realm conducting the communication between the living and those in the none physical world.

The snake in the story depicted as a green serpent with an orange tongue that lets out fire. Fire and water are opposites which are as equally important as humans’ survival. The green of the snake symbolised the earth were humans acquire their food, whilst the fire represents the fire

that is necessary for the preparation of the food, providing warmth and warding off predators that may attack the humans in the dark. While also on the most extreme a dangerous element that could destroy life. In the story, the snake is clearly set on Absas being the chosen one “Absas, I have chosen you. Come to me.” (p. 4); Absas, however, Absas did not initially heed to the snake’s calling, as a result the land was suddenly stricken by drought. The dried up water and pastures means the people of Absas’ land have no food; thus the suggestion of some clan’s members to pack up and left rather than facing death by starvation. Regardless of the conundrum faced by the clan, they did not rush to force Absas to surrender herself to the snake. Her family, in fact, attempted to discourage Absas from going back to the stream. However; Absas made the choice to sacrifice herself willingly; understanding that it was the only way to ensure her people and their way of life would remain intact.

Ayittey (2005) asserted that, Ubuntu is still evident in the normal every day functioning of the African people, especially at the grass root level in rural settings. Ayittey (2005) reiterates that, the philosophy of Ubuntu states that decisions are not made haphazardly nor in a rushed manner; time is given for all the involved people to ponder on the fact and then give their suggestions or thoughts. And in the story, it was observed that Absas also considered the consequences her people would face if she refused; ultimately she sealed her fate and decided to save her clan. Her decision proved to be one in line of the and that was the reason to save them. However, the chief of her land hastily decided all the people should rather leave the land in search for another. Herein was a conflict between the libertarianism and communism arises (Berkowitz; 2020). This seemingly virtuous act, however, posed a challenging stance on the Ubuntu philosophy; which was discussed later on in this chapter.

Rakotsoane (1996) mentioned that according to traditional beliefs; water spirits decide who they call upon and bestow special gifts that were meant to help those in the world of the living. The author further explained that the act was not made to be taken lightly, if another person attempted to interfere in the choosing process or the summoned individual refused to partake; they would be serious repercussions that would fall not only on the individual but the whole community at large. Regardless of the looming harsh punishment; the people of Absas's village could not bring themselves to sacrificing a young child, this perhaps speaks to their adherence to a communist-style philosophy of life. In real life instances, Berkowitz (2020) identifies that in most countries the political philosophy of communism has reportedly failed miserably left people gravitating more to a liberal philosophy. "The Watersnake" however, did a service by portraying both philosophies as viable options that both came with undesired downsides. Therefore, further examining the story of Absas, it seemed to comment on the state of life styles and philosophies that guide people; from the past and present. Pitting together beliefs that worked well back then, and which were thought to work well in the modern setting. Eventually the story seemed to suggest that, from a given culture, philosophy or belief system; it could be sensible to weed out beliefs from the old system that could negatively affect the freedom of others. Not only that, but there also seems to be a suggestion of accommodating the fringes of society that adhere to the olden ways.

To save the land and its people, the chief recollects the old caution of what would happen once the summoned maiden did not adhere to the water snake. This appears to be a commentary to the instance of African leaders to opt for modern solutions when problems arise, rather than consulting with the locals who might possess indigenous knowledge that could be of service. Ezeanya-Esibou (2017) brought up the importance of indigenous knowledge systems such as

‘tasa’ when dealing with agricultural practises in dry areas in Africa as it is evident that most million dollar agricultural projects funded by the Non-Government Organisations have failed.

Ezeanya-Esibou (2017) described ‘tasa’ as an act of planting crops in somewhat small holes with less surface area so that when the plants are watered, less water is lost in the atmosphere through evaporation. Ezeanya-Esibou (2017) further noted that communities that practise ‘tasa’ have better yields compared to those that practised western innovated farming techniques. Thus, one might be inclined to read the story which attempted to notify a young reader that perhaps the old methods of solving problems caused by weather or climate change are just as valid in the current era as they were centuries back.

The “Watersnake” is from the Nama people, and the Namas are part of the Khoisan cultural group. Biesele and Hitchcock (2010) state that according to Khoisan beliefs, the snake is associated with power. Sullivan and Low (2014) observed that the snake in Khoisan beliefs is also associated with metamorphosis, and constructive as well as catastrophic events. All which were observed in the short story. The metamorphosis was seen when the water spirit presents itself to the village people as a giant snake and when Absas is said to vanish along with the snake after she agrees to sacrifice herself. Therefore, a change from being a physical being into an intangible being that might move in between the physical real and the spiritual realms. This transformation is an important part of most Namibian cultures as they believe that ancestors and the gods exist but could not be observed by the human eye as they reside in the ancestral realm, however they might appear to the living through taking possession of other people, animals, or even weather elements (Rakotsoane, 1996). Thus it was important to ensure that those in the ancestral realms are constantly pleased and remembered as they could inflict disastrous consequences if they are forgotten or displeased.

The story exhibits an example of what kind of consequences the people may face, i.e. a drought. On a deeper level, this aspect of the culture emphasises the importance of accountability of the living to the ancestors. Furthermore, it can be argued that accountability is a necessary quality required in well-functioning society. Ayittey (2005) proffers that one of the hindrances of development in Africa is a lack of accountability in those who are in privileged positions of power. Accountability comes when the leader is able to listen to the subjects as well give reason for his decision. There is a stark moment in the story that mirrors the worries that Ayittey mentions, which is the lack of consulting the majority of the subjects. Absas's chief notes (p.6) "It is said by our forefathers that if the water snake calls a maiden, she must obey. Now we have been cursed. Without water we will be destroyed. Let us return to our homes and gather our things. At sunrise we must leave this place." It is said the people wept as he said this; there is a lack of counsel with the people of the village, it is unclear whether the decision was meant to save the girl or the chief merely thought all hope was gone. It cannot be over seen that it was a dire situation, the people had been cursed, and perhaps the chief reasoned that leaving before things got worse. Regardless, it has been established that within the Ubuntu philosophy, all people, or in the very least the elders should be heard as well before a decision is made. From this perspective; "The Water Snake" short story appeared to be a literary form of the train and the track ethic problem which proved Achebe's notion that literature is made for both didactic and hedonistic purposes (Etim, 2004). As the story posed the question: should the village people abandoned their land in order to save Absas or should they sacrifice her to the spirit and save the land?

Nelsen (2017) stated that the train and track problem, also known as the trolley problem, was developed by Philpa Foot in 1967 as a thought experiment meant to assess how the human

mind make decisions when all options available yield detrimental results. Relating it back to “The Watersnake” short story, would one then sacrifice Absas to save the village people or would they side with the chief and suppose it would be better for the people, as well as Absas, to leave the land for good, and face an uncertain future as they have angered the spirit? Gyekye (1995) mentioned how issues of morals, ethics, religion and spirituality in most African cultures are intertwined. Gyekye (1995) further stated that guidance or instructions are passed on from the spiritual realm through the selected few people who act as mediators between the two. It is possible to hypothesise that over time, the regular practising of a given instruction gives way to a custom or norm, and depending on the extremity of preparation, significance of even effort needed to conduct the act; the sacred practises which only performed only when necessary. Therefore, from the foregoing analysis, it had concluded that “The Watersnake” uses the snake as an animal that is culturally associated with transformation, power and the ancestral realm to bring to light issues of environmental care and management. Moreover, the shorty stories highlight the struggle between the modern versus the old in regard to the life philosophies and the complexities that come with negotiating the new and the old as the present citizens attempt to find a balance between the two.

### **4.3 “Greedy Jackal” story synopsis**

The story of the *Greedy Jackal* is that an unnamed jackal overhears the human children talking about a feast that will happen in their village later that night. The jackal not wanting to miss an opportunity to eat meat from the feast; devises a plan to steal human clothes and sneaks into the party celebration where he attempts to steal meat from the hosts. However, the plan failed miserably and jackal was chased away from the village.

### 4.3.1 “Greedy Jackal” discussion and analysis

“Greedy Jackal” is a narrative from the San people though in the story they used the pejorative term ‘Bushmen’, verified by the opening line ‘*Jackal heard that there was to be a great feast at the Bushman village nearby.*’ (p. 18). The use of the term has been discouraged due to the negative connotation it carries; the politically correct term in use now is San.

The Bushman’s perspective appeared to mirror the Herero’s view that jackals were clever animals and quite often used their wits to get what they want and escape. Before any significant discussion can be laid out; an important distinction had to be made as the jackal character appeared in another story to be discussed in this study. Megan Biesele an American anthropologist who advocated for the San people in the Kalahari region of Namibia and Botswana subscribed to the notion that from an ancestral perspective, the group of people called the San who comprised of the Khoisan and the Khoikhoi people. However, over hundreds of years the Khoikhoi people adopted a pastoral life style as they socialised with the Bantu people, whilst the Khoisan persisted as hunters and gatherers (Biesele & Hitchcock, 2010). Wittenberg (2014) further noted it was allegedly that the San people were the earliest inhabitants of Southern Africa, they were initially displaced by the groups that migrated southward from West and Central Africa. And ultimately faced yet another displacement by the European settlers, especially once the idea of privatisation of mines and farmland took root.

It was in this regard that Wittenberg (2014) speculated that to the Khoisan, jackals were seen as positive symbol; reason being their folklore celebrated the jackal’s cleverness and ability to use their wits to escape the bigger and stronger predators. Given their social and political history, Wittenberg (2014) assumed the Khoisan might see themselves as the jackal; constantly

on the move, forced to constantly escape the dangers of their environment and other humans around them.

Meanwhile the pastoral Khoikhoi, (who included the Nama of Southern Namibia and the Cape Khoi of South Africa), viewed the jackal negatively as it was a threat to them and their livestock (Wittenberg, 2014; Biesele & Hitchcock, 2010). Moreover, for the Nama faction, in their literature the jackal could also be a political enemy, as it was the case in the early 1900s when they were at war with the Herero and subsequently Imperial Germany. It was from this later perspective that the discussion of this story takes form.

From the onset of the short story of “The Greedy Jackal”, the jackal displayed a major character flaw associated with the colonial mind-set, which was dishonesty. Upon hearing the children mention the feast, jackal thought of himself, “I’ll go to the feast too and steal some of their meat for himself!” (p. 18) it was alluded that jackal knew that his actions were wrong hence he decided to camouflage himself as one of the human children. The theme of deceit was alluded to with the use of words such as: ‘well hidden’ (p. 18), ‘quickly he snatched them and ran behind the bushes’ (p. 18), ‘was careful to stay in the darkness’ (p. 18).

Wittenberg (2014) noted that in politically charged folktales of the San people, it was characteristic to use language that ridicules the offender. This was also evident in the story when one of the characters N!a proclaims to jackal: “You look like a girl, but you have manners of an animal!” (p, 18). An interesting declaration. Thinking back to the way the natives were portrayed in stories and intellectual pieces by the settlers, they painted the natives as savages

with animalistic tendencies. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, an English official stated that the natives have no human language rather they make grunts when they communicate with each other, a manner of communication associated with animals. In the times of political oppression, it was acceptable for the Europeans to refer to the natives as savages and uncivilised. But for a native to openly make such remarks was a sure way to face severe punishment. Hence, in the stories they told via the use of anthropomorphism they could say the 'unspeakable' and only those of the same culture or within the community could see the underlying meanings packaged in these statements.

Lastly, the ending of the story also carried much symbolism and imagery pertaining to colonialism. The jackal was recognised for who he was, everybody chases him and he runs off into the darkness where it is said he still lurks up to today. It was interesting to note that they say jackal still moved around at night. This served as caution that, the people who aimed to 'steal' the San people's riches still remain present. According to the story, they hidden in the darkness but they are still watching and waiting for a chance to do it again. Therefore, all who heard the story ought to be vigilant.

#### **4.4 "King Frog" story synopsis**

In "King Frog", a group of San boys wanted to catch the little frogs in a river. The clever Frog King devised a plan to trick the human boys by pedalling the human boys on his back to a deeper part of the river where they were powerless, thus saving the little frogs.

#### 4.4.1 “King Frog” discussion and analysis

The Editors of Give Me History [TEGMH] (2020) declared that in ancient Egypt, frogs were a symbol of fertility and creation; this depiction grew from the observation that whenever the Nile river would burst its banks bringing fertile soil and plenty of water for their crops and animals; there would also be an abundance of frogs. Interestingly the ancient Egyptians attributed both male and female attributes to frogs (TEGMH, 2020). Thus frogs symbolised a duality of male and female, an entity capable of acting out the roles of both genders.

In the Khoisan people community, from which the “King Frog” story was collected from, gender roles were presented but they were not stifling as those of the Bantu and white people’s social structures. One gender was not placed above the other. In fact, Cogito (2019) reported that anthropologists James Suzman and Richard B. Lee asserted that the Khoisan people were most likely to be the least sexist civilisations; both men and women were regarded as respected and valuable members of the community; unlike in most patriarchal societies where the male, by virtue of being a man, was accepted as the leader and most respected of the two. The two anthropologists’ respective studies showed the Khoisan people’s equality stemmed from their acknowledgement of the fact that both men and women provide food for the community. Moreover, both possessed extensive indigenous knowledge which was imperative to the functioning of the clan. The women were well vested with knowledge of plants; which plants could be used for medicinal purposes; which plants were good for food and the methods required to properly gather them. While the men had knowledge of tracking animals, poisoning the arrows and transporting the meat (Cogito, 2019). This balance had, however, been upset by the presence of the rigid patriarchal system imposed by the Bantu and the Europeans (and their

descendants). The consequences have reverberated in the Khoisan people's way of life to date as the women's input have been side-lined severely.

The story started with the Khoisan children planning on capturing the young frogs in the river; something that goes against the Khoisan's hunting style since the delicate balance between the environment and the Khoisan's way of life has existed due to their mindfulness, it is said they never hunted nor gathered more than was necessary. They only took from the environment what was required for sustenance, therefore killing young frogs who have not reached maturity to repopulate the river would certainly go against their beliefs and have a negative effect on the environment.

The short story also addressed the issue of gender balance, Kent (1995) in Felton and Becker (2001) explained that when outsiders made contact with the Khoisan; they would assume the males were in charge and thus only consult with them. Moreover, during the colonial era only native men were expected to work in mines, and the hunting and gathering grounds of the Khoisan decreased due to farm fences; it became harder for the Khoisan people to find food in their traditional ways. Furthermore, the knowledge that was adept to the females such as the plant knowledge, including the food, and medicine how to apply the medication was comprised, due to the lessening available forest areas and at the same time the indigenous knowledge about hunting including poison extraction, tracking the animals was also compromised due to some of the men who left their homes for extended periods as they worked in faraway mines and farms (Kent, 1995 as cited in Felton & Becker, 2001).

The Khoisan people were identified as one of the most marginalised people in Namibia. Thus, the story served as a riddle; the listener would have to critically think to deduce that the story is a warning for the Khoisan's young generation of abandoning their traditions. Smalls et al. (2010) recognise that in sociolinguistics, there is a theory that those who are quick to lose their cultures are usually the first ones to experience social and economic disparity in comparison to those who hold onto their cultural traditions and customs; they were deemed as unrooted people, susceptible to vices such as alcohol, drugs and crimes. In Namibia, this has prompted the government to develop numerous projects as a means to uplift the community; these endeavours have included school scholarships and farms. Yet again, most of the projects have not had the desired outcomes as the settling standard of living goes against their nomadic lifestyle, the gender roles are still blurry from the Khoisan perspective. Thus, it might be a suggestion that as citizens of a global village, there was a need for a redefinition of what success and development are. They could not be viewed as a one size fits all, but rather diverse notions of development were required if the aim was really to help humanity. It can be observed that there was the use of a frog as a medium to express the importance of healthy gender relations and a rooting oneself in culture as the world expands, it symbolises the importance of working hand in hand for the betterment of the local society. The San people's adherence to a sustainable lifestyle in their natural environment might be speculated to how they have been able to maintain their way of life for generations, as it was now evident that outside influence was threatening this way of life. It was equally important to note that both the San and the environment suffered under this threat.

Just as the King Frog strived to save the little frogs from being killed off by the young San children; there have been projects created to ensure the nomadic lifestyle of the Khoisan is

preserved, these have come in the form of special reserves where the Khoisan can freely hunt and gather, and have access to western medicine and clean water as those are fundamental human rights (Wander Learn with Francis Tapon, 2015). Such endeavours have actually a better effect on the environment in addition to the wellbeing of the Khoisan. In this sense; it was observed that cultural diversity and perseverance were integral to sustainable development.

On a gender equality front, King Frog is put in a role usually reserved for females in most African societies. The females are expected to be the nurturing and family centric ones, to the extent that male absence in the family unit has been normalised. This had a catastrophic effect on the Namibian family unit. By making the frog a male, and King much less, who willingly adept the nurturing role; it could be symbolic of how strong the Namibian mother figure and father figure could be if they worked together for the betterment of the younger generations.

Therefore, from the foregoing analysis of the story “King Frog” it was concluded that healthy gender relations were integral to the Namibian family unit and society at large. The use of a frog, an animal culturally believed to be a representative of both sexes in one; magnified the need for the Namibian man and Namibian woman to join their hands together and protect the Namibian child. Furthermore, the short story highlighted that at times gender imbalance tends to negatively influence the wellbeing of the natural environment. This was because, when one gender is silent on these matters; certain aspects of indigenous knowledge encompassing of how to care for the environment risk being lost. For this reason, it is important to revive and maintain healthy gender dynamics.

## 4.5 “Nehova and the Monster” story synopsis

In the short story of “Nehova and the Monster”, Nehova was swallowed by a human eating monster, called Ekishi. Out of her three brothers, the youngest was brave enough to set off a journey to track down the monster and free his sister from the insides of the said monster.

### 4.5.1 “Nehova and the Monster” discussion and analysis

The story of “Nehova and the Monster” is from the Owambo people of Namibia, who are also part of the Bantu groups that settled in Southern Africa. As observed from other Bantu groups in southern Africa; especially the Luvale in Zambia, a few selected people dress up as monsters and go around masquerading during important festivals or ceremonies. One of the most prominent ceremonies the masquerade happens for was the young boys’ coming-of-age ritual.

Chitungu (2012) noted that the Luvale of north-west Zambia and the Lozi of west Zambia call these ‘monsters’ Makishi (or Likishi if it is one). Makishi also made an appearance in Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*; thereby suggesting that they might be a staple in many African cultures.

Chitungu (2012) added, Makishi were believed to be manifestations of the people’s ancestors. Back in the day when most rituals were shrouded in secrecy, most people; especially women and children, thought the Makishi were indeed the reincarnations of spirits because they adorned larger than life animated outfits with intimidating face masks, some walked on stilts to make themselves much taller as they walked in a procession for the audience (Personal

information, Florence Siyambango, n. d.). This belief was well accepted because only men were allowed to wear these outfits, moreover, only men who had been initiated in a coming of age ceremony could have the privilege of adorning them (Chitungu, 2012). Given the interconnectedness of most African cultures, the researcher was inclined to believe this was the inspiration of the story of “Nehova and the Monster”.

The story opened with letting the reader know that both Nehova’s parents had passed away, therefore there was a vacuum for who would fill the role of parents or in the very least, guardian. It was further stated that the siblings would do the chores as dictated by their respective genders, Nehova would cook, pound mahangu and collect fire wood while the brothers would go hunting. All was well until Ekishi came to demand food from Nehova while her brothers went, and eventually he ate her as well. It was here that the coming-of-age connection comes in.

As seen in the discussion of “The Watersnake”, communication with the spirits was a task that only the chosen ones can execute. But as Nankelo sets off to find his sister he encounters a number of other Mashiki whom he asks if they have taken his sister and they answer him freely. Chitungu (2012) noted that it is a cultural belief that boys who begin their transition into manhood were not necessarily part of the living world for the duration of their ritual; they believed to be in between the spiritual and physical realm. Pointing to why Nankelo could easily talk to the monsters without fear; while his brothers could not.

There was another question on the idea of masculinity as presented in the short story. It is said Nankelo was the youngest, yet his older brothers could not stand against the Ekishi that took

their sister. It is as if the story teller is alerting the reader that, Nankelo and his respective brothers were not man of the same calibre. Phiri (2008) affirms that according to tradition any boy who went through this ceremony of manhood was said to be more of a man than those who did not; regardless of age. Unlike the other stories where a toxic form of masculinity was celebrated, by virtue of being associated with male, “Nehova and the Monster” gave a glimpse of a caring and loving young boy who went to prove his worth as a man by saving his sister. Being a protector and provider. These were some of the lessons Chitungu (2012) noted that the boys who attended the ceremony were invested in “The Mukanda involves the circumcision of the initiates, tests of courage, and lessons on their future role in society as men and husbands” (p. 67). Tests that in a manner of speaking Nehova underwent as well.

The connection to the Owambo people is also recognised as Chitungu (2012) noted that these ceremonies were common in the people who once lived in west and North West Zambia; the Owambo people followed a similar route before settling mainly in Northern Namibia, others still remain in East Angola. Given the artificial political borders imposed on Africa by the imperialists it could be inferred that these ceremonies were indeed a common place though in present day Namibia they were not regularly practised. The Lozi in Zambezi region used to practise a similar ritual they called *Mupato*. It was considered as an important rite of passage where young boys could get circumcised and be taught how to be a valuable member of society. Chitungu (2012) concurs that “The *Mukanda* school had an educational function of transmitting cultural values, practical survival skills as well as knowledge about nature, sexuality, religious beliefs and the social values of the community” (p. 68).

The female versions of these ceremonies, such as the *Sikenge* in Zambezi region and *Olufuko* in Owambo land have received a lot criticism by female rights group and activists who have deemed them sexist and oppressive (Talakinu, 2018). Herein, it is evident that modern ideals and cultural ideals are clashing. Perhaps a lack of mutual understanding and compromise on both sides are to be blamed for this, because as observed from the story both Nehova and Nankelo emerge from this journey into adulthood as better versions of themselves. The current social view of the Namibian youth is that they have become far removed from their cultural ways in favour for the modern ways, the internal clashing of two world views thought to have a detrimental effect on the psyche of an individual (Valipoor, 2016). This effect was compounded by the inability of the people to negotiate these two realities; it would appear as if society expects one to choose either they fully embrace their culture or be fully immersed in the modern culture.

There were sensible attacks on the certain cultural practises, especially the initiation rites. Titus (2017) reported how some former initiated women in the Zambezi region petitioned for the ceremony to do away with the harmful, and bordering on violent, acts such as forcefully submerging girls in rivers, disrupting their schooling, training them on unquestioned subservience to their future husbands, marking their bodies with razor blades without consent from the individual and in some extreme cases the statutory rape that occurs in the name of culture. Such instances could easily drive people away from their cultures, especially the women when they feel they are not protected or heard in the confinements of their culture. In the story of “Nehova and Monster”, the interaction between Nehova and the Monster were quite similar to those that were observed in an unhealthy domestic partnership, which could still be supported by cultural ideals. The Monster constantly disrupted Nehova in whatever she

was doing, he spoke to her in a demeaning manner, he frightened and threatened her in everything what she did. The older brothers were presumably afraid of protecting their sister from the Monster, they even attempted to deter the younger brother from rescuing their own sister. Patriarchal cultures certainly placed a burden on the women. As Titus (2017) further noted that both young girls and boys were culturally expected to undergo initiations, but the boys' initiations usually starts and ends with circumcision; while the girls' initiation was actually a lifelong experience and riddled with dehumanising and out right violent acts that subverted the females of the community into second class citizens, However, it was not supposed to be like that. It was quite feasible to weed out the knowledge and cultural practises that did not serve their purpose anymore or are plain harmful, and keep the positive ones. And merge these with the equally positive and advantageous characteristics of the modern culture. This was possibly how cultures evolved healthily.

The evolution of cultures happened alongside the growth of the people as well. The reader observed that Nehavo and Nankelo set forth a new path, different from the one their older brothers took, moreover they grew into adulthood together. This growth was symbolised by the blood that flows from Ekishi when Nankelo slays it. Blood, death and resurgence were all of significance in coming-of-age rituals, as Chitungu (2012) states “red, signifying the blood shed at circumcision but also that held the initiates together as a related people sharing the same origin and ancestors personified in the Makishi; black that signified the death of their childhood; and white, that signified purity on their rebirth as adults at their emergence into society.” (p. 71). Herein, the importance of blood and its significance on the markers one makes through life is evident, for instance; during one's birth there is a copious amount of blood shed

from the mother; when one reaches puberty the first menstrual cycle signals womanhood, and a boy child's bloodshed from circumcision entails their welcome into manhood.

There is an illustration of in the story where Nehova was seen climbing out of the big toe she was imprisoned in and then sits on the mutilated big toe, the monster' blood trails off her and Nankelo was seen wielding a white (or sliver) knife that he used to cut open the monster. Quite a symbolic scene of the two growing into adulthood through the shedding of blood, as they would during the circumcision or menstrual flow. Not only that but, when they returned home; Nankelo smeared some of Ekishi's blood on the frame of the doorway into their homestead and it is said after that no other monster came to disturb their sister ever again. This narrative challenged the thought that blood is only significant to a girl's transition into womanhood, due to popular belief that a girl is woman after her first menstruation. It solidified the cultural belief that when a boy under goes circumcision, he too bleed and this blood was also necessary for him to be accepted as a man.

Given that the story opened with the children who was doing chores as per gender, and ending with a symbolic way of how both men and women became welcomed into adulthood as per culture, "Nehavo and the Monster" was laden with imagery and symbolism that carefully narrated just how culture balances both womanhood and manhood, and makes the less aware that it was not only women who have to undergo certain rituals to be accepted; nor as they the only ones tasked with many chores to ensure the running of a household but rather there were systems in place that called for the men to also contribute for the betterment of the household in their own way. However, the extreme harmful cultural acts and the allure of modernity as an escape from these practises has seen a cultural degeneration in some societies, moreover the

cultural practises that many societies still hold onto too seem to be those that subjugate women into second class citizens which contributed to the gender imbalance.

Through the anthropomorphised monster, “Nehova and the Monster” highlighted that some of the lost cultural practises that were available to both young boys and young girls as they transitioned into adulthood. By analysing the story with aid from secondary sources it became evident that these rituals exposed women to harmful acts than the man. Thus showing that by not addressing the oppressive acts in the Namibian cultures more people would rather distance themselves from the said cultures in pursuit of freedom and choice.

#### **4.6 “Lion and Jackal” story synopsis**

Lion is said to be a strong hunter and farmer with three wives, while Jackal is perceived as a weakling by his wife because he cannot hunt as good as lion. Thus, Jackal concocts a plan to make Lion seem like he is the weak one. Jackal tells Lion’s wives that it is actually him who does all the hunting and Lion is merely his horse. After learning of this lie, Lion sets off to find Jackal and make him confess to his three wives. Jackal however, further lies to Lion and manages to ride Lion proving his point to the three wives. Thereafter, Jackal runs off with his wife; leaving an infuriated Lion, and his three surprised Lion’s wives who believed their husband was Jackal’s horse.

#### 4.6.1 “Lion and Jackal” discussion and analysis

“Lion and Jackal” is from the Kavango region, as evident from the line, “*He was also the greatest hunter in the land. In his Kraal there was always feasting and dancing. The sound of the drums could be heard from far up the mighty Okavango River.*” (p. 40). It is rather hard to establish whether it was procured from the Kavango East or Kavango West region as at the time of the story’s publishing there was only one Kavango region in existence. Diaz (1992) reports, similarly to most Bantu cultures, the Kavango people are also a patriarchy society. This is also reflected in the story as the Lion and Jackal are depicted as the heads of their respective families, and the wives are casted in supporting roles.

In the story, the clever and cunning character, Jackal, makes an appearance yet again; this time he is pitted against the lion, who is believed to be the embodiment of power and wisdom as established in chapter two, section 2.8. As discussed in the “Greedy Jackal”, the Khoisan view the jackal as a nuisance while the Khoikhoi people view the jackal as a positive symbol. Unlike in the previous story where the jackal is the easily recognised villain, in Lion and Jackal, Jackal is somewhat of an anti-hero. Or in the very least an underdog who out wits the strong and respected lion. Through the jackal and the lion characters, the short story infers to the class discrimination and power struggle observed in previously colonised multiracial societies. The jackal takes the role of the underdog, the colonial subjects and the lion is the stand in figure for those in power, the colonial masters.

In the preface of the thesis, *A definitive edition and analysis of the Tjakova myth* (1992), Diaz makes mention of the importance of metaphorical speech to the Kavango culture. A similar sentiment to Wittenberg (2014) and Biesele and Hitchcock (1993) that, the use of idioms, metaphors, riddles and even stories was and is still an important tool for expression in a colonised and former colonised societies due to fear of prosecution. Words, settings, characters and actions appear to be meticulously chosen to offer insight on the power struggle that appears to be the theme of the story. “Lion and Jackal” can be read as a comical insight on the double oppression of Namibian women by capitalism and patriarchy; granted it does seem to take a patriarchal stance on the matter. For starters, the reader is told whilst Lion has a big kraal and is a great hunter who ensured his wives were well taken care of, Jackal’s wife was said to be fed up with her husband’s ‘laziness’ and inability to provide for her. As retaliation to this portrayal, it is said Jackal become even more reluctant to hunting and providing for his wife.

This scenario is laid out similarly to the status quo of the apartheid era. Most of the white men were in comfortable positions to provide for their families decent housing, schools and food. Whereas most black men were merely contract workers who got paid too little to afford a comfortable life for their families. While the white man would get praise for the luxuries he could afford; the black man was scrutinised by the family unit and society at large for his inability to provide even the most basic of things. However, it must be noted that the ability to provide for a family being synonymous with pinnacle of ‘real manhood’ is a belief that can be traced back to pre-colonial Namibian culture (Nampala, 2004). As such it can be argued that it is a long standing tradition and colonialism did not have much of an impact on it.

Ambunda and de Klerk (2008) report that in a study conducted on gender roles in different

Namibian cultural groups; the consensus was that men were accepted as the 'natural leader' who makes all the decisions in the home. While the women were placed on the same level with the children; furthermore, a male child once matured could surpass his mother's standing in a homestead. Be that as it may, the story narrates that when Jackal was not providing for his wife he interpreted her complaints as 'nagging'. The story does not state why Jackal was unable to provide, as it is a given in nature both lions and jackals are hunters, it is only stated that he was fed up with the comparisons and decided to exert revenge on other characters. This could be indicative of the lack of accountability that men are afforded in most societies. The same lack of accountability that Ayittey (2005) asserts is hindering advancement in Africa by the mainly male headed governments.

From the story, it may be said that Jackal's wife also had a role to play by contributing food for the family to the best of her abilities; as those who follow the communist philosophy would suppose. By this line of reasoning it can further be extended that both men and women then should make contributions to the wellbeing and progression of the country, as it can also be argued that the progress of a nation is a task that is to be done as a collective and not by a select few. However, this realisation is nearly impossible to accept and implement in a strong patriarchal society. As Ambunda and de Klerk (2008) observe that in most Namibian societies a task that one may be allowed to do is warranted by their gender and not necessarily on their talents or skills. Therefore, a woman born natural leadership skills would be overlooked by virtue of her gender and an incapable man may be chosen for the role. Thus, it can be speculated that these rigid gender restrictions could have prevented Jackal's wife from going out to hunt, leaving her to rely on her partner who could not provide for her; hence the constant complains.

Some may counter-attack this notion by stating Namibia is a democracy where all genders are equal, however, according to Ambunda and de Klerk (2008), this may not be the reality in some parts of the country. Ambunda and de Klerk (2008) gave an example of a finding that in the Zambezi region, the hold of patriarchy has so much influence that even when it comes to politics women are expected to follow whatever party or policy their husbands may support as such even children born in such families are indoctrinated to follow suit. Thus here, democracy, equality and freedom of choice is merely an illusion. The lack of authority or voice of the women is exemplified in the story as Jackal's wife is a mere spectator in her own life, Jackal gets involved in some antics in an attempt to humiliate Lion; she is kept in the dark thus her fear of Lion's retribution is legitimate and she cannot say vocalise this to her husband as he takes her for a nag. This insight is quite troubling as Ambunda and de Klerk (2008) concur that, the normalisation of female suppression eventually manifests itself even work places. Women may not necessarily have the required respect for them to do their duties as they have internalised the misogyny and sexism; this in turn negatively affects the country's social and economic growth. It brings into question whether stated policies such as the 'zebra representation' in cabinet really have the desired outcome they strive to achieve or they are merely meant to give an illusion of inclusiveness. Because of this aspect, it is only reasonable to consider what concrete proof is there to prove that the suggestions passed by the female representatives serving on boards are truly theirs, and are these female representatives truly confident in their capacity as part of the rule makers and contribute to the discussions or are they simply glad they have a seat at the table.

From the story, Jackal uses both his wife and Lion's wives to make Lion look like a fool. Jackal lies to Lion's wives who then begin doubting their husband, "*So Jackal was right after all!*"

“*Why do you lie to us?*” demanded one wife. “*You didn’t kill that kudu!*” accused another. “*You went for a swim didn’t you?*” “*Why do you let Jackal use you?*” (p. 41). Herein, it is shown that Lion’s wives are actually doing Jackal’s work for him; thus it can be said that at times women are used as pawns by men. In real life this shows that the politics of inclusion may have actually done more harm and set the feminist movement slightly back. According The Financial Diet [TFD] (2021), it may seem like there are more women in powerful corporate positions or running for office as of late, such as in the case of Hilary Clinton, Kamala Harris running for political offices in the United States of America, while in Namibia notable women in powerful positions include Saara Kuugongelwa, the country’s first female Prime Minister; Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, who is the country’s Deputy Prime Minister; Ester Kali Chief Executive Officer of Letshego Financial Services Namibia; and Sara Naanda, Chief Executive Officer of TransNamib. However, this does not mean things are suddenly better for everyday women who are subjected to less than appealing circumstances. As it could be seen for Jackal’s wife. By the end of the story it is said that Lion’s three wives leave him and go to another kraal while Jackal and his wife move to another part of the forest. The insinuation here is that, while Lion’s former wives; the stand in for white women, get to live in another kraal where they will still be taken care of, Jackal and his wife, who are the stand ins for the black man and woman, relocate to another part of the forest where she may still be struggling yet again. Therefore, it may seem progressive on paper to say women are now part of the discussion, but are they bringing up issues and seeking solutions for their fellow women?

To deconstruct the toxic masculinity portrayed in the “Lion and Jackal”, the society first has to restore the dignity of the Namibian man. Namupala (2004) concurs that Apartheid laws in Namibia placed black Namibian men under an identity crisis and anxiety in regards to their

value in society. It can be observed that the surrounding circumstances proved to be a perfect environment for such insecurities to occur. This in itself is a troubling legacy, however; as many narratives by Namibian women would reveal, black men in societies showed little to no empathy for the black woman (Andimba & Tjiramanga, 2014). As evident in the story, Jackal decides to play trick on his wife, Lion, and Lion's three wives because he was frustrated of being seeing as lesser than Lion. Lion confronts Jackal and his wife at their home; and Jackal's wife is said to be beyond frightened by Lion's anger. The suggestion that Jackal would willingly expose his wife to such trauma for his own gain is telling of the troubling relationship dynamic that exists between the black Namibian man and woman.

Just as it is told in the story that Lion could easily approach Jackal and demand things from him; a white man could instruct a black male, young or old, to anything he so wished (Hangula, 2000). This is because a young white child was granted more respect than an older black man. This status quo was one of the many forms of emasculation that black men experienced during the colonial era. It is alleged; the men would then exert their frustrations on someone they thought was 'weaker' or 'inferior' to them; who unfortunately happened to be the black women in their lives (personal information, Dr Pasi, 2017).

It can be argued that Jackal's wife's 'nagging', as described in the short story, was warranted as she wanted food, a basic necessity. Yet Jackal saw this as a burden. This line of thinking is still echoed in present day Namibia as single motherhood is reportedly on the rise and divorce rates are at an all-time high. In 2013, single motherhood rate was at 53% (Chadoka-Mutanda & Mbanefo, 2017). Unfortunately, there was appeared to be little that has been done on the part of communities, traditional and government leaders to address the endemic issue of family

abandoning (Titus, 2017). And this could be perhaps be traced back to culture. It is not an easy fit from a patriarchal cultural perspective to hold an intervention for a man, and they might not be willing to listen just as Jackal relegates his wife's concerns to simple 'nagging'. Since culture is a grounding tool that helps people kept their heritage, it would appear like an attack on one's heritage if there is a call for certain aspects of the culture to be evaluated and amended so that they would not infringe on all the concerned people's rights. This is especially true in rural areas where cultural practises still seemingly to have more hold than in the contemporary big towns or cities. As Titus (2017) observed, some Namibian men refuted and claimed violence against women regardless of an overwhelming number of reports that are made. It is a predicament for those advocating for equality and peace if the violence is not even acknowledged in the first place.

As noted in the previous discussion and analysis of "The Watersnake", those people who are still indoctrinated in the cultural beliefs fear turning away from them as they believe they shall be cursed by their ancestors. Thus they would rather keep the status quo, regardless of how stifling it is for their fellow women. In most cases, NGOs partner up with the government to reach out to the discriminated and abused women, but did not reach out to the men perpetuating these acts and it created conflict in ideologies. As established in chapter two, section 2.3, differing ideologies and philosophies are the number one reason where there is slow actualisation of beneficial change. Thus bridging these differences is as Ambunda and de Klerk put it, like manoeuvring a 'mine field' (p. 48). Therefore, it was important for leaders, scholars, and government policy makers to find sensible methods that may be used to educate people rather than just passing laws for gender equality. As having laws and having them enforced are two separate endeavours.

In conclusion, the “Lion and Jackal” exposed what must seem as the toxic masculinity traits that are negatively affecting the freedom of Namibian women, and the socio-economic growth of Namibia. Unfortunately, the short story did not appear to offer suggestions on what might be done to combat the issue, though secondary sources did offer suggestions. The story also highlighted how normalised toxic masculinity is, and quite telling about just how much work still remains for the scholars, and activists in creating methods that could erase some of the less desirable toxic traits whilst attempting to preserve the beneficial aspects of people’s culture.

#### **4.7 “The Good Farmer” story synopsis**

In “The Good Farmer”, four animals; duiker; baboon; leopard and lion, ate farmer’s crops. He devised a trap to capture them as punishment. The animals beg for forgiveness from the farmer who reluctantly agreed to set them all free. All the animals initially scattered and the farmer left thinking that they have fooled him; eventually they each returned with a gift to show gratitude for his kindness on them.

##### **4.7.1 “The Good Farmer” discussion and analysis**

The underlying message for this story is not evident initially, it is one of the stories that required extra attentive reading to give a better understanding of the text. Firstly, the significance of the main character was a farmer who must be acknowledged. Farmers are strongly associated with cultivating the land to produce food for the nourishment of many. Alongside the farmer in the

story, there were also some animals who each bequeath the farmer with a gift that allowed him to have a more fulfilled life in future. The researcher interpreted the story by seeing the farmer as one who cultivates and nourishes the talents and skills of the people he has saved, who in this case are animals.

As seen in the discussion and analysis of the “Lion and Jackal” one of the problematic aspects of a patriarchal system was the rigidity of roles one would enact within the social bonds. However, in this short story, there was different approach on how roles were undertaken and carried out. The animals offered the farmer what they were capable of doing for him or brought to him. And in the essence of him being a ‘good farmer’ he accepted the gifts and it was stated that he was grateful for them. It was further alluded to that he nurtured those gifts which enable him to live happily ever after.

The happily ever after aspect of the story was indicated that the story is a fairy tale, what was known about fairy tales? They were far-fetched from reality. They were a pleasant escape from the mundane, and hardships of real life. It was unfortunate they were exactly that, a nice imaginative escape. For most people, the current social and economic state of Namibia is not ideal to say the least, and it has been observed one of the things holding the country back is the legacy of harmful patriarchy while the short story showcases a glimpse of what could be possible under a nurturing patriarchal system.

The story painted The Good Farmer as a good leader who recognised the talents and skills his people could bring to the table in an effort to advance the growth and satisfaction of the nation.

The fact that at the end of the story, the farmer was also able to find fulfilment with the help of these animal characters speaks volume to how a leader ought to not seek individual satisfaction but rather seek fulfilment for all, as through this it was possible for him to also be content. In the political sense these would be grass root level policies that actually yield results, availability for the masses to express their grievances, affordable housing and food, to name a few.

The first animal to be analysed is the Baboon. The Khoisan and the Bantu people believed that baboons have a special link to the ancestors (Taringa, 2014). This association is imperative, especially in regards to the gift that the Baboon offers the farmer. When they were captured by the farmer the Baboon declared that if set free, he would chase away thieves in return for keeping his life. Conversely, when Baboon returned to bestow the gift, he returned with a bag of seeds for the farmer to plant in his new garden.

Essential factors to note here: ancestors, land, thieves and replanting. Though the Baboon did not honour the promise to chase away thieves; he did something equally important by giving the farmer seeds which they would replanted thus ensuring a future harvest from which more seeds could be saved and replanted; and this process continued through generations. Taking the social and political view, the farmer's garden could be the stand in for Namibia; and the Baboon reclaimed its role as the ancestors acknowledging their part in what seemed as abandonment when their descendants were unwillingly taken as subjects under external imperial nations. There is a strong belief in Bantu cultures that, so long as the living remember and honour the ancestors, the ancestors would protect them. But should they be forgotten their living descendants shall face dire consequences.

The story teller of “The Good Farmer” appeared to acknowledge the fact that during the trying times of colonial rule, it may have seemed to the black citizens of Namibia that their ancestors had forsaken them for why else would they have faced such brutal experiences for years upon years. Yet, Baboon came back; and it came back with seeds he told the farmer to plant in his new garden “The farmer thanked Baboon and went to prepare the soil” (p. 45). It was seen as an analogy to how the ancestors were attempting to reassure their descendants that it is a new dawn, it was possible to sow new seeds, and grow as a nation again. The Good Farmer, interestingly did not plant the seeds in the recently vandalised garden; he however took time to prepare the soil again to ensure that the new plants have the necessary nutrients for growth.

The researcher could not help but consider the similarities in portrayal of the relationship between the Good Farmer and his garden to that of Tambu and her garden, in the novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988), a novel that highlights the stifles of a patriarchal system. Both characters are shown to have strong and healthy ties to their land, to the extent that their identities and destinies appeared to be intertwined with the productivity of their gardens. This in itself dismantles the long held belief that only women are strongly tied to the land, though they have little to no ownership over the said land. Both men and women tend to the land, nurture the seedlings through to harvest; and to a greater extent such qualities could also be extended on how to care for the younger generations.

“The Good Farmer” seemed to be a narrative from the Herero and Himba people, given the illustration of a Himba woman and mention of a Holy fire. From this perspective the story gained more profound interpretation; given the Herero people’s social and political history with Imperial Germany. In a novel called *Mama Namibia* (2013) by Mari Serebrov, mentioned how the some of the Herero people noted the despicable things that were happening to them at the

hands of their oppressor was a result of them departing from their ancestors by distinguishing their Holy fires and adopt the Christianity religion. In modern day independent Namibia, most of the Herero and the Himba people showed great interest and affinity in keeping their Holy fires burning and acknowledge their ancestors proudly.

The act of the farmer in accepting the seeds, and continuing to prepare the soil was symbolic of how the people could move past the wrongs of the past and set a new foundation that guarantees a better and fruitful tomorrow for the future Namibian generations. It is interesting how the animals had just recently entered the garden; yet the farmer said that he took time to go back and ‘prepare’ the soil again before sowing the new seeds. This could indicate how those who had seen and experienced the cruelty of colonial rule were trying to learn from the past, thereafter taking the right steps in anchoring themselves as well as the young generations to their land and accepting the responsibility to rebuild what they lost, reclaim their heritage and took root once again in the Namibian soil in a manner that no one else may attempt to uproot as it happened in the past.

The other animal which gave a gift to the farmer was a Leopard. That animal bargained for his release and promised to look after the Farmer’s goats; which he obviously did not. Instead he brought a dead buck to the Farmer in a manner that is on par with the local perception of Leopards. ‘The following morning the good Farmer found a dead buck beside the Holy Fire. “Now where did this come from?” he wondered. Then he saw Leopard standing nearby. The leopard drew closer: “This is my gift to you for saving me.” (p. 45). Grahl (2012) notes that the local folklore describes Leopard as an animal of stealth, master of disguise, and rarely gets in clashes with other animals as it always seemed to walk away rather than risk from getting hurt.

These characteristics exude a calm that does not need to loudly declare its might while also moving with an admirable poise. A quick read through Namibian history revealed that from the arrival of the European settlers and through the liberation struggle, many a time the native people sought peaceful negotiations with the Europeans but most of these talks proved fruitless, and eventually armed struggles would ensue. The use of the leopard is significant because it highlighted how a timid approach to certain issues proved to be disadvantageous, because due to their timid nature leopards at times lose food to other predators in the wild (Grahl, 2012). But the proximity of the leopard to the Holy Fire in the story painted another picture, Leopard is close to the ancestor, he does not seem to weaver or feel the need to be extravagant. It is as if the story is attempting to let the readers know that by knowing thyself, and anchoring thyself in that identity there shall be peace within.

The third animal which returned to the farmer was the Duiker; duikers, springboks and kudus, were part of the antelope family. Namibia has an abundant population of such animals. Most people hunt them for food and use their skins to fashion clothing, hats, bags and shoes. The Duiker tells the farmer “I have no hands to help you and have no gift, only myself. But you may hunt me.” (p. 45). The farmer however did not immediately hunt the Duiker, he said to him he shall hunt him on the another day when the farmer has no food to eat. This speaks to the sustainable lifestyles the indigenous people adhered too, and unfortunately the challenges that most are facing now. It went against their norms and values to take from the land more than what was necessary, as doing so would prove to be destructive on the environment and eventually the indigenous people as well. Therefore, none sustainable hunting, fishing, harvesting and farming practises would simply not be in their benefit.

Animals in the antelope family have been reported to have a special connection to the Herero people and Namibian nation at large. They have depicted in literature as kind and caring animals that provide the humans with food, and guidance. This was also noted in Serebrov's (2013)'s novel where a Kudu guided the protagonist to a spot where she finds water and food, which they drink and eat together side by side. This benevolence of their character is said to extend to the spirits, ancestors and the gods as well. The importance of wild and the environment protection to the Namibian people is still observed even in the present, it is even included in the country's constitution as Article number 95 which was the first of its kind in Africa (Snively, 2012). This law is significant to the Namibian people due to the income that tourism generates, not only that but the surplus of the country's population resides in the rural parts thus they largely depend on the land. For these reasons, it came as no surprise that environmental protection for future generations remains important.

The ever-increasing demand in natural resources for export, and nuances on who can extract sources from the natural areas has raised serious concerns for the health and maintenance of the environment as well as the well-being of the native people, or even just the less earning population who rely directly on these natural resources. With Namibia becoming recognised as an upper middle class earning country, it was said that the sustainability is slowly compromised and of course this was seen by the natives and those who earn relatively less money with uncertainty for a fruitful future.

Lion was another animal that was freed by the farmer and returned with a gift as well. Lions too are associated with ancestors in most Namibian cultures, as discussed in chapter two, section 2.3; in most cases they are seen as a sign that the ancestors are protecting or guiding

the one who crosses paths with the animal. In the story, the Lion presents the farmer with a beautiful wife near his Holy Fire. The illustration that accompanies this scene; beautifully captures the moment. The symbolism and significance of this scene is enthralling. There is a Holy Fire, the medium of communication with the ancestors; there is a Lion, a positive symbol of ancestral protection and a wife- whom Lion rescued from an abusive father and thus tells the farmer to take care of her. Unlike the previous story where the female figure is treated with little respect by her husband, the woman in this story, though previously abused by her father, is said to be cherished by both the ancestors and the husband. It certainly seems like a blissful union, both partners have mutual respect, and admiration. It can be assumed the partnership will consist of team work as they replant and care for their previously ravaged garden. Until the remainder that this story is a fairy tale, and the possibility of this happening in actuality is quite low.

The true villains of the story are revealed to be the farmer's father-in-law. It is not stated why he treated his daughter horribly but it is expressed that he does not want to allow her to marry the Good Farmer, to the extent that he sends a mercenary on her trail to capture and return her to his home stead. This plan is foiled by Snake, another creature the Good Farmer spared.

Snake further pledges to always keep the Farmer's wife safe from anyone who may try to harm her, "You will never need to be afraid again, Snake said to the young woman. "I will always be close by to protect you. It is my gift to the Good Farmer." (p.46.) it must be mentioned that snakes too have a strong association to the ancestor in most Namibian cultures. On this note, it is interesting to consider how the snake is perceived in the native cultures or religions in comparison to the depiction of the snake in the more dominant Christian religion and European cultures.

Guthrie (1993) observed that in most religions and cultural beliefs snakes are in positions where they can do both good and bad; on the other hand, the snake in the Christian religion is represented as a vessel of inherently bad or evil entity, thus everything associated with the snake also becomes bad or evil. According to Home Team History [HTH] (2021), most African cultures and religions liberally accept the existence of good and evil existing at the same time. In other words, they realise duality is the nature of the universe; it aids the flow of energy, their belief in the transcendence into the ancestral realm after death exudes this concept since the snake, happens to be one of the animals strongly associated with ancestors, life and rebirth.

Therefore, it must have been quite a shock for the early Christians who encountered the natives who viewed snakes as positive symbols. Macdonald (2019) was of the idea that the little or no understanding of the native cultures and religions furthered the process of demonization of some, if not most, aspects of the native culture and religion. The dichotomy of the woman and snake in “The Good Farmer” in contrast to the snake and the woman of the Christian bible, is vast. In the short story; the snake is said to be a protector of the woman while in the bible, the snake is said to have deceived the woman into eating the fruit of knowledge and as punishment they are both cursed for it.

The short story “The Good Farmer” utilised animals that have significance in association to the ancestors of the Namibian people. It also had imagery that invokes political and social struggles of the Namibia people, more especially the Herero and Himba people. The story appears to have a hopeful tone to it, as it encourages the readers to assess the destruction they experienced,

and thereafter prepare the soil for this time they have the ability to ensure their roots grow deeper and they stay anchored so the leaves that come can weather the winds of change.

#### **4.8 “The Cunning Tailor” story synopsis**

The story follows a young tailor who due to his small physique and job as a tailor has trouble finding a wife in a patriarchal society. So he sets off on an adventure with hopes of finding a wife. He encounters giant eagles and a big hornbill, all whom he manages to vest with his brains as a result of his wits, eventually manages to marry a beautiful young prince.

##### **4.8.1 “The Cunning Tailor” discussion and analysis**

The cunning tailor is another cautionary of brains triumphing over brawns. The young tailor’s narrative is one that challenges the cultural idea of what a real man should be. Thus, the theme of masculinity in Namibian cultures is observed in this story again. However unlike in the other previously discussed stories where the male character is crushed under the pressure of upholding what society entails he ought to be; the young tailor uses his wits to prove his ability to be a ‘man’ even without the socially accepted attributes of masculinity.

Brown et al. (2005) noted that masculinity is a cultural defined construct. As evident from the story, the tailor was underestimated by all the secondary characters, this was because they had

a predisposed idea of what a man ought to be, it is highlighted in the short story when the Tailor visits the chief's village and the village people were disappointed in his size "When the messengers arrived with a very tiny tailor instead of a giant, the people could not believe their eyes! The chief cleared his throat, to hide his disappointment more than anything else." (p. 57). Similarly, the young tailor was well aware of this hence his smart attempts to hide the truth of how he was actually able to the seemingly impossible tasks.

Physical strength is one of the of the defining traits of real manhood in most societies, in the short story the chief is eager to meet the young tailor because he believes he could be a beneficial asset to his clan based on the young tailor's power. "He thought it would be a good thing to have a strong man to help them in time of war." (p. 57). As a gift to the young cunning tailor, the chief says should he manage to help rid the village of the giant eagles that terrorise the people; he offers his daughter's hand in marriage. This story is telling of the hypocrisy of the patriarchy system. It is not enough that a man could be an intellectually gifted individual, they are expected to be physically strong. Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* reports how men who were gifted with traits and talents associated with femininity were seen as weak in comparison to men who were deemed to the embodiment of masculinity. Okonkwo's father was a talented singer and artist; yet his son was so ashamed of him that he made sure to do everything that would set the two of them apart. Herein, Hearn (2007) as cited in Shefer et al. (2010) asserts it is counterproductive to think oppressive patriarchy only harms the females in the society; oppressive patriarchy in actuality negatively affects the male as well. It distorts their self-perception, self-worth, and validation. Relating "The Cunning Tailor" to the story of "Lion and Jackal", it is evident that this conditioning can produce two extreme mind-sets. One man would retaliate and exert frustrations on those around him, and in the process perpetuate toxic

masculinity. On the other hand, one man may attempt to negotiate his way around ensuring he reclaims the community's respect whilst not offending them in the process. Under the feminist umbrella there is a branch called neo feminism; which most scholars state may be a better fit for an African collective, as it has a less 'confrontational' approach. In a multicultural society such as Namibia where culture and modernity appear to live side by side, communication styles and expectations of society tend to easily clash. Thus, just as women are using neo feminism to navigate their way through relationships but this purely puts the burden of keeping peace solely on the women. Perhaps "The Cunning Tailor" is suggesting that a healthier perception of masculinity could involve some 'neo masculinity', that is an intersectionality of masculinity, culture and communication. Because it is not every man that is in support of the toxicity that is embroiled in current patriarchy system, some are aware of the detrimental effects it has on the progression of their societies and wish to align themselves with their fellow women in a struggle for equality.

Just as feminists state that women should be allowed to choose the paths they deem appropriate for themselves, men too should be given the opportunity to choose what kind of a man they want to be; provided each party does not cause harm to others in the process. Just as The Cunning Tailor was capable of defeating all the animals he encountered using his mind, whilst taking care not to cause offense to other members of the society because he knew they would not approve of it. Shefer et al. (2010) add that the understanding of masculinity in Africa is important to the well-functioning of society and policy makers ought to familiarise themselves with the actual wishes of the people they are attempting to help rather just imposing preconceived notions.

“The Cunning Tailor” pits a smart young man against dangerous animals such as hornbills and eagles. The Tailor is capable of using the animals’ strength against themselves thus proving his manliness in the process. Not only did the people in the story look down on him, but the birds themselves as well underestimated him purely based on his size. The story showcases the dangers of toxic masculinities and how it can hinder some of the talented and skilled people from rising to tackle challenges they observe in their communities out of fear of being persecuted for being feminine.

#### **4.9 “The Giant Ant” story synopsis**

In this short story, two siblings, Buroxab and Igoaros, used magic to turn a small ant into a giant who then proceeds to devour their goats along with Igoaros. Their father, with the help of the other wild animal’s slayed the giant ant. Buroxab and Igoaros’ father dug up a water hole as a sign of gratitude to the animals that helped him; and vows to protect the animals forever.

##### **4.9.1 “The Giant Ant” discussion and analysis**

This story makes clear inferences to wild life protection, especially towards the closing act. The children’s unwise use of magic and creating a giant ant that threatens to destroy most of the forest could be symbolic of the young generation misusing their power over the environment thus creating situations where the natural order is disturbed with devastating consequences such as deforestation, endangerment of certain wild animals and even loss of viable farm land. It is very telling when the elder, in the form of the father, makes things right. He does so with the use of an arrow and an axe, both weapons sourced from the environment,

given his attentiveness to the environment, it can be inferred that the weapons were obtained sustainably. Not only have that, but the fathers thank you act is digging up a water holed, a significant resource in the wild.

According to Snively (2012), most societal problems faced by indigenous communities are results of environmental destruction. The promise of riches has seen many natural environments cleared to pave way for industries, which are owned a few as seen in conservative and socialist societies. These endeavours see many aboriginals being relocated to different places with limited to no access to the resources their people have spent thousands of years relying on. This dynamic creates a scenario were the natives are then marginalised and poverty ensures. Kapuka and Hlasny (2020) concur by stating that in Namibia, majority of the land that has experienced degradation is in the northern part of the country and coincidentally these are the regions that also report most of the lowest earnings in terms of income. Thus it is noted that the well-being of the natural environment affects the native people in more ways than one.

The chaos in “The Giant Ant” is provoked by a young boy called Buroxab, he sees a small ant and uses magic to make it grow bigger. The ant then goes on a rampage destroying the forest and eating other animals. The animals collate and attack the giant ant, ““We must save the child and the goats! Find the giant!” Roared Lion. (p. 66). Coincidentally the father arrives at the right time to deliver the arrow that blinds the ant and there after hacks it to release his daughter and the other animals the ant had swallowed. It is interesting to note how the story centres on the actions of the male characters, even though the environment is usually associated with the female. It is the young boy who causes the dangerous situation, and it is the father who corrects it; in this manner the short story seems to allude that in most cases it is the actions of the men

that put a strain on the health of the environment, while the women like Igoaros; are the unfortunate victims of this. Moreover, it is possible for men to also be the ones who find ways of reviving the environments. Cook et al. (2019) observe that, most societies land and conversation policies seem to disregard the women's experiences in regard to their relationship to the land even though they derive a lot from the environment to feed and heal their families and communities.

Thus organisations such as Women for the Environment Africa [WE] (n.d.) are advocating for women's inclusion in decision making concerning land, as in most rural settings the women hold little to no power over the land they reside, however with statements such as "Putting women at the heart of transforming the African environmental movement"; this approach has been identified as problematic for others. Goebel (2011) was of the opinion that the claims of women being the gender more associated with land and sharing the same mistreatment at the hands of men is rather one-dimensional and warps reality. This makes sense taking into consideration that there are multitudes of men whose livelihood also suffer when the environment is degraded; these include fishermen, cattle headers and carpenters to name a few.

Hence, Babugura (2019) reported the complexity of tackling the environmental protection plans and the complex politics of gender roles in African societies. They suggest that an initiative that strives for a collaborative approach to this issue would be more beneficial. Thus recognition of the struggles endured by all parties involved is imperative. From the short story, it observed that when Igoaros is swallowed Buroxab and their father strives to rescue her, they did not neglect it as Igoaros' problem alone; it appears they show concern and eagerness to free their daughter and sister. Ampaire et al. (2019) notes that it seemed like most environment concerns appear to be presented and quantified as female issues requiring female based

solutions; but as the WE (n.d.) states, most of the people tasked with making these decisions are male. Thus it could be inferred that the ideologies and systems they may propose to implement to combat the problems may not necessarily resonate with the women, the clash in approaches to problem solving is thus slowed.

In African belief systems, according to Huis (2020), ants are strongly associated to matters of witchcraft. But because of the belief in a dual existence, Huis (2020) also notes that in some cases ants, especially when encountered in as a trail transporting goodies, it is a sign of positive things to come. In the story, the children spotted the ants in a trail transporting bread crumbs to their nest. It is thereafter that Buroxab uses magic to make the smallest ant into a giant. The positive outcome of this event is the affiliation that is formed between the father and the animals as gratitude for saving his daughter. It can be inferred that the children will follow suit and be guardians of the forest as well.

Through the ants the short story highlights how environmental carelessness can cause a negative ripple effect affecting the wild life, and the people of the land. The analysis of the short story suggested that the negative effects may be felt mainly by the womenfolk, however this division is a counterproductive way of assessing the situation and whilst figuring out possible solutions to the problem. It may be sound to approach the situation by looking at it as a problem that affects all humans.

#### **4.11 *Mbinda* (1998) story synopsis**

A young warthog, Mbinda, is considered to be a physically ugly child and thus ostracised by his clan. He resorts to making a deal with an evil *tokoloshi* to make him handsome. The deal however comes with a hefty cost, males in his village start dying; thus Mbinda seeks out to bring back the Jewel of Happiness and restore it in his village.

##### **4.12.1 *Mbinda* (1998) discussion and analysis**

Mbinda's story presents the issue of being the 'other', within one's own community. The short story depicts how certain how one can be a victim of discrimination due to could gender discrimination, social standing, racism (or colourism in predominantly dark skinned communities), or even physical disability. It essentially coincides with the social problem of unequal opportunity as identified by Glicken (2010). In the story, the reader is told that Mbinda was considered too ugly to even find a life partner nor friends; the only friend he could make was a friendly and kind *tokoloshie* - another being considered to be an 'other'. Thus, it can be inferred that Mbinda was faced with unequal opportunities in his society based on his appearance.

In a situation where there are unequal opportunities there is bound to be an existence of marginalised groups who essentially constitute as the other. Staszak (2008) proffers that the issue of otherness is a made up human construct, an imagined division meant to declare what is considered normal and abnormal, so to say. That is because the measures set in place to

distinguish the 'in' and the 'out' groups are usually dependent on ideals that one may not necessarily have control over such as class; monetary standing, language, physical disabilities, mental illnesses or skin colour. From a socio-economic perspective it can be observed that the othering of one group is usually enforced for the benefit of the in group and the disadvantage of the out group. But what then in the case that the aforementioned other is an 'other' due to physiological or biological circumstances as it was for Mbinda who was born physically disfigured. Staszak (2008) notes, geography is one of the most defining precept in determining the other; that is to say the west vs the oriental, the European vs the African. However, the case of the other can even occur in a community which comprises of one culture, or race. It can even be said in extreme cases such as monasteries or an all-female school, there can still be those who are viewed as the other. Illnesses, disability, sexual orientation, sub and counter-cultures even personalities are some of a few that can cause a difference between the in-group and the out-group.

Mbinda's story was one that could be interpreted as either a tale in which a community shuns one of their own due to his unusual form; or it can be a metaphor for an African child who betrays his people by trading their resources. Both these interpretations were discussed in this chapter.

Mbinda is convinced by an evil *tokoloshi* to steal the Jewel of Happiness; "If you can bring me the Jewel of Happiness, I will give you a magic potion that will make you irresistible to all the girls in your village" (p. 9). Mbinda's trade of the jewel to the outsiders for personal gain is somewhat reminiscent of the aftermath of colonialism. The researcher believes that the use of images such as warthogs, Jewel of Happiness and Great Earth cements the allusion to

colonialism and its effects on the African people, and even a possible solution to these problems.

One has to consider, out of all the animals with tusks what could be a possible reason for choosing a warthog? Elephants and rhinoceros are probably the most famous animals when it comes to tusks, as proof they are more endangered than warthogs. Animals with ivory tusks are synonymous with wealth and power especially for those who have control over them. What is my spirit animal (n.d.) reports that in African folklore warthogs are considered virtuous animals that emphasise the interconnectedness of all creatures on earth? Furthermore, they stand for faith, bravery, determination, abundance, and conflict (what is my spirit animal.com, n.d., para 23). Also a warthog's tusks are a dangerous weapon which it can use to harm others when attacked. Left untamed, the tusks can also grow into the animal's face causing it excruciating pain. Finally, the tusks are what the hunters kill the warthogs for. Herein, then it can be said the warthogs are meant to represent the Namibian natives at large; they have these precious resources which they can use to generate wealth in abundance, yet the same wealth can be a source of great conflict and pain when mishandled.

The imagery and symbolism of The Jewel of Happiness is most indicative symbol of the Namibian natural resources.

They continued on their journey to Great Earth. There, wild fruits grew in abundance and there was plenty of water. More important for the warthogs, however, it was the home of the Jewel of Happiness. This jewel granted

warthogs a longer life. But the evil spirits, the tokoloshies, also desired this jewel.

-*Mbinda* (Izona Bock, 1998, p.3.)

Namibia is a country with abundant minerals, natural resources and wildlife; which from an economic perspective are supposed to ensure her citizens have a long and healthy life. However, social and economic inequality and unequal distribution of wealth is said to be a hindrance for many below the poverty line (Briccetti & Popovich, 2021). Due to lack of necessary infrastructure many raw materials are removed from the land and exported to other countries, then the finished products are sold back to the Namibian people at inflated rates that most cannot afford (Briccetti & Popovich, 2021). Might be safe to assume that does not guarantee a healthy and long life for most.

In the story it is said that when the Jewel of Happiness was stolen from the village by Mbinda, the males of the clan fell ill and some unfortunately died. It is interesting to wonder why only the males got sick and died? In Dakar, the capital city of Senegal stands a towering statue of an African man, a woman and child called the African Renaissance Monument. The man is holding the women and their child as they look and reach out to the sky. It is an art form that speaks to the importance of the African man in the struggle of freedom for all Africans. According to Kounalakis (2019), it is observed that it seems like women and children receive the worst treatment in the face of instability. Kounalakis (2019) reminisces the seemingly forgotten motto of 'women and children first', a statement that reflected the dignity and value that these two groups held in the eyes of the men. As it can be expected that without women

and children, the continuation of a nation is severely jeopardised. Thus it can be suggested that men protecting their women is not only honourable, but it is also necessary for survival of the people. Therefore, it may be interpreted that a society of men that do not value and protect their women is committing societal suicide. Though the third wave feminists may not agree with the sentiment, but it can be suggested that when the males of a people are killed off or are not able to protect their families it becomes easy for the people to fall. As the women and children left behind will most likely be indoctrinated into the new culture thus leaving little room for the previous culture to remain relevant.

This line of reasoning can also be extended to the leaders as well. Most of the social and economic inequalities in the country have been attributed to mismanagement on the part of those in power (Ayittey, 2005). Mbinda was symbolic of an unjust leader who takes the Jewel of Happiness for personal gain with little regard for the others; thus making him a corrupt individual; just as Briccettii and Popovich (2021) report that the extraction and exportation of raw materials from Namibia seems to be at the forefront of social inequality as this act creates an unjust and disproportionate allocation of wealth amongst the citizens of the country.

Finally, Mbinda being out casted by his people for his physical deformities can also be seen as being a symbol of those ostracised by their communities due to gender, illness, age, religion, physical disability or sexual orientation, to name a few. Geher (2019) notes that, though it is deeming; 'othering' is actually a part of human nature as it is always inevitable that one will see themselves as different from next human. For instance, vegans see themselves as more caring for the environment than non-vegans, pro-children couples see themselves in an altruistic light while they cast the child-less couples as selfish and so on so forth. In essence,

it was near impossible to find a group of people that think and live with a homogenous psyche. It becomes problematic though, when the othering goes to the extremes of making others feel less accepted. As Mbinda was treated in his community, his outcast status was so extreme that his fellow warthogs would not even want to fraternise with him. “Many years passed. Mbinda was sad and lonely. Nobody wanted to play with him, all the other warthogs ran away from him.” (p. 7). As Staszack (2008) mentions, discrimination of this sort eventually leads to harmful mental and physiological after effects. Thus, there is a need for people to engage in healthy talks were people are sensitised to the different circumstances others different from them may exhibit as well as ways to accommodate them

Overall, Mbinda is a highly loaded short story, it unpacks the evils of self-hatred, corruption and discrimination. Through a warthog, an animal hunted for its ivory tusks the story showcases how the Namibian people, like many other Africans, have been blessed with natural resources yet mismanagement of the resources and ill-advised wealthy distribution leaves millions below the poverty line.

#### **4.13 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented the synopsis of the short stories alongside their analysis and discussion. What was evident from most of the short stories from *The Stolen Water and other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) as retold by Jennifer Davis, is the prominence of young children alongside the animal characters. Furthermore, majority also seem to imply the importance of upholding the spirit of Ubuntu among the people, as well as how its tenets are integral to the well-functioning of the society.

From the identified social issues identified in chapter one, the stories addressed the following, environmental protection, colonial legacy, gender relations, toxic masculinity, crime, poverty, discrimination and corruption.

*Mbinda* (1998) similarly addressed the similar issues and emphasised the importance of re-evaluating the state of fraternity between the black citizens of the country, as way to root out self-hatred, corrupt activities and unequal distribution of wealth. Only by addressing issues, among many more, can the country fully stride towards bettering the societies. The next, and final chapter, offers the conclusion and recommendation as identified by the research in the course of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reported and discussed the findings from the anthology *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) as retold by Jennifer Davis and illustrated by Libby Costandius and the short story *Mbinda* (1998) by Izona Bock and illustrated by Paulo Malubila.

The chapter gave conclusion and recommendations on the use of anthropomorphism and social issues in selected Namibian's children literature. The study was informed by the folklorist theory and thus the exploration and discussion of the findings were made through this theory. The study aimed at exploring how anthropomorphism was used in the selected children's literature; this included animals which presented in the stories and in some cases why those animals were used. The study also interrogated social issues of interest in the stories and how these social issues presented. The study also highlighted the possible reasons for their existence of social issues as well as possible solutions to combating them.

## 5.2 Findings and conclusion

From the short stories studied and analysed the following social issues were identified: poverty, environmental destruction, discrimination, toxic masculinity, erasure of significant cultural practises and the legacy of colonialism.

The first story from the anthology *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from*

*Namibia* is that of “The Watersnake”. The story highlighted the perceived significance of snakes in relation to ancestral connection and wellness of the people in the physical natural environment. In addition, the story highlighted the fact that humans are quite dependent on their natural environment and they are expected to move and adapt as the environment changes. Moreover, the study revealed that the observance of these changes gave rise to indigenous knowledge that aids the younger generations when needed.

The second story analysed from the anthology was “The Greedy Jackal”, the short story was an analogy of the imperial colonists initially settling in Namibian soil, extracting the natural resources they required and the ever present notion that a similar incident may happen again if the Namibian people are not vigilant enough to protect their natural resources.

The third story was “The King Frog”, this short story focused on the issues of gender in society. The story exposed the reader to realise that rigid gender roles can not only be harmful but also quite destructive to the social fabric and the environmental health when blindly followed. The fourth story was “Nehova and the Monster”; this story brought to light the sad reality of child headed family units in Namibia. The story depicts how children assuming the roles of caretaker

and provider for their siblings while they do not have the society's guidance in transcending into adulthood in the form of coming of age rituals. The fifth story was "Lion and Jackal", this story provides an insight on the possible effect that colonialism had on the black Namibian men's masculinity, it further highlighted how damaging this legacy had on the relationship dynamics between the black Namibian man and the black Namibian woman. The sixth story from the anthology was "The Good Farmer", this story also highlighted the theme of colonial legacy. Unlike the previous story which consider colonialism as a perpetual justification for lack of compassion and harmony between the black Namibian man and woman; "The Good Farmer" offered a differing insight, it showed the importance of making peace with the past, as ugly and painful as it may be, and then advancing on route to rebuild the nation from the ground up. The story also emphasised on the need for healthy and strong bond between the man, woman and the environment for a strong nation to take root.

The seventh story was "The Cunning Tailor". "The Cunning Tailor" interrogated the notion of masculinity in the African sense as well; it showed a protagonist who was adept at strategizing and using his brain rather than his might to solve problems. The story highlighted the dangerous pressure to attain and maintain a tough exterior was actually a hindrance to the advancement of the nation as it left very small room for people who do not fit for traditional gender roles were not accommodated in the contribution for the betterment of the country. The story after that was "The Giant Ant" (short story number eight). The story was on pair with Namibia's laws regarding wildlife and environmental protection. The short story highlighted how the inexperienced can pose a great danger to the natural environment and how those who understand nature are most likely to offer sensible solutions to the environment problems experienced. Not only that it also highlighted the dynamics of the relationship between the man, woman and the environment; and how the imbalance of access to land and authority over

the land hinders the solving of most environmental problems as the problems are feminised and the solutions appear to be masculinised. Finally, *Mbinda* (1998) emphasised the issue of discrimination, especially within a society or community of people who share so many aspects. As well the controversial topic of corruption that appears to plague the African landscape.

To reiterate, the objectives of the study were to:

- Examine the means through which social issues are presented in the selected short stories;
- Analyse the significance of animals in the selected short stories, as well as in the society; and
- Evaluate the ways in which the messages are conveyed through the use of animals.

After reading the nine short stories, the general consensus seemed to indicate that the social problems highlighted in the stories were because of negative legacy colonialism and the unhealthy gender relations. Colonialism came with a strong affinity for capitalism; western religion and belief systems; different familial and societal dynamics.

These factors were directly and indirectly responsible for the natives abandoning their beliefs systems and religions, which saw a growing lack of interest in using the tried and tested traditional solutions; especially pertaining the environmental problems. The emergency of capitalism also contributed to weakening of spirit of Ubuntu within and among the natives. This of course includes the black on black crime and the mistreatment of the womenfolk by

their male counterparts. One of the short stories; *Mbinda* (1998) went as far as showing how disadvantageous self-enrichment of one person can easily be the fall of an entire nation. A drastic change in the social fabric of Namibia has seen less and less acts of Ubuntu; orphaned children are all too often left to fend for themselves without proper social guidance- a notion expressed in “Nehova and the Monster” from the anthology *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993).

It would however be biased, and lacking retrospection to conclude that colonialism was inherently bad and evil, and in fact this manner of reasoning was identified to be regarded as methodically flawed in African philosophy; African philosophy believes in the duality of all things (HTH, 2021). Post the colonial era; Namibian people were able to be more vocal about the ‘norms’ that negatively affected their wellbeing; one of these norms was observed from the short stories was the social issue of toxic masculinity. This notion was explored in the short stories: “The Cunning Tailor” and “Lion and Jackal”, both from *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993) anthology. These two stories highlighted that toxic masculinity was harmful and oppressive not only to women but to the men themselves as well because some men in a traditional setting lacked qualities that were conventionally accepted as masculine, yet they possessed ‘feminine’ traits that could prove to be valuable to the advancement of a people.

Thus far, it may be inferred that topics of this nature are regarded as controversial; therefore, people have to employ a certain discretion and diplomacy in expressing these views, more especially to children. This present study uncovered that anthropomorphism proved to be one of the suitable methods adopted by Namibian authors and story tellers. As defined earlier,

anthropomorphism is a literary technique that allows authors and story tellers to give nonhuman entities (e.g. animals) human characteristics and emotions. This literary technique is usually observed in folktales.

The short stories that were studied were of a folklore nature; some of the short stories only used animals as characters while others used both animals and humans as characters. After close examination it became apparent that the animals used in the story were not selected haphazardly by the story tellers. Rather, the animals were chosen for a role based on a few factors namely:

- The relationship the humans have with the animal

Ihueze (2015) stipulates that if the animals were observed to have a positive effect on the humans' lives and lifestyles, such as how cattle are a source of food, they could be seen as the cast in the constructive roles. This was seen in the usage of a warthog in trying to address the issues of natural resource extraction and unequal wealth distribution in *Mbinda* (1998). Meanwhile, if the animals have negative effect on the people and their lifestyles, as such the case for predatory animals like jackals or predatory birds, the animals would be cast as a villain. As the case for the jackal in stories of "The Greedy Jackal", and "Lion and Jackal"; both from *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993). In some cases; it could be a more neutral relationship, such as the relationship between snakes and humans. The sight of a snake can easily instil fear in a person since some snakes can deliver a deadly bite, however; snakes tends to help humans indirectly via killing rodents that would otherwise eat the harvested grains and spread diseases. All consequences that can positively or negatively affect the humans as such the snake could be an animal that is cast in role it can embody both such as in the case of the "The Watersnake", and "The Good farmer".

- The symbolic status of the animal

Humans tend to observe animals in their natural habitats and make assumptions about the animals' characters. They create myths as to why these animals may possibly act in a given manner. These assumptions over time take on a symbolic status, this then becomes an accepted perception of the animal.

For those short stories which were in theme of the effects of colonialism, it was observed that the animals associated with power in real life scenarios such as lions were cast in roles in which they were the stand in for the colonial oppressor. Not only that but with the topic of colonialism comes to the supporting ideals of the 'other' (Staszack,2008). Due to the need for separation and rigid social hierarchy structure that the colonial system required to be in place for the colonies to run in accordance to the imperial goals, discrimination was a major psychological tool in advancing these goals. However, in the short story of *Mbinda* (1998) the author acknowledged the fact that discrimination within a homogenous society could quite possibly be much more disastrous than discrimination experienced from the outsiders.

There is a saying, a boat cannot sink unless there is a hole that allows water into the boat. In the case of discrimination and imperial oppression; one person cannot hate members of his or her clan unless one of the outsiders was successful in convincing them to do such oppression and discriminations. Reading *Mbinda* (1998) and "The Greedy Jackal" drives this message home. While *Mbinda* (1998) illustrates how one can be driven to betray his or her own people and the laborious task of restoring what has been lost, "The Greedy Jackal" gives a warning that though these people who intend to do harm can be identified and warded off if a society bands together, the enemy will remain lurking in the shadows waiting for an opportunity to strike yet again. Therefore, there is a need to remain vigilant and guard one another.

*Mbinda* (1998) uses a warthog, an animal with ivory tusks; a clear indication of the natural resources wealth that Namibia has. Also a warthog is said to be an animal that only resorts to violence when provoked and in dire need for self-perseveration. While “The Greedy Jackal” uses a jackal as the animal that attempts to steal meat from the village people. Jackals are synonymous with destroying farmers’ kraals and even posing a threat to humans who unfortunate find themselves in their paths. There are similarities in character with the nature of the animals used in the respective stories and the commentary they may offer on the issue of colonialism and its legacy.

But that is not to say that Namibian folklore that addresses colonialism entirely puts the blame for all that is wrong on the Europeans that settled in Namibia. Certain stories such as “Lion and Jackal” and “The Good Farmer”; both from *The Stolen Water and Other Stories: Traditional Tales from Namibia* (1993), shine light on the natives’ varying reaction to the situation. A quick read of Namibian women’s literature catalogue one would identify the theme of domestic abuse, this phenomenon has been attributed to the oppressive climate of the colonial era. Secondary sources consulted for the study implied that this practice has been normalised in most parts of the country (Ambunda & de Klerk, 2008). The need for Namibian women to be protected by the men was also highlighted in the short story “The Good Farmer”. The short story showed that it is possible for the nation to rebuild; and most importantly it also illustrates that caring and protecting the Namibian women is a part of rebuilding the country as they too have been through tremendous maltreatment, injustice and fear. “The

Watersnake” even showcases just how women in most cases were willing to self-sacrifice for the good of their people; as such in the case of Absas surrendering herself to the Water spirit so the environment her people resided would not be destroyed.

The self-sacrificing black woman is a dangerous stereotype; the misguided belief that only women should do certain tasks or duties (which men can also do) puts unnecessary restrictions that in some cases end up causing more harm for all involved. The moral behind “The King Frog” demonstrates this in a sound manner; the King Frog assumes the duty of looking after the children, a role usually reserved for the women in most Namibian societies, King Frog did not send out word for the other subjects to come help the children, the natural instinct to save the younglings enabled him to think quickly and trick the young humans, thereby saving the young frogs or else the young frogs would have perished. Another story that depicts a well-rounded, brave and protective example of a Namibian man was the short story of “Nehova and the Monster”, though Nehova’s older brothers shy away from the difficult task of saving their little sister; Nankelo, the younger one, takes it up on himself to seek out the monster that took his sister. He eventually slays the monster in an act that is reminiscent to the rite of passage ceremony for young boys into adulthood. Traditionally, it made Nankelo the new head of the homestead. The symbolism of the parents has been deceased, and Nankelo stepping into adulthood with bravery, and protective of his sister speaks volumes to the prospect of a new generation of men who are willing to pick up the shield for the women in their lives. This speaks to a healthy version of masculinity. The subject of masculinity was one of the prominent topics in the short stories.

“The Cunning Tailor” exposed the reality that men who do not possess the typical qualities of masculinity; for instance, physical strength, are usually overlooked in society. The cunning tailor is a character who was able to use their mind to solve problems easily, but hides this fact from his society knowing that he will be seen as less than a man if he was observed to possess no brute power. The pressure of men to hide their true self was also expressed in *Mbinda* (1998), Mbinda’s father attempted to convince his wife into abandoning their child for fear that he will not be accepted by the society due to his peculiar appearance. Mbinda too, takes note of how he discriminated due to his different appearance and his desire to fit in and be accepted almost brings the annihilation in the whole clan. It is as if the authors were emphasising the fact that society only recognises one face of masculinity, and it is either one meets all the requirements to be part of it or they too are an outsider.

Igoaros’ father in “The Giant Ant”, “The King Frog” and the farmer from “The Good Farmer”, appear to be some of the male characters that are able to embody a healthy and balanced idea of masculinity in a modern Namibia setting. Igoaros’ father was able to use his physical might and sharp thinking mind to save his children and other animals from the destructive ant. Moreover, the father was not too engulfed by pride to only credit himself for the feat, he acknowledges the wild animals’ role and as a show of gratitude he pledges to always take care of the wild animals. The story also hints at how it is not just the duty of women to care for the environment, but men as well; it goes as far to suggest that when men should also provide care and protection to the women as well. This idea can be paralleled to how the good farmer vows to take care of his farm and wife. Thus, it can be inferred that, if men are accorded space, they can practice healthy masculinity; then society can experience healthy and elevated gender relations which will prove beneficial to the population at large.

It became quite clear that if these short stories were told with human characters, they would have been criticised for the nature of the topics they laid out. Which proves that anthropomorphism is a good technique to shine light on an issue; and with time the reader will be able to critically think and uncover more about the message contained in the story.

### **5.3 Contribution to knowledge**

The researcher recognised the need to explore the subject of anthropomorphism in children's literature in Namibia as this has not been formally explored in Namibia. This thesis functions as an introductory study on the topic of anthropomorphism in the Namibian context; the study revealed the extents to which social issues are presented in Namibian folklore and the methods one can employ in uncovering these issues. It highlighted the need of reading children's literature in accordance with the cultural and social evolution that is constantly occurring, since it is only through understanding a people's culture can it be possible to study the people's literature and have much appreciation for the symbols, idioms, norms and values that are integral to those people's functioning. Social issues that arise from the legacy of colonialism are still prevalent in Namibia, thus in moving forward and building a better nation for younger generations academics and policy makers are expected to know what is included in the literature the Namibian children are exposed to and equally important, what is missing from these texts that can aid the children to become better citizens. The thesis further showcased that children's literature is not simply for hedonistic purposes but it can also serve didactic purposes. The short stories analysed and discussed in this study revealed the extents to which social issues

are presented in Namibian folklore and the methods one can employ in uncovering these issues.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

The major take away from this study was that the short stories that were studied for this thesis amplified and exemplified the magnitude of trauma that resulted from colonialism that is still apparent in an independent Namibia. Especially considering how it affects the quality of relationship between the men and women in Namibian society. Thus, the research recommends that perhaps there is a need for literature, school subjects and general communal services that could offer psychological rehabilitation and counselling for those in need if the social fabric is to be mended for the better lives of people in Namibian societies. Granted these short stories were published in the years 1993 and 1998, respectively; yet over a decade later there are still some very loud echoes of the same social problems. Crime rate has gone up, violence against women- especially in the rural areas has heightened, and there is a new form of colonialism taking place called neo-colonialism. And on the environmental aspect, there is a growing concern of environmental destruction through illegal sand mining, poaching, and the most recent incident of this is the go ahead of the Re-Con company to drill for oil in the Kavango east region; in spite of numerous protests from environmental organisations.

As aforementioned in the previous paragraph, the short stories used in this study were published in the late 1990s, thus the researcher recommends a future study that analyses anthropomorphic stories from fairly recent years to compare if the social issues that expressed have changed or

they still resonate to those identified in this study. The researcher also found the portrayal of abuse in the short stories to be quite thought-provoking; perhaps a close inspection of abuse in the anthropomorphic Namibian folklore would be a worthy study. Finally, the researcher recommends further investigations on anthropomorphism and social issues in Namibian children's literature.

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**Appendix 1: Ethical clearance certificate**

(On the next page)



## ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

**Ethical Clearance Reference Number: SHS 0015    Date: 25 February 2022**

This Ethical Clearance Certificate is issued by the University of Namibia Decentralized Ethics Committee (DEC) in accordance with the University of Namibia's Research Ethics Policy and Guidelines. Ethical approval is given in respect of undertakings contained in the Research Project outlined below. This Certificate is issued on the recommendations of the ethical evaluation done by the School of Humanities, Society & Development Decentralized Ethics Committee.

**Title of Project:** Anthropomorphism and social issues in selected Namibian Children's Literature

**Researcher:** Mercy Mubuyaeta

**Student Number:** 201408724

**Supervisor(s):** Dr. N. Mlambo

### Centre for Research Services

Take note of the following:

1. Any significant changes in the conditions or undertakings outlined in the approved Proposal must be communicated to the ethics committee. An application to make amendments may be necessary.
2. Any breaches of ethical undertakings or practices that have an impact on ethical conduct of the research must be reported to the ethics committee
3. The Principal Researcher must report issues of ethical compliance to the ethics committee (through the Chairperson) at the end of the Project or as may be requested by the ethics committee
4. The ethics committee retains the right to:
  - i) Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance if any unethical practices (as outlined in the Research Ethics Policy) have been detected or suspected,
  - ii) Request for an ethical compliance report at any point during the course of the research.

The ethics committee wishes you the best in your research.

Prof. Trywell Kalusopa (Chairperson, Decentralised Ethics Committee)

Prof. Davis Mumbengegwi (Head, Multidisciplinary Research)