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The representation of father and son relationships in
African fairy tales

by

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Plagiarism Declaration



Declaration of Original Work

I, Hlengiwe Nkosi (Student number 553301), know and accept that plagiarism (i.e. to use another's work and to pretend that it is one's own) is dishonest.

Please confirm the following:

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✓	I have acknowledged all direct quotations and paraphrased ideas.
✓	I have provided a complete, alphabetised reference list, as required by the APA method of referencing (described in the Referencing Handbook).
✓	I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.
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Date: 7 August 2023

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Dedication

I dedicate this research project to my father, John Ojikutu, who said to me many years ago that I should give a master's a shot. Here it is, Dad. I am grateful to God every day for you and Mom.

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Abstract

This research project examines the representation of father and son relationships in African fairy tales. The purpose of this research is firstly to analyse how father and son relationships are portrayed in African fairy tales. The second purpose of this research is to determine the types of father and son relationships portrayed in the African fairy tales and how those relationships expand, challenge or support the existing knowledge about what it means to be a father and a man. I used ten fairy tales to conduct this study. Three of the fairy tales are from Ethiopia, one fairy tale is from Kenya, four are from South Africa, one from Zimbabwe, and one from Ghana. I analysed the data for this study using a thematic content analysis method. My findings were that there are five types of father and son relationships: dysfunctional father and son relationships, detached father and son relationships, distanced father and son relationships, absent father and son relationships, and positive father and son relationships. There are five factors that determined the father and son relationships; these factors are hard work, wisdom and knowledge, obedience and disobedience, communication, and reckless behaviour. The types of father and son relationships portrayed in the African fairy tales affirm, contest and extend existing knowledge on fatherhood and masculinity in different ways.

Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

1.1 Background

In this research project, I examined how the relationships between fathers and sons are depicted in ten African fairy tales taken from the African storybook website (<http://www.africanstorybook.org/>). The African storybook website was used because unlike popular publishers such as the Oxford University Press Southern Africa and MacMillan Education South Africa which publish a limited selection of stories in textbooks for schools and in English only, the website has over 3000 storybooks which have been translated to over 200 African languages (<http://www.africanstorybook.org/>). These stories have been written and produced by educators and other members of African communities. The ASb (African Storybook) along with accredited organisations and language experts thoroughly check and edit the stories before publishing them on the website (<http://www.africanstorybook.org/>). Local African communities are part of the construction of the storybooks in the African storybook website, which makes the stories more personal and relevant to African communities. Using a reader from the Oxford University Press Southern Africa or any other print publication to teach fairy tales would limit the teachers' creativity in teaching the stories as they would be bound to the material in the reader, making their approach textbook centred.

What led me to this research topic is the lack of sufficient literature that analyses how the relationship between fathers and sons are portrayed in African fairy tales and the implications of misrepresentations of father and son relationships in African fairy tales. As an Intermediate Phase language educator, I encountered several problematic representations of father and son relationships in the classroom, as well as lack of representation in this topic, because the only readers we are given are the Department of Basic Education (DBE) English textbooks and Oxford English for Success textbooks. Unfortunately, the fairy tales in those readers do not adequately address father and son relationships or any other male to male relationships. This is the reason I used fairy tales from the African storybook website to study the

representations of male characters who are fathers, sons, uncles, grandfathers and father figures and their relationship to one another.

This study is important, firstly, because the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) has made fairy tales one of the prescribed texts for English Home Language Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6) (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Learners are required to spend at least 12 hours in the English period for a two-week cycle studying texts (Department of Basic Education, 2011). During this time, learners will listen to texts, speak about texts, read texts, view texts and write about texts (Department of Basic Education, 2011). One of those types of texts are fairy tales. The CAPS document, however, does not provide educators with a clear guideline on how to address challenges associated with texts. These challenges include choosing the appropriate text and engaging with a selected text critically. The CAPS document mentions that learning and teaching materials should include a reader that contains various text types, including folktales. The relationship between folktales and fairy tales is that they are part of fables. Folktales are stories that have been transmitted through oral storytelling and there is often a correlation between folktales and the daily experiences of the ordinary people in the community, whereas fairy tales often include mystical characters and supernatural events (Hasa, 2016). Since children are exposed to fairy tales at their early stages of language and literacy development, I found it useful to investigate the representation of father and son relationships in fairy tales. In chapters two and four of this research report, I discuss the following in detail: why the focus is on the Intermediate Phase, the different genres in children's literature, and why the focus of the study is solely on fairy tales.

The second reason this study is important is that, as learners know how to read, they become aware of the cultural values and norms portrayed in texts (Taylor, 2003). Since texts, particularly the ones we read in our childhood, shape our identity, it is important to analyse how gender roles are represented in them (Taylor, 2003). In social discourses, academic discourses and literature, fatherhood has been given meaningfully less focus compared to motherhood (Hubin, 2013). When we choose to ignore fatherhood, we are doing a great disservice particularly to the life of the boy child. The relationships sons have with their

fathers contribute significantly to their life experiences and emotional development (Hickey, 2013; East et al., 2007; Near, 2004). A literary study on father and son relationships is necessary because it demonstrates how literary texts can impact learners' perceptions of fatherhood in the classroom. Such a study can also enlighten educators about the importance of analysing texts before we select them for teaching and learning purposes.

Fatherhood is the most impactful factor to a son's masculinity (Near, 2004). Father and son relationships have a dominant influence on the personal and emotional growth of young boys (Hendricks, 2009; Yoon et al., 2018). Near (2004, p. 1) states the following: "the relationship a boy has with his father is one of the most influential male-male relationships that he will have in his lifetime. The father and son relationship impacts various facets of the boy's development such as problem-solving ability, emotional health, sexual attitudes, communication behaviours and even their relationships with their own sons". Sadly, boys with absent fathers begin to formulate imaginary father figures to fill this void (Near, 2004). It cannot be denied that the absence of a father in the life of his son impacts the son when he later becomes a man (Ratele, Shefer & Clowes, 2012). Men who have had absent fathers struggle with how they perceive masculinity and gender relations (Ratele et al., 2012). They sometimes get involved in toxic relationships just to display assertive masculine actions (Ratele et al., 2012). The pressure for these men also comes from Western influence which idealises a nuclear family set-up (Ratele et al., 2012). That is why texts that portray father and son relationships in an African context should be closely examined.

According to Lipenga (2017), the topic of masculinity is not a frequently discussed theme in African literature. Although this is changing gradually, the scales of gender representation criticism are still unbalanced. There has been significant amount of academic writing about how women are represented in African literature but discussions about men and boys' representation is infrequent (Lipenga, 2017). In African literature, due to ancient traditional and colonial influence, masculinity in fathers has been represented in a narrow way; masculinity for African fathers means the men do not exhibit any traits of femininity (Lipenga, 2017). However, in reality we have various masculinities in African societies (Lipenga, 2017). There are multiple ways boys are nurtured to become men; some are

traditional whereas others are contemporary, and these ways are constantly changing (Lipenga, 2017). In many classic African stories such as *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (1958), young boys through the influence of their fathers are compelled to imitate a certain type of masculinity and this masculinity is influenced by either the colonial or precolonial period (Lipenga, 2017). The relationship between a father and son can be strained or positively enhanced by the masculinity a son chooses to depict, depending on the father's own cultural and social convictions[(Lipenga, 2017).

In many parts of the African continent, we cannot disregard the fact that colonialism as a historical event had the greatest impact on the current state of fatherhood (Ratele et al., 2012). Before colonialism, a man's progress in Africa was measured by agricultural labour, the number of children he had and, most importantly, if he had a son to continue his name after he died (Hunter, 2006 as cited in Makusha, 2013). However, things changed after colonialism. In South Africa, with the start of apartheid in 1948, the white minority attained political and financial dominance that altered fundamental perceptions of fatherhood (Makusha, 2013). Since apartheid oppressed people in different areas of their lives it also meant that there were different experiences of work for African, Indian, Coloured and White fathers (Morrell & Richter, 2006 as cited in Makusha, 2013). The effects of colonialism on African fathers are still felt today in Africa (Makusha, 2013).

In addition to the economic constraints on African fathers in South Africa, apartheid and colonialism also introduced labour migration laws that separated fathers from their children (Makusha, 2013). The breakdown of family life is one of the most significant impacts of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa (Hall, 2017). The political destruction of the African system of governance by Western domination also extended to the destruction of family life. In many instances in academic discourse when restitution is suggested, it is for political and financial amends and no recompense is discussed for family breakdowns, which is unfortunate. It is therefore important to undertake a research study that unpacks the effects of poor fatherhood on sons, as well as the benefits of exemplary fatherhood. This is the reason why I chose to examine the representation of father and son relationships in African fairy tales in this project.

1.2 Research problem

Fairy tales contribute significantly to children's literary development (Crain, 2018). The research problem for this study is the scholarly neglect of African fairy tales in terms of how they contribute to understandings of fatherhood and masculinity. There have been multiple studies on the representation of femininity in Western fairy tales (Berlianti, 2021; Nanda, 2014; Neikirk, 2009). However, masculinity and father and son relationships in African fairy tales have been largely ignored. The representation of sons in African literature has been mainly told from a perspective of their relationship with a strong male figure around the boy (Mahonge, 2017). The position of the son is elevated by the status of the father in society (Richter, Chikovore & Makusha, 2010). Fathers impact the identity of their sons, and from a cultural perspective, sons continue the clan names of their forefathers; thus, being fatherless is a great shame and loss of who they are (Richter et al., 2010). Modern storytellers in Africa write tales that reflect the social, political and cultural changes of our society (Molongoana, 2015). According to my observation, the voice of sons in some African literature such as *Things Fall Apart* (Achebe, 1958) has been less dominant compared to the voice of their fathers or an elder representative of the community. This study is important as it investigates the lens through which African masculinity is depicted in African fairy tales. The study makes the reader ask the question: is this representation empowering or emasculating African men?

In a subtle yet powerful manner, fairy tales assist in formulating masculine identities in boys and feminine identities in girls (Louie, 2012 as cited in Cekiso, 2013). Fairy tales assist boys and girls in navigating their way in society (VisikoKnox-Johnson, 2016). Boys' violence and misbehaviour is influenced by a number of factors such as culture, social expectations and family background (Molongoana, 2015). However, the kinds of literature boys read and interact with can play a role in how they will enact their masculine identities (Molongoana, 2015). This study is also a significant indicator that masculine representations should not be carelessly depicted, especially if children will engage with those representations, but rather be carefully considered so that as teachers we can actively instil positive masculine perceptions in the minds of the young boys we teach.

1.3 Research aim

The aim of this research is to find out how father and son relationships are depicted in African fairy tales. The titles of the African fairy tales are “A father’s lesson”, “A fish and a gift”, “Advice from an old man”, “Clever brother”, “Demane and Demazane”, “Man with a serious problem”, “Thoko’s FantaPine seed”, “Sekuru Mkuku”, “My friend, my enemy”, and “Result of disobedience”. The reasons behind how and why these texts were selected as well as the geographical considerations are discussed in chapter five of this research study. The study seeks to determine the types of father and son relationships depicted in the African fairy tales, the factors that determine those relationships, and how those relationships expand, challenge or support our existing knowledge about what it means to be a father and a man in an African society.

1.4 Research questions

The main research question for this study is: How do representations of father and son relationships in African fairy tales contribute to understandings of fatherhood and masculinity?

To answer this question, the study will address three sub-questions:

1. What types of father and son relationships are portrayed in African fairy tales?
2. What factors determine father and son relationships in African fairy tales?
3. How do father and son relationships in African fairy tales affirm, contest or extend existing knowledge on fatherhood and masculinity?

These questions are answered in this study through a thematic content analysis of ten selected African fairy tales.

1.5 Rationale for the study

This research project is important because instructors and young male readers need to recognise misrepresentations that might exist in how father and son relationships are portrayed in African fairy tales. They need to be able to identify stereotypes and problematic representations of fatherhood in African fairy tales. The Intermediate Phase is a critical stage in the lives of learners because that is where their identities are still being formed. As a language teacher myself, I am aware that in subjects such as English, IsiZulu and Sesotho, fairy tales are a large part of the curriculum. Therefore, it is important for me to conduct this study to learn how to approach the teaching of fairy tales from a critical perspective that will empower my learners with knowledge about father and son relationships. One of the fundamental reasons I undertook this study is because of the prevalence of toxic masculinity and dysfunctional fatherhood that exists in society. I wanted to embark on a study that looks at the relationship young boys have with their fathers from a literary perspective as literature offers insights into human relationships that real life often does not make accessible.

1.6 Significance of the study

The significance of this study is that it will raise awareness about varieties of fatherhood for writers of African fairy tales and that will make them more conscious of how father and son relationships can be depicted in their stories, since these representations form a major part of how boys perceive fatherhood. The study is also significant for educators since the issue of absent fatherhood has an impact on learner performance (Brown, 2018; Makusha et al., 2019; Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014). Educators can use the knowledge gained in this study to initiate discussions about absent fatherhood using fairy tales. These discussions can help learners open up about the emotional and social difficulties of absent fatherhood in their lives. The study is also useful for learners and teachers to learn to apply critical literacy when engaging with texts, in order to challenge dominant ideologies, cultures and social expectations about fatherhood (Anwaruddin, 2016). Lastly, the study is important for curriculum instructors as they can deliberately design the language curriculum to address psychosocial issues that learners are confronted with, such as relationships with their parents.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

In any research project, there are possible problems that can arise. In other instances, the researcher intentionally restricts his or her study to control the outcome of the investigation. Delimitations are the limitations that the researcher has imposed on their study (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). The researcher deliberately decides to put certain delimitations so that the aim of their research is achieved (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). Delimitations can include restrictions on research questions, research aims and the research problem itself (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). In this research, the delimitation is that although there are thousands of African fairy tales on the African storybook website, I have only chosen ten for the purpose of this study. So, I will use the ten African fairy tales that I have chosen to investigate how father and son relationships are represented. This allows me to keep the project small and manageable, thus keeping it within the scope of a research report. Africa is a large continent with diverse cultures, traditions and people, so limiting the selected literary texts to a specific region narrows the scope of the study. The cultural, historical and socio-economic factors that shape and affect father and son relationships in different regions may be relevant but are not the focus of this study. This also does not impact the representations of these relationships. The values and norms portrayed in the texts are similar but have not been used for comparison purposes.

1.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, in this chapter, I provided a brief background of this research study, including why fairy tales are important in relation to the national curriculum of South Africa for primary school learners in the Intermediate Phase. Secondly, I explained the research problem. The research problem section explains the reason I undertook this study. Thirdly, I discussed the aim of this research study. The aim is what I intend to achieve with this study. Fourthly, I provided the research question for this study. Lastly, I provided a rationale for the study. In the next chapter, I will discuss different perspectives of father and son relationships in African fairy tales, as deduced from existing literature.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I introduced this research study by providing the background of the study, the research problem, the aim of the research, the research questions and the rationale for the study. In this chapter, the literature review discusses different perspectives of the topic, the representation of father and son relationships in African fairy tales. The first perspective discussed is fairy tales as a genre in children's literature and the impact of fairy tales on children. This study is a literary study which uses children's fairy tales to analyse the interactions fathers have with their sons. The second perspective is the representation of father and son relationships in children's literature. The third perspective that is discussed is gendered representations in fairy tales. It is not sufficient to focus only on the representation of male characters and fathers, but we also need to look at how gender as a whole is constructed in fairy tales. The fourth perspective explored in the literature review is the representation of masculinity in children's literature. Fifthly, the chapter discusses absent fatherhood. Absent fatherhood is discussed from sociological and literary perspectives. The sixth perspective is the impact of colonialism on fatherhood in Africa. Colonialism is one of the biggest historical and political events that contributed to the current state of fatherhood in Africa. Lastly, I examine fatherhood and fathering in South Africa. The circumstances surrounding fatherhood in reality are important to investigate as they often influence the kind of stories writers narrate.

2.2 Fairy tales as a genre in children's literature and the impact of fairy tales on children

The most prevalent understanding of children's literature is that it is books that are written for children; this excludes children's dictionaries and encyclopaedias (Reichert, 1997). However, it is debatable as to which books can be classified as quality children's literature, as this is largely dependent on the reader's own point of view, and if the reader is a child, that can be even more complex (Reichert, 1997). Rahman (2017) claims that modern children's

literature includes short narratives, illustration books, comic books, magazines, cartoon books and poems. Children's literature has evolved significantly over the last few years and the common characteristics of children's literature is that the books often contain illustrations and colour and are easy to read (Reichertz, 1997). Pictures play a vital role in the storytelling process in children's literature (Reichertz, 1997). Children's literature is classified into different genres. These genres include realistic fiction, fairy tales, poetry, non-fiction, mystery, and biography.

In this study, my focus is on fairy tales. Fairy tales are very popular with many children. In fact, some children get exposed to fairy tales even before they start school because their parents read them classic fairy tales such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, and *Little Red Riding Hood*. Although children's literature is created specifically for children, the readers are not always children as many adults love reading children's literature (Rahman, 2017). Fairy tales are part of children's literature that emerged from oral storytelling (Rahman, 2017). Fairy tales have been used for many generations to pass on life lessons through moral lessons embedded in the fairy tales (Rahman, 2017). Fairy tales represent stories that have been told orally but were later adapted into written form (Vučković, 2018), and oral and literary stories are closely related to one another (Zipes, 2012). Fairy tales also represent the progression of literary history as well as the lifestyle and values of the culture they depict (Vučković, 2018). Fairy tales enable children to gain an improved understanding of society at large as each fairy tale depicts what occurs in different cultural and social settings (Koutsompou, 2016). This is the reason this study selected African fairy tales as these fairy tales are tied to the African context.

Stories are significant in the lives of both children and adults (Koutsompou, 2016). However, for children they are more significant as children formulate their identities through what is happening in the story (Koutsompou, 2016). Children make comparisons between what the characters in the stories encounter with their own personal lives (Koutsompou, 2016). Chou (2007) claims that stories can never be impartial because each story carries the writer's beliefs, thoughts and perspectives. The perspectives that a writer may portray in a story can include how children should behave and specific expectations of how girls and boys should

conduct themselves (Chou, 2007). What distinguishes fairy tales is that they closely observe the protagonist as he or she goes through adversity into triumph. Furthermore, most fairy tales follow a similar pattern where good triumphs over evil. Some distinct features of a fairy tale are that they are imaginary stories which often include the use of supernatural elements, a specified setting and a distinct time period. In addition, the circumstances surrounding the characters are often exaggerated; the antagonist is often described as having evil external features but in the end good always prevails over evil (Koutsompou, 2016).

The reason children's literature is different to adult literature is because the experiences, cultures and thinking of children is highly peculiar compared to those of adults (Koutsompou, 2016). For children to find pleasure in reading any material, it has to be easy to read (Koutsompou, 2016). The original purpose of children's literature – particularly fairy tales – was amusement (Koutsompou, 2016). However, as time progressed, fairy tales were used for teaching and learning, especially in language classrooms. Therefore, the contents of a fairy tale should amuse a child whilst also offering him or her the opportunity to learn and think critically (Koutsompou, 2016). Fairy tales enable children to have a deeper insight about the world they live in. Fairy tales assimilate children into different cultures, and children learn to appreciate those cultures (Koutsompou, 2016). Effectively, fairy tales inform children on how to respond to real-life situations such as personal battles, ambitions and interacting with others (VisikoKnox-Johnson, 2016). These lessons not only stay with the child when they are young but also as they grow up and become adults. Fairy tales can also influence a person's actions subconsciously (VisikoKnox-Johnson, 2016). A large part of children's mental development in the Intermediate Phase is due to their interaction with reading materials. Hence, it is important to study the texts that learners will engage with in the classroom.

Fairy tales act as a mediator that ushers children to the real world: "Children's literature helps a young child make sense of what it means to be human and helps them understand the world around them. The fairy tale genre provides ways for children to receive important messages" (VisikoKnox-Johnson, 2016, p. 77). Not all topics written about in the fairy tale will align to every child in the classroom. However, many topics will enforce good moral behaviours such as love, friendship and family values (VisikoKnox-Johnson, 2016). Themes discussed in fairy

tales correlate with what is happening in our society because the themes are inspired by real life events. Fairy tales also inspire the imagination, thinking and psychology of young children (VisikoKnox-Johnson, 2016). A study has shown that for both boys and girls, fairy tales teach children about what behaviour is expected of them according to their sex (Neikirk, 2009). The roles assigned to the characters in fairy tales are largely based on the character's gender and male characters are often given leading roles (Neikirk, 2009). Old age is a sign of maturity in male characters and often admired (Neikirk, 2009). Amongst the many traits that are highlighted in fairy tales, physical appearance is a significant one (Neikirk, 2009). It is more likely that the male superhero will be tall, muscular and possessing physical strength (Neikirk, 2009). A fat and short man will less likely make the cast for superhero. Violence is hailed in male characters as a form of bravery (Neikirk, 2009). In many fairy tales the themes of masculinity and being a man are closely connected. Even in modern times, stereotypical depictions in fairy tales remain dominant (Neikirk, 2009). When parents, guardians or teachers read fairy tales to children, they cultivate the children's emotions and personality (Koutsompou, 2016). The reality in Africa is that many children do not have parents who read them bedtime stories, so it is the teacher's responsibility to work with the texts in a way that enriches and enlightens the mind of a child. It is also important to note that this particular project is not centred on teaching the texts that have been analysed. Therefore, I have not written any discussions about how controversial and intense topics such as murder and cannibalism can be handled in the classroom

2.3 Representation of father and son relationships in children's literature

The type of relationships children have with their fathers has received some critical attention but not enough attention has been paid specifically to the relationships of sons with their fathers, as was noted in Chapter One of this study. Studies on father and child relationships in literature tend to focus on themes such as absent fatherhood, whereas father and child relationships are more complex and multifaceted (Hickey, 2013; Turney, 2012). This literature shows that sons replicate many actions they see from their fathers, which takes place consciously and unconsciously (Hickey, 2013; Mahonge, 2017). In the popular African novel *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe (1958), the reader gets the sense that deficit fatherhood is something that sons feel ashamed of. Deficit fatherhood in the African novel *Things Fall Apart* is tied to many shortfalls such as a father who enacts a masculinity

perceived as weak and a father who is unable to sufficiently provide for the needs of his family, like Unoka the father of Okonkwo. Many sons with deficit fathers often formulate imaginary fathers in their minds that they wished they had (Hickey, 2013). Thus, it will be impossible to study father and son relationships without including father figures such as uncles, grandfathers, community elders and big brothers.

Father figures are an important aspect to look at in children's literature as they play the role of the father in an event where the father is absent or non-existent (Hendricks, 2009; Ratele et al., 2012). In determining positive, healthy and appropriate father and son relationships in literature, we must consider the setting, social aspects and cultural aspects in which a story takes place (Hickey, 2013). In classic literature, fatherhood is often differentiated according to specific cultural and traditional norms (Hickey, 2013). The cultural and traditional norms may include fathers who are leaders of their homes, communities or clans. Fathers who are traditional can also be non-feminine and hypermasculine. Traditional fathers also tend to be authoritative and lacking in emotional intelligence.

Father and son relationships are the core of identity and masculine formation in boys (Near, 2004). This study is important for children in the Intermediate Phase because this is the stage where many boys are subconsciously formulating their masculine identities before they transition to teenage hood. Many gender roles that boys enact in stories, movies and plays are copied from fathers (Near, 2004). However, this study will show that this is not always the case. Many sons' actions are contrary (both positively and negatively) to the actions of their fathers. One of the main reasons that representations of fathers is important in literature is because storybooks provide cultural, social and symbolic patterns males use to formulate what fatherhood is (Quinn, 2009). Some of the popular symbolic patterns of fatherhood are that a father is the one who provides food, protection and shelter for the family. This can happen through hunting, working in the city, killing dangerous animals, and constructing a home. Over time, the representation of fathers has changed in children's literature and other publications, moving from a father as a breadwinner to a father as caregiver for his children (Quinn, 2009). Nonetheless, according to Quinn (2009), fathers are less frequently depicted in storybooks, as the mother archetype occupies a dominant space in storybooks. Mothers are

presented in most scenes as being the main caregivers and guidance providers. Even when a book depicts the father frequently, fathers are portrayed as being less involved in the lives of their children (Quinn, 2009). Fathers are represented as less likely to be nurturing beings in literature (Quinn, 2009). Furthermore, fathers are most often depicted in a macho masculine way, rarely showing affectionate physical contact such as nursing, kissing and embracing their children (Quinn, 2009). Fathers in children's literature also shy away from other types of affection such as speaking words of encouragement, engaging in games with their children and coaching them in various activities (Quinn, 2009). However, I disagree with this notion of fatherhood because, as I observed in the African fairy tales, some fathers in these stories are at the forefront in their sons' upbringing. The fathers in the African fairy tales display complex behavioural and emotional patterns. Thus, fathers in children's literature cannot all be described in a single and rigid way.

Stories regarding fathers, mothers, sons and daughters are always linked to the historical and cultural period in which they are written (Watson-Phillips, 2017). There is no representation in literature that emerges from nothing; rather, it comes from the social, political and cultural influences on the writer (Watson-Phillips, 2017). It should therefore be expected that because history, social norms and cultural values change with time, no representation will remain constant, and that includes the depiction of fathers (Watson-Phillips, 2017). Fatherhood has evolved with time, and so has the literature that portrays fathers (Watson-Phillips, 2017). According to Watson-Phillips (2017), there is room for improvement in relationships between fathers and sons (Watson-Phillips, 2017). It would be a mistake to think that children do not have an impact on fathers. Scholars have discussed how fathers impact the behaviour of their sons as they grow to become young men (Ashbourne, Daily & Brown, 2011). But it should also be noted that sons directly and indirectly influence the actions of their fathers as well (Ashbourne et al., 2011).

Modern children's literature shows how the role of fathers has changed over time. However, there are features that remain more or less the same, such as a father being the disciplinarian, provider and adventurous parent (DeWitt, 2005). Likewise, mothers' representation has also transformed to a more financially independent character (DeWitt, 2005). Yet, it seems that no

matter how financially capable a mother is, she cannot escape traditional roles such as taking care of the house (DeWitt, 2005). Stories about absent fathers have forced mothers to step up and take on multiple responsibilities within the story, just like it is in the real world (DeWitt, 2005). According to De Witt (2005), scholars are still investigating whether children's storybooks will align with the changing times or stick to the traditional roles assigned to each parent (DeWitt, 2005). The African fairy tales on the storybook website show that writers have transformed their style of writing children's storybooks over time. However, because social aspects such as patriarchy, toxic masculinity and gender-based violence still persist, the problematic representations in storybooks will linger on.

2.4 Gendered representations in fairy tales

A narrow and limited description of gender is that it refers to a person's sexual organs which determine whether the person is male or female (Dixson, 2016). Masculinity is often associated with men because of them being males biologically, whereas femininity is often associated with women because they are females biologically (Dixson, 2016). However, in recent time those definitions have evolved, and gender, masculinity and femininity have been recognised as complex terms which cannot be defined without considering socially formulated behaviours, beliefs and viewpoints (Dixson, 2016). Gender representations in fairy tales influence how gender roles are perceived in the real world (Shaheen, Mumtaz & Khalid, 2019). Since gender is socially constructed, it becomes impossible to change the common perspectives that exist about gender as most societies are deeply rooted to their traditional systems about gender (Agrawal, 2008). Fairy tales across different cultures depict similar stereotypes about female characters, often asserting that they pay too much attention to how they look and not on their inward beauty (Shaban, 2017). Fairy tales idolise male characters as a way to rescue women from the shame of singlehood (Kasner, 2004, as cited in Cekiso, 2013). Gender representations have the ability to influence learners to enact particular gender roles when they read and engage with storybooks (Cekiso, 2013). Fairy tales do not promote individuality, but they teach their young readers how to appreciate and adopt social traditions (Hevko, 2015). It seems that while the world is constantly transforming, gender representations remain relatively unchanged in African fairy tales (Cekiso, 2013).

Many fairy tales are not only used for leisure but as part of the curriculum and reading activities in the classroom, so their representations are significant. According to Cekiso (2013), gender is represented in various ways in fairy tales. Boys are generally lovers of the outdoors and are strong, brave and resilient, whereas girls are presented as fearful, powerless and timid. Many false ideas from fairy tales have been transmitted into the minds of many women, who expect men to be their financial saviours (Cekiso, 2013). It is important for educators and parents to analyse fairy tales carefully before prescribing them for children as children are likely to adopt the points of views and mindsets depicted in the fairy tales (Cekiso, 2013). Gender misrepresentation in literature can affect both boys and girls. Girls may grow up with low self-esteem as they feel they do not match the standards of beauty set in fairy tales and boys may grow up with the mentality of undervaluing women and seeing them as tools rather than equals (Cekiso, 2013).

There are various types of male and female characters in fairy tales. The female protagonist is an embodiment of flawlessness (Patel, 2009). She looks attractive, can multitask and is caring (Patel, 2009). On the other hand, she is powerless in certain aspects such as facing an adversity (this can be a wicked stepmother or a monstrous creature), and she lacks the ability to think critically (Patel, 2009). The female protagonist often relies on others to help her out of predicaments (Patel, 2009). The independent female characters who show intellect are often depicted as wicked (Patel, 2009). The wicked and crafty female character often battles the innocent, gorgeous protagonist (Patel, 2009). In spite of her intellect and clever strategies, she loses to the powerless, beautiful protagonist who is aided by a prince or a strong male character (Patel, 2009). Female characters who are daring and take initiative to resolve difficulties are faced with tragedies at the end (Patel, 2009).

Many classic fairy tales such as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella* endorse patriarchal values and perceptions (Neikirk, 2009). Modern fairy tales have shifted from this representation to challenge stereotypical gender characteristics. However, certain patriarchal stereotypes still persist when it comes to how females are represented. The female character always has to have a flawless beauty even though she is ambitious, independent and highly successful

(Neikirk, 2009). Gender representation in fairy tales is often tied to religious beliefs which are deeply entrenched in many societies (Neikirk, 2009). The process of transforming gender roles in fairy tales so that they not only favour one group such as men or women but equally represent and celebrate the diversity that exists in both groups will require more than just making a few adjustments to the plot and characters in fairy tales.

Gender discrimination is also evident in the language used by authors for female and male characters in children's literature (Shaheen, Mumtaz & Khalid, 2019). Male characters are synonymous to the words 'provider' and 'protector' whereas female characters are closely associated with the words 'subservient', 'beautiful' and 'caretaker' (Shaheen et al., 2019). Moreover, fairy tales have, over the years, become a platform for the social construction of gender behaviours and cultural expectations for children: "they are powerful cultural agents that tell us how to be" (Parsons, 2004, p. 136). According to Parsons (2004), the main objective of patriarchal gender representations in literature is to get the mindset of girls ready for romantic relationships, marriage and having children. A girl child should know the importance of being wanted by a man; in fact, girls are expected to pursue this desire in men in a subtle and 'ladylike' manner that is not obvious to others (Parsons, 2004). There are, however, some classic fairy tales with courageous and smart female characters such as Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* (Nanda, 2014). Gretel thinks critically to solve her problem and overcome her adversary (Nanda, 2014). Such characters challenge the common notion of unquestionable female submission and create a voice for themselves in the narrative. Stepmothers in fairy tales are the most negatively portrayed (Nanda, 2014). Although they are daring and assertive, they use their good attributes for evil and their knowledge of the supernatural is often used only to execute evil plans (Nanda, 2014).

Children's literature contributes to how girls and boys see how they fit in society (Filipović, 2018). Unfortunately, for girls a pattern of underrepresentation of female characters exists in children's literature and for boys a pattern of overrepresentation of toxic masculinity is portrayed (Filipović, 2018). Gender misrepresentation is problematic for both girls and boys as it creates a mindset that gender inequality is acceptable (Filipović, 2018). Even within a specific gender – for example male characters – there can be behaviours that depict masculine

inequality (Filipović, 2018). The implications of gender stereotypes and misrepresentation are evident in the choices boys and girls make about the games they play and their future aspirations (Filipović, 2018). For example, girls normally play with dolls whereas boys like to play with cars. Male characters in children's literature are often related to authority while female characters are related to reliance (Filipović, 2018). In the same way, non-stereotypical books have great implications for the mental, emotional and social development of girls and boys (Filipović, 2018). This is because these books portray various complex roles for both male and females without any prejudice based on gender (Filipović, 2018).

Complexity and diversity of male and female characters in children's literature is significant because it gives children a wider scope of imagining themselves in the real world (Filipović, 2018). Teachers and stakeholders in the education sector have to ensure that critically approved literature is made available to children in schools to avoid negative implications of gender stereotypical books (Filipović, 2018). Educators also have to teach critical thinking and analysis to children when they work with texts, so that children are trained to think critically about the ideas presented about gender and the lessons conveyed in the texts (Filipović, 2018). Teachers need to reflect and become conscious about gender misrepresentation so that they can mindfully encourage children to form positive ideas about who they are and the classroom setting should also enhance a positive learning space about gender (Filipović, 2018).

I personally think that not all stereotypical gender representations in fairy tales are negative. When fairy tales portray boys as daring and brave, that can inspire boys to pursue their dreams without fear and not give in to the challenges they will encounter in life. In the same way, if girls are sometimes depicted as emotionally fragile that can make young girls to grow into women who acknowledge their vulnerabilities as something that does not make them inferior to men but makes them more powerful emotional beings. I therefore argue that problems with stereotypical characters in texts can be mitigated by the teacher who can use these characters to teach positive male and female values.

2.5 Representation of masculinity in children's literature

Children's literature is crucial for conveying ideologies and lessons about how to enact one's own gender according to the social expectations (Thyssen, 2013). When we look at the representation of masculinity in children's literature, the issue of cultural, political, social and historical context plays a vital role (Thyssen, 2013). An example of a social context which exists in many societies is patriarchy which has fuelled toxic masculinity over the years. This is due to the fact that social structures and systems favour patriarchy and "individuals cannot construct masculine identities outside the patriarchal codes of conduct" (Mahonge, 2017, p. 39). Male characters in many children's stories enact their masculine identity according to their prevalent circumstances, cultural norms and social expectations which are in line with patriarchal ideals (Mahonge, 2017). The masculinity enacted often aligns with the ideologies about male domination (Mahonge, 2017) and the representation of masculinity can be complex. Traditional masculine characters depict character traits of self-control, virtue and being willing to give themselves fully for their families (Mahonge, 2017).

There is also a new breed of men that challenges traditional masculine values due to the influence of Western education and media (Mahonge, 2017). Western influence gives African men the courage to determine their own unique masculine identity (Mahonge, 2017). In stories where a male character enacts a type of masculinity that is not favoured by the larger population in the community, they reject him and mistreat him (Mahonge, 2017). Different types of masculinities can be depicted as competing for the highest social status in texts (Mahonge, 2017). This shows the diversity of masculine identities even within a single community (Mahonge, 2017).

In the past, the main focus of studies regarding representation in children's literature have been mainly about how male characters are overrepresented compared to female characters (Thyssen, 2013). This has led to a neglect of how masculinity is portrayed in children's literature (Thyssen, 2013). Male characters have not been exclusively examined outside of comparison to female characters (Thyssen, 2013). In many instances where masculinity is depicted in children's literature, it is portrayed as an exaggerated display of manhood. A good example is the heroic exploits of male protagonists who are fearless in the face of great

danger (Waliaula, 2010). The masculinity of the male protagonists in children's literature represents strength, power and attempting the impossible. Examples of popular male superheroes include Spiderman, Superman and Batman (Thyssen, 2013). Many stereotypical depictions of male characters do not show the complexity of masculinity (Thyssen, 2013).

Complexities of critically analysing representations of masculinity in children's literature exist due to a number of factors (Taylor, 2019). Firstly, some scholars examine masculine representation in children's books through a feminist critical lens (Taylor, 2019). Other scholars look at masculinity from a race and cultural perspective while still other scholars analyse masculinity in relation to other masculinities that are perceived as weak and oppressed (Taylor, 2019). In this study, I focus on the experiences that African men in fairy tales go through in enacting their masculine identity. There is no study that can solely deal with all the issues about the representation of masculinity in literature (Taylor, 2019). Various studies are required to understand the different perspectives and complexities surrounding masculine depictions in books and other media publications (Taylor, 2019).

In many traditional literary texts, the writers of the stories are men who represent masculinity through the male protagonist (Waliaula, 2010). Waliaula (2010) argue that in order to understand the male protagonist's masculinity, we should consider the different cultural and social values that contribute to his identity. There are universal characteristics in both Western and African masculinities, such as wisdom, power and courage (Waliaula, 2010). The male protagonists in literary texts often take extreme measures, such as risking death, to protect their honour, which is tied to their masculine identity (Waliaula, 2010). Even within the same cultural context, masculine depictions differ as there are differences in cultural, social norms and religious beliefs (Taylor, 2019).

However, even though different communities in the same society have various masculinities, there is one common feature that exists in all societies and that is the idea of dominant masculinities: "dominant masculinities are an idealized version of masculinity only achieved by a small minority of men. The dominant masculinity is approved and rendered viable and valuable through a patriarchy system" (Taylor, 2019, p. 3). Dominant masculine identities

have the same characteristics in Western and African societies: usually the men belong to the upper class, and they do not fight or critique the social structures as these favour them (Taylor, 2019). They also directly or indirectly discriminate against men who are viewed as belonging to marginalised masculinities (Taylor, 2019). There are some children's books that portray masculinity that does not conform to societal and patriarchal norms but such texts are not common (Taylor, 2019).

Traditionally, masculinity depicted in literary texts meant the acknowledgement of the roles that men play, such as the role of a husband, father, uncle, brother and son (Clowes, 2005). Over the years, these masculine representations have changed; the modern man is viewed individually and not in relation to what he means to his family members (Clowes, 2005). Occupational roles have also been foregrounded: this includes roles such as a businessman, a policeman, a doctor, and a chairman (Clowes, 2005). The representation of masculinity is not only prevalent in male character dominated storybooks but also in girls' books (Harper, 2007). Storybooks that focus on female characters may indirectly address how masculinity is formulated (Harper, 2007). Male and female characters cannot be easily defined as portraying masculinity or femininity because of their gender (Harper, 2007). Sometimes even female characters portray masculinity (Harper, 2007). A character may take on multiple gender identities that constantly transform as the story develops, "as such masculinity is not the exclusive purview of male bodies but can be performed by anyone. Thus, the study of masculinity cannot be reduced to male characters, or to so-called boys' books" (Harper, 2007, p. 510). Examples include lesbian characters, tomboys and transgendered men (Harper, 2007).

Coloniality and Western literature have entrenched the ideology that educated Westernised masculinity is superior to other types of masculinities and this is not true (Harper, 2007). There is a notion that a woman's body disables her from being able to enact masculinity, but this is also not true (Harper, 2007). The female body (especially women's curves, buttocks and breast size) has been under heavy scrutiny by hegemonic masculinity in literature and society (Harper, 2007). There is a subtle but powerful pressure on men and women to live up to a certain ideal of masculinity (Martín, 2020). Patriarchal societies have not only benefitted

white, straight men but everyone who gains from the political, social and economic structures in place (Martín, 2020). There are instances where black men and women also highly benefit from the system (Martín, 2020).

In closing, in my view, masculine representation in children's literature is broad and complex. However, there are core elements of masculinity that are similar, and it is these common characteristics that drive the dominant ideas of masculinity universally. In children's literature, the dominant constructions of masculinity are frequently favourably depicted and celebrated. Although there are other important aspects about masculine representation such as the politics of representation, misrepresentation, positive and negative images of fathers and sons, these are beyond the scope of this project, so I have not discussed them.

2.6 Absent fatherhood

In this section, I draw information from the field of sociology to talk about absent fatherhood. Thereafter, I look at what literary studies have said about absent fatherhood. The reason I started looking at absent fatherhood from a sociological perspective is because of the scarcity of literary studies that analyse absent fatherhood critically and in-depth.

It is not enough for a father to be merely present physically in the life of his child. A father can still be regarded as an absent father even though he is there physically since "father absence is defined as the physical, social, financial and psychological absenteeism of a biological father" (Molongoana, 2015, p. 12). Many men have chosen to neglect their duties as fathers and very little is done to make them accountable: "almost all of today's fatherless children have fathers who are alive, well, and perfectly capable of shouldering the responsibilities of fatherhood" (Popenoe, 1997, p. 3). Fathers are not just sperm donors; they play an important role in the cultural development of their children (Popenoe, 1997). However, many men fail to be fathers and give all the burdens of raising the children to the mother (Popenoe, 1997).

Every country in the African continent and worldwide has their own peculiar historical, social, economic, cultural and political setting that impacts the state of fatherhood in that nation (Molongoana, 2015). Colonialism has had the biggest impact on fatherhood in the African continent; this will be discussed in depth in the next section. The causes of absent fathers have been due to various reasons over the years (Molongoana, 2015). The causes can include death, marital separation, abandonment, loss of job, sickness and imprisonment of the father (Molongoana, 2015). The drastic changes that have taken place socially in South African communities have resulted in the rise of households led by single mothers (East, Jackson & O'Brien, 2007). Many studies have proven that a child who has both mother and father has an advantage over a child with a single parent (Popenoe, 1997). However, in some instances this is not the case as some families with both parents are in a state of breakdown even worse than single-parent-headed households (Popenoe, 1997). Father absence should not only be analysed from the perspective of the nuclear family but the extended family as well (Magqamfana & Bazana, 2020). Many nuclear families do not have immediate fathers but do not feel the impact of father absence due to extended father figures such as uncles, grandfathers and cousins (Magqamfana & Bazana, 2020).

Absent fatherhood affects girls and boys differently (Brown, 2018). For girl children with absent fathers, the harmful impact of absent fatherhood includes poor mental health, troubled romantic relationships, using sex as a means to fill a void, and unplanned pregnancy (Brown, 2018; La Guardia, Nelson & Lertora, 2014). Although having a father does not guarantee that a son will be a morally upright citizen, "fathers are important to their sons as role models. They are important for maintaining authority and discipline" (Popenoe, 1997, p. 10). Boys who have had no emotional attachments to their fathers tend to be more violent, sexually irresponsible, likely to use drugs or alcohol and engage in criminal activities (Popenoe, 1997). However, the impact of absent fatherhood for children is not easily predictable (Brown, 2018; Von & Kari, 2018). Some children, even though they do not have a father in their lives, can still overcome many obstacles and have a successful future because of the presence of a strong support structure through immediate and extended family members (Brown, 2018; Popenoe, 1997). Some fathers, even though they do not stay in the same house as their children, still manage to formulate healthy relationships with their sons and

daughters, whereas other fathers due to different circumstances do not have that privilege (East et al., 2007).

Fatherly affection is just as valuable as motherly love (East et al., 2007). The relationship a child has with their father is one of the first and most significant in a child's life (East et al., 2007). Present fathers are perceived as exemplary figures in the lives of their children and they instil discipline and values (East et al., 2007). Some absent fathers still have weekly, monthly or yearly contact with their children (East et al., 2007). There are some advantages of an absent fathers although they do not overshadow the many disadvantages (East et al., 2007). Some advantages are that the child develops the ability to adapt, cultivates personal strength and learns to be independent (East et al., 2007).

An active and present father is not only valuable to the children but also to the father himself (Eddy, Thomson-de Boor & Mphaka, 2013). When a man is a father, he is likely to 'get his act together' by finding a job and looking after his life so that he can take care of his child (Eddy et al., 2013). Some fathers may be physically present in their child's life but their presence may be detrimental to the child's welfare because they inflict physical and emotional harm on the child (Eddy et al., 2013). In the African context, many cultural expectations have resulted in men being absent fathers, for example, the practice of lobola and paying damages (Eddy et al., 2013). Some men who do not have the financial means to pay lobola or damages would rather run away than face the shame of having failed to meet the cultural obligations (Eddy et al., 2013). The dominant perception is that a father should be a provider, so when a man fails to provide due to the harsh economic circumstances or the high rate of unemployment, that man is seen as a 'useless man' (Eddy et al., 2013). The pressure that follows causes a strain in the relationship he has with the mother of his child (Eddy et al., 2013).

Moreover, being a provider is tied to masculinity, so failure to do that can result in low self-esteem for the father and ultimately lead him to substance abuse (Eddy et al., 2013). Father and child relationships play a significant part in different aspects of the child's life (Brown, 2018; East et al., 2007). The attitude a child will have towards his or her absent father

depends on the reason for their absence (Brown, 2018; Qureshi & Ahmad, 2014). If a father is late, the attitude is likely to be positive whereas if a father neglected the family, the attitude is likely to be negative (Brown, 2018). When a child has had an absent father, the child will carry that experience into their adult life; this will be evident in the way they interact with others and the decisions they take concerning career and marital matters (Brown, 2018; Freeks, 2017). The identity of a daughter and a son is altered by lack of a father figure (Brown, 2018).

Now let us look at absent fatherhood in relation to literary texts. In many classic fairy tales such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Chinye* and *Hansel and Gretel*, one of the biological parents of the central character is absent (Antonia, 2020). Absent fathers or mothers are a common theme in fairy tales, leading to the formation of stepparents or other replacement parental figures (Lockwood, 2010). In many instances, the replacement parents or families are a source of abuse to the children in the fairy tales (Lockwood, 2010). Many fairy tales never address the distress associated with having one or both parents absent from the life of the characters (Lockwood, 2010). Death and abandonment are the common reasons for absent fathers and mothers in fairy tales (Lockwood, 2010).

There is also a common trend in fairy tales where if the mother is strict then the father is usually absent (Antonia, 2020). The themes in some fairy tales are constructed in such a way that the main character cannot fully function with both parents present (Antonia, 2020). For example, in *Cinderella* and *Chinye*, we admire and celebrate Cinderella and Chinye's characters because they overcome adversities even though both girls lost their mothers and had to endure pain inflicted on them by their wicked stepmothers. In the same way, the bravery of the siblings Hansel and Gretel is proved because of the absence of their mother (Antonia, 2020). At times absenteeism of fathers in fairy tales is caused by their silent submission to strong female characters, as in the case of Hansel and Gretel's father (Antonia, 2020). Absent fatherhood in narratives like these is not due to the death or neglect of the father but their extreme silence in the narrative. The absenteeism of fathers in fairy tales is also a thing that is usually unquestioned and easily forgiven (Antonia, 2020). This is evident

in the story of *Snow White* where the father never goes out and searches for his daughter or enquires about what happened to her (Antonia, 2020).

It is not unusual in fairy tales that when a father dies no reason is provided or even expected (Lockwood, 2010). Lockwood (2010) suggests that silence can be a representation of unfortunate circumstances in fairy tales. Fathers who exist but are silent and do not contribute anything to the character development of the protagonist (who is usually their daughter or son) are often portrayed as powerless against the adversary which is commonly the wicked stepmother or the village witch (McGlathery, 1991). Many daughters of present fathers in fairy tales such as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* and *Beauty and the Beast* seem to face fewer hardships before marrying their prince, whereas daughters of absent fathers such as in *Cinderella* and *Snow White* seem to go through greater obstacles before they 'get to' marry their prince. Absent fatherhood can be the escalation of difficulties encountered by the son or daughter in the fairy tale (Lockwood, 2010).

Lockwood (2010) claims that absent fathers and mothers are a common thing in fairy tale narratives. When a father is present, he is too attached to the evil stepmother and therefore emotionally neglects his children (McGlathery, 1991). Absent fathers in fairy tales enable the narrative to progress because a son or daughter without a father creates room for a charming prince or some supernaturally powerful characters (magical people, fairy godmothers and/or mythical creatures) to assist him or her (Weeks, 2014). The fathers presented in fairy tales are the opposite of what an admirable father should be (Wojtaszek, 2014). Absent fathers in fairy tales means that their children do not have many social privileges such as growing up in a loving home with all their basic needs met (Crain, 2018). As a result, these fairy tale children have to learn independence and resilience from a young age as that is necessary for their survival (Crain, 2018). Whilst other fairy tale children (particularly daughters) see a successful marriage, especially a royal one, as an escape from a deficit or absent father, there is no provision made for sons with absent fathers in fairy tales. Boys are often expected to "man up" and not show any signs of childhood trauma.

I personally think that absent fatherhood is an important issue from both a sociological and literary perspective. While in literary texts the characters can escape absent fathers by turning to magic, fairy godmothers and handsome princes, in real life children who are fatherless have no escape against the emotional, financial and psychological strain left by an absent father.

2.7 The impact of colonialism on fatherhood in Africa

The context and ideologies of a community are significant in understanding fatherhood for those particular regions (Mitchell, 2021). Africa has not only been colonised politically but also through textual representation of African fathers as men who fail to take accountability (Mitchell, 2021). There is a notion that exists in Western literature that African fathers during the pre-colonial era were uncivilised whilst African fathers in the post-colonial era are highly progressive (Mitchell, 2021). Although Joseph Conrad's (1996) *Heart of Darkness* is not about fatherhood, one can see the high disrespect in the depiction of African men in this colonial text. So, in terms of textual representation in the English canon and Western literature, African men and fathers started at a historical disadvantage as they were depicted as inferior. In my personal view the textual colonisation of African fathers extended to literary texts such as fairy tales where African fathers are colonised through underrepresentation and misrepresentation. In most classic fairy tales, there is little to no representation of strong, successful and industrious African fathers. When African fathers are represented, they are normally portrayed as servants and peasants.

The things black men endured during the colonial era made them more likely to experience low self-confidence in their ability to be fathers (Selebano & Khunou, 2014). In order for us to fully comprehend the state of fathers in the African continent, we need to look at the social, financial, historical and political factors in Africa (Selebano & Khunou, 2014). Colonialism in Africa brought about social, cultural, economic and political change that resulted in many fathers feeling emasculated (Gumede, 2020). For example, during the pre-colonial era, a father brought home the food for the family through farming and hunting activities. In the post-colonial era, the same father could be characterised as jobless and not able to provide financially for his family. In some families, the man felt even more insecure

as the mother or wife had a job as a domestic worker while the man was idling at home. It is also after colonialism where the image of African fathers was tarnished due to high cases of women abuse by men, rape perpetrated by fathers against their own children, and excessive use of substance abuse such as alcohol (Gumede, 2020).

The impact of colonialism on fatherhood in Africa is both negative and positive (Igboin, 2011). African fathers lost a significant part of their culture through colonialism and colonialism forced African fathers to adopt an individualist and capitalist way of life (Igboin, 2011). The positive aspects of colonial rule for African fathers are the advancement of medicine and scientific knowledge (this does not imply that science is only a Western phenomenon) (Igboin, 2011). Western medicine and advanced scientific knowledge have saved the lives of many children who otherwise would have died at infancy. It is important to understand that colonialism in Africa did not just enforce authoritative control over African countries' political power, as was the case in Nigeria by the British government from 1900-1960, but it also enforced white supremacist ideologies and oppression on African people (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). Many men abandoned their indigenous skills in pursuit of Western education that would serve in advancing the colonist's way of life (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). Since Western education was unattainable for many families, they lived their lives in poverty after the failure to obtain employment (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012).

According to Hall & Posel (2019), colonialism is part of the major reasons for the destruction of nuclear families in African countries such as South Africa. Colonisation and urbanisation of life in Africa has radically changed the traditional family structure and resulted in many fathers being apart from their children (Richter et al., 2010). First, the separation meant that only fathers had to leave the home but later it was the mother as well (Richter et al., 2010). The children were left behind and the grandparents had to look after them (Richter et al., 2010). In southern African countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique, many men migrated into cities in search for work (Makiwane & Kaunda, 2018). These men were husbands and fathers who left their wives and children behind. Fathers became money givers (Selebano & Khunou, 2014). Their presence or absence did not matter as long as they could financially support the family (Selebano & Khunou, 2014). This

meant that during the colonial and early post-colonial era, many African fathers were absent (the process of men migrating to economically developed areas still happens today). Although migration is not new in the African context, during the pre-colonial era families migrated together in search for greener pastures for the livestock and more conducive living environments (Makiwane & Kaunda, 2018).

Western colonisation of Africa radically altered the definition of family (Mitchell, 2021). During pre-colonial era, family in Africa did not imply mother, father and two children (Mitchell, 2021). A father had multiple responsibilities that extended beyond his immediate family (Mitchell, 2021). Many African fathers had multiple wives and many children, so the expectations were different compared to a father in a nuclear set-up. The African definition of what a family is, is in Western society referred to as an extended family (Makiwane & Kaunda, 2018). In the African culture, the brothers of one's father are considered one's fathers and not distant uncles (Makiwane & Kaunda, 2018). The collaborative system of the African family structure not only ensured that children had multiple father figures but also that the responsibility of fatherhood did not only lie with the biological father. The impact of colonialism on African fatherhood was the social transformation of the entire family structure (Makiwane & Kaunda, 2018). The failure of the biological father meant severe repercussions for his children as extended family members could no longer assist due to distance of urbanisation and migration into the city for work.

Colonialism also changed the way African fathers enacted their masculine identity. Mitchell (2021) claims that when Zimbabwe was colonised, Shona men adopted the colonist's patriarchal family structure. This is not to say that patriarchy did not exist in Africa; however, when African men adopted a Western way of being a father, they surrendered their own masculinity and power. Before colonialism fathers were present, providing protection and provision for the family (Selebano & Khunou, 2014). These fathers offered daily guidance to their children about how they should grow up (Selebano & Khunou, 2014). Fathers were revered and a key part in the decision-making of their children's lives (Selebano & Khunou, 2014). The father had to be consulted on all major decisions in the life of his son

or daughter (Selebano & Khunou, 2014). Lastly, colonialism robbed African fathers of the chance to be culturally, emotionally and socially present fathers to their children.

2.8 Fatherhood and fathering in South Africa

There is no single way to define a father in South Africa: “there are many types of fathers and many types of fatherhood in the country. There are biological fathers, social fathers, gay fathers, straight fathers, young fathers, older fathers” (Van den Berg et al., 2018, p. 5). In addition, “we have self-identified fatherhood, ascribed fatherhood, long-distance fatherhood and proximal fatherhood, to name only a few. The texture is rich by age, race, class, geo-type, ethnicity or family type” (Van den Berg et al., 2018, p. 5). Fatherhood takes place in different forms, as listed above, and men who do not fit into any of these roles but still provide a father figure to the child should also be acknowledged and appreciated (Van den Berg et al., 2018).

Fatherhood is a significant part of men and masculine identity. An important aspect of our progress and success as a nation depends on fathers (Van den Berg et al., 2018). The complexities of fatherhood require understanding and consideration (Van den Berg et al., 2018). Some fathers do not live under the same roof with their children; however, they are not absent fathers (Van den Berg et al., 2018). Black children in South Africa have the largest percentage of absent fathers; this is due to colonialism and the segregation history of South Africa (Van den Berg et al., 2018). Apartheid with its labour migration laws contributed significantly to the current state of fatherhood, as fathers were kept away from their families up to 12 months (Malherbe & Kaminer, 2022) as they pursued work in the cities with little leave time. This has contributed to the poverty and inequality we face today (Malherbe & Kaminer, 2022). That is why, even in democratic South Africa, the percentage of non-resident fathers is relatively high among black children (Malherbe & Kaminer, 2020). Thus, the notion of the nuclear family is not an ideal model for many South African families (Malherbe & Kaminer, 2022). Fatherhood is socially formulated by the norms and expectations of society (Malherbe & Kaminer, 2022). According to Malherbe & Kaminer (2022), fatherhood is a social catastrophe that causes much harm to children. This is particularly the children with absent fathers, who long to fit into the nuclear family fantasy

but are unable to do so due to circumstances beyond their control (Malherbe & Kaminer, 2022).

In South Africa, mothers are the ones who mostly take financial responsibility for their families when the father is absent or unemployed (Makusha, Van den Berg, Khoza & Lewaks, 2019). Most children in South Africa do not stay in the same house as their fathers (Makusha et al., 2019) and a large number of South African children live only with their mothers (Cowley et al., 2020). Many fathers miss out on the crucial early stages of their children's lives since infant care is largely seen as a mother's job (Cowley et al., 2020). Although the role of a mother is important in infant care, we cannot dismiss the vital function of fatherly love (Cowley et al., 2020). Many fathers are not emotionally and physically involved in the upbringing of their children (Makusha et al., 2019). This is a great disadvantage because active fatherhood helps a child socially, emotionally, financially and in their school performance (Makusha et al., 2019). A mother with children who have an active father is likely to have a more positive attitude regarding motherhood and parenting (Makusha et al., 2019).

In many families, there is a father figure who is not the biological father of the children; such father figures can include big brothers, stepfathers, grandfathers and uncles (Makusha et al., 2019). However, many children in South Africa suffer emotional, physical and sexual abuse at the hands of father figures (Makusha et al., 2019). This may have been avoided if they had stayed with their biological fathers (Makusha et al., 2019). Nevertheless, some biological fathers who are actively involved with their children become violent and abusive to their own families; due to the high rate of gender-based crimes in South Africa, they see abuse as a lifestyle (Makusha et al., 2019). Many gender activists have examined fatherhood from the perspective of physical abuse against women and children, and fathers who do not want to financially support their children can also be seen as perpetrators of financial abuse on the mothers (Van den Berg et al., 2018).

Fatherlessness has diverse effects on children; some fatherless children struggle with identity issues (Nathane-Taulela & Nduna, 2014). They feel like they do not know who they are or

where they come from. There are many reasons why many children do not know who their fathers are; these reasons include conception through rape, abandonment or the father's location is only known to the mother who hides it from the children (Nathane-Taulela & Nduna, 2014). Later on, in their adult life, some children attempt to search for their fathers while some fathers, through maturity or guilt, later search for their children (Nathane-Taulela & Nduna, 2014). In many painful instances, children who do not know their father find out the identity of the father from strangers or drunk relatives (Nathane-Taulela & Nduna, 2014). When these children do find their real fathers, they can go through great mental distress and even attempt to take their own lives (Nathane-Taulela & Nduna, 2014). Some children will even resent their mothers for not telling them about their fathers.

A good father figure can potentially close the void of fatherlessness (Nathane-Taulela & Nduna, 2014). In line with this, there has been some change in fatherhood in South Africa due to outstanding biological fathers and father figures (Smit, 2008). Smit (2008) claims that there is a new culture of fathers that are more active, nurturing and emotionally available (Smit, 2008). The role of fathers has drastically been transformed over the years due to significant historical events such as the rise of feminism, women being financially independent and men wanting to be more active fathers (Smit, 2008). However, this change is not a one-size-fits-all (Smit, 2008). In many households, the behaviour of fathers still remains predominantly the same (Smit, 2008). In closing, South Africa is a largely fatherless nation and thus textual representations about fatherhood should not be taken lightly but used as a tool to educate young boys about how to be great fathers in the future.

2.9 Gaps identified in the literature

This study addresses specific gaps in the literature reviewed. Firstly, there is a gap in recognising the importance of fairy tales in comparison to other genres in children's literature. The study highlights how fairy tales have the ability to linger on even through adulthood whereas with other genres when the child becomes an adult, they outgrow the genre. The second gap is the lack of acknowledgment of father figures as a significant part of the development of male characters (boys) in fairy tales. In many instances in fairy tales, the biological father is not available, so a father figure such as an uncle, grandfather, stepfather or

big brother has to play the role of a father to the main character. Thirdly, there is a gap in how male and female characters are represented. When male characters are studied, they are often studied in relation to how they treat female characters or compared to why they are better or equal to female characters. There is seldom a study that focuses mainly on male characters and their relationship with each other. Fourthly, many studies on masculinity are from a Western perspective; there are few studies on African masculinity in children's literature. Lastly, in this study, absent fatherhood was presented from a sociological and literary perspective. Many studies focus on absent fatherhood in real life situations and not in the context of fairy tales. The few studies that examine absent fatherhood from a literary perspective do so in relation to classic Western fairy tales such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. This study attempts to close this gap by focusing on the representation of fatherhood and masculinity in African fairy tales.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed different perspectives of father and son relationships in African fairy tales. First of all, I discussed fairy tales as a genre in children's literature and the impact of fairy tales on children. Then, I discussed the representation of father and son relationships in children's literature. Thereafter, I discussed gendered representations in fairy tales. Fourthly, I discussed the representation of masculinity in children's literature. Next, I discussed absent fatherhood from a sociological and literary perspective. Subsequently, I discussed the impact of colonialism on fatherhood in Africa. Lastly, I discussed fatherhood and fathering in South Africa. There are many other theories surrounding this topic such as multiculturalism, transculturalism, transnationalism and decolonisation. However, I have not discussed them because they are not directly relevant to this study and there has to be a delimitation of theory for any study. In the next chapter, which is the theoretical and conceptual framework chapter, I will discuss the concepts and theory the study utilises in the analysis of the selected African fairy tales.

Chapter Three

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the literature review, I discussed the different perspectives of father and son relationships in African fairy tales. This study utilises theories of masculinity for the analysis of the selected African fairy tales. In this chapter, therefore, I provide a discussion of the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study. First, I present an overview of the theoretical and conceptual framework and then I discuss masculinity in detail. Then I present the conceptual framework where I explain the three concepts I have chosen from the theory to use as my points of analysis. In this regard, I present a diagram that illustrates the conceptual links between the three concepts. The chapter concludes with a summary of its contents.

3.2 An overview of the theoretical and conceptual framework

The overarching theory for this research is masculinity and I am using three concepts from the theory to design the conceptual framework. The three concepts are: dominant constructions of masculinity; African conceptualisations of masculinity, and masculinity and fatherhood. The first concept, the dominant construction of masculinity, presents the view that masculinity is socially formulated and impacted by a number of factors in the life of a man, such as his historical background, his culture, his political environment, and his financial state (Langa, 2012). There is no single way to define masculinity because multiple masculinities exist (Langa, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity is one of the prevalent types of masculinity; hegemonic masculinity thrives in patriarchal societies where the oppression of women and weaker masculinities is normalised (Langa, 2012). The second concept is African conceptualisation of masculinity: a key factor in the African conceptualisation of masculinity is that colonialism had the largest impact on how men enact masculinity in Africa (Uchendu, 2008). African masculinity draws its influence from three eras: the pre-colonial era, where traditional African masculinity was revered and celebrated; the colonial era, where African masculinity was oppressed and marginalised; and the post-colonial era, where African society

went through radical political, social and economic transformation that changed the course of how men perform their masculine identities (Uchendu, 2008). The last concept is masculinity and fatherhood, which shows how a father's parenting style is directly influenced by his masculine identity (Pleck, 2010). Fatherhood cannot be separated from masculinity; the two are closely intertwined.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

Over the years, the definition of masculinity has greatly evolved due to intensive research and studies about the behaviour of men in society. Early definitions of masculinity were about dominant features of manhood and any actions that are contrary to femininity (Connell, 2005). These early definitions of masculinity were problematic because they oversimplified a complex subject. We have now learned that masculinity is not just about men because they have male sexual organs and that masculinity is not limited to a specific gender; many women portray masculine characteristics in the same way many men portray feminine qualities (Connell, 2005). Connell (2005) claims that because masculinity is socially constructed, it cannot be restricted to a biological entity (Connell, 2005). Society formulates subtle but powerful conventions about how masculinity can and should be enacted (Connell, 2005). Masculinity is socially represented by leadership, power and physical strength and is highly influenced by the cultural context a man finds himself in (Connell, 2005). Masculinity has existed from the beginning of time; it is not something that is recent. However, in modern times, researchers have attempted to understand masculinity in-depth to find the answers to why men behave the way they do—particularly men who exhibit toxic masculine behaviour. This is particularly important in countries such as South Africa with a high rate of gender-based violence exerted by men particularly on women and children. The knowledge would assist us in finding answers to what is ailing the men in our society and how best different structures of society can help them. The theory of masculinity is founded and rooted in the idea that masculinity is a social construct.

The dominant construction of masculinity is that it is a man's ability to enact his manhood according to what his culture, society and history dictates (Langa, 2012). Masculinity includes actions, ways of speaking and ways of believing that are related to being a man

(Itulua-Abumere, 2013). Masculinity can be beneficial if it is used by men to understand who they are, but it can be negative if used to marginalise women (Itulua-Abumere, 2013). In some African societies other members of the community tend to applaud men who exhibit toxic sexual and social behaviour toward women as they see that as a passage to real manhood. Masculinity is not natural or biological, but it is created by the society a man is situated in (Itulua-Abumere, 2013). No man singlehandedly comes up with his own masculine identity. His masculine identity evolves and grows according to the experiences and circumstances he encounters in his life. Although masculinity is commonly constructed as symbolising power, social influence and strength, its meaning is highly unstable (Langa, 2012). The reason for this instability in the definition of masculinity is because of the diverse and multifaceted aspects pertaining to masculinity (Langa, 2012). Other complicated structures that have a direct impact on how we construct masculinity are race, socio-economic class, ethnicity and career occupation (Langa, 2012). For example, men who belong to a wealthy socio-economic class and hold positions of power at work have a different perception of masculinity compared to men who are working class and lower-level employees. In the same way, black Zulu-speaking young men in rural KwaZulu-Natal construct masculinity differently to Coloured Afrikaans-speaking young men in the Cape Flats.

Scholars claim that there are multiple masculinities, so it is only proper to study masculinity in plurality rather than in a single way (Connell, 2002; Langa, 2012). People formulate masculinity differently, according to their geographical location, historical time, traditions and customs. In some societies, men in the military and men who exert physical aggression are seen as epic examples of masculinity, whereas in other societies physical aggression and the military are seen as a degradation (Connell, 2002). In the same way in African communities, there was a time when many black men saw wearing their traditional attire as a splendid display of their masculinity and strength; however, in recent times many men no longer hold that view. Masculinity is used as a gender distinction and masculinity differs in different cultures and societies across the world (Langa, 2012). Itulua-Abumere (2013) claims that masculinity exists because it is contrasted to femininity. There would not be masculinity if there was no femininity, so the only reason masculinity persists is because of the presence of femininity (Langa, 2012). Studies of masculinity have developed as a result

of various feminist, social and cultural movements (Wedgwood, Connell & Wood, 2022). Yet, masculinity in everyday life continues to be valued over femininity. There are popular expressions we come across daily such as ‘do not be such a girl’ or ‘you have to man up’. These expressions point to masculinity as being constructed in society as superior to femininity. In patriarchal societies, there exists a hierarchy in the different masculinities (Wedgwood, Connell & Wood, 2022). Homosexuality is an example of a kind of masculinity that has actively been disregarded by many societies over the years (Connell, 2002). Masculinities that are honoured in societies are those that are associated with financial and social power.

3.4 Conceptual Framework

3.4.1 Dominant constructions of masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is a prevalent concept that has emerged as part of defining how some men use physical, financial and social strength to dominate women and other men they perceive as weak (Langa, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity performs well in patriarchal institutions because patriarchy condones the oppression of subordinate masculinities and women (Langa, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity is the most dominant type of masculinity (Connell, 2002). It is a gender supremacy perception that men are greater than women (Connell, 2002). Hegemony in masculinity comes into effect where a particular masculinity occupies a higher status in the hierarchy (Wedgwood, Connell & Wood, 2022). The concept of power is central in hegemonic masculinities (Wedgwood, Connell & Wood, 2022). The men who enact hegemonic masculinity exert power through force over women and marginalized masculinities (Wedgwood, Connell & Wood, 2022). Some studies suggest that men who represent hegemonic masculinity often engage in substance abuse and promiscuity and are careless about their health (Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney & Luque, 2014). In addition, men who hold toxic views about masculinity often have poor mental health (Mincey et al., 2014). The media depicts and celebrates aspects of hegemonic masculinity in men such as being a womaniser (Mincey et al., 2014).

We cannot successfully speak about hegemony in masculinity without mentioning men’s sexuality (Langa, 2012). Heterosexual men are a prime example of men who exercise

hegemonic masculine identities (Wedgwood, Connell & Wood, 2022). Hegemonic masculinity has always implied that to be a man is not to be womanlike (Mincey et al., 2014). This includes being detached from one's emotions, being dominant, competitive and heterosexual (Mincey et al., 2014). Some social connotations of being a 'real man' imply having sexual relations with more than one female partner (Langa, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity thrives on making women symbols of sexual gratification (Langa, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity does not just exist in African communities but all over the world. Across the world societies celebrate hegemonic masculinity as symbolising bravery, leadership and a rare breed of men.

An extreme version of hegemonic masculinity is hypermasculinity. Hypermasculinity thrives in male groups such as criminal gangs where men have to prove that their masculine identity is worthwhile, and they also have to compete with other dominant masculinities within the same group (Zernechel & Perry, 2017). Hypermasculinity celebrates oppressive, traditional and outdated perceptions about being a man (Zernechel & Perry, 2017). Hypermasculinity is associated with violence and aggression perpetrated by hypermasculine men on women, children, and men viewed as weaklings (Zernechel & Perry, 2017). Popular hypermasculine groups in Africa include Cape Flats gangsterism gangs and Boko Haram gangs in Nigeria. All these gangs have three common characteristics: killing their victims brutally, not displaying any sign of empathy, and forcefully occupying communities where they abuse women and children. Hypermasculinity has an obsession to always appear strong, ruthless and emotionless. Hypermasculinity despises femininity because being feminine symbolises gentility, affection and nurturing (Zernechel & Perry, 2017).

Zernechel & Perry (2017) claim that the root cause of hypermasculinity in young men is absent and problematic fatherhood. Boys who grew up with no father or an abusive father can feel pressured to over-prove their manhood as a way to fill in the void of being fatherless. Hypermasculinity does not want to be challenged or questioned and thus it becomes impossible to have a dialogue with an extremist group because their language is violence. Hypermasculinity is also not limited to uneducated men who live in informal settlements or

rural communities, but it can also be found in corporate environments, educational institutions, parliament, the police force and other workspaces.

3.4.2 African conceptualisations of masculinity

In many literary studies centring African discourses, masculinity has been given the lesser attention compared to femininity (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). Masculinities in Africa are often given a single definition and viewed as the same thing (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). This is a great error because in order to effectively understand African masculinity, we have to see African men as diverse, having different cultures, historical backgrounds and political convictions (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). There are several misconceptions that people internalise when analysing African men. The first misconception is that African masculinity only refers to black men. However, this is not the case because many men who are white, Indian, mixed raced or Asian who were born and raised in Africa also ascribe to African masculinity. The second misconception that comes mainly from an uninformed and colonial European perspective is that all African men ascribe to the same religious beliefs and that they speak a similar dialect (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005).

Historically, African masculinity has been largely associated with anti-colonialism (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). This is because of the efforts of African men in resisting colonialism. African masculinities have also been perceived by the West as the ‘other’, that is, as inferior and barbaric (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). Patriarchy has also been a key factor in the construction of African masculinities (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). Patriarchy already existed in pre-colonial Africa; colonialism also brought its own patriarchal systems (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). African men had to navigate their masculine identity through both forms of patriarchy which favoured some men and oppressed women.

We cannot discuss all the types of masculinity that emerged as a result of colonialism, owing to the constraints of space. However, some of those masculinities are oppressed masculinities, emasculated masculinities, estranged masculinities, elite masculinities, and hybrid masculinities (Hayward, 2005). Colonialism was a historical event and process that

radically transformed the notion of what it means to be a man in Africa. Many features of modern masculinities in Africa were constructed during the colonial and post-colonial era (Uchendu, 2008). In many African countries today, young men are formulating new non-rigid masculine identities (Langa, 2012). This is because of the political, historical and social transition that has taken place in post-colonial Africa (Langa, 2012). During the colonial era, African men enacted a militarised masculinity due to the political and social struggles of that time (Langa, 2012). The belief that white men are superior was instilled during the colonial era in Africa (Uchendu, 2008). Black men often had to fight for their masculinities through resistance and the formation of black consciousness organisations (Uchendu, 2008).

In African countries such as South Africa and Nigeria, young men have transitioned from political violence to criminal violence (Langa, 2012). The formation of criminal gangs among young boys has significantly increased; these gangs also symbolise an initiation to a toxic and violent masculinity (Langa, 2012). New masculine identities in Africa have also been forged due to socio-economic status, music preference and language use (Langa, 2012). In many countries in Africa that have encountered post-colonial political shifts, the social construction of masculinity has been altered by a move to democratic governance (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). With the increase in the levels of formal education in Africa, the social construction of masculinities has also been affected. In the pre-colonial era, when formal education was scarce, a man's masculinity was constructed according to his physical capabilities, such as his hunting skills; however, with the advent of Western education such activities were seen as outdated (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). In post-colonial Africa, men have had to practise masculine identities that are in line with their professional identities.

Tamale (2011) argues that in post-colonial African communities, masculinity is associated with a man's sexual performance. Men go to great lengths to maintain a high sex drive and to satisfy their partner's sexual desires (Tamale, 2011). This is because sexual intercourse in Africa, like in other parts of the world, is used to formulate a specific kind of masculinity (Tamale, 2011). The size of the penis for a man is an elevation of his masculine status (Tamale, 2011). In many East African traditional literary texts, the penis is a symbol of masculinity (Waliaula, 2010). This is especially true for young men: "for young men in sub-

Saharan Africa, as for many young men worldwide, sexual experience is frequently associated with initiation into manhood and achieving a socially recognized manhood. This fosters a perception of sex as performance, specifically a means by which to demonstrate masculine prowess” (Barker & Ricardo, 2005, p. 16). Many men in African societies thus perceive having many sexual partners as a show of masculine dominance (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). Sex is viewed as an expression of male dominance and not as an act of love and intimacy (Barker & Ricardo, 2005).

The idea that men are allowed to have different partners (promiscuity) and multiple partners (polygamy) have traditionally been endorsed by African cultures as expressions of masculinity (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). In many African societies that endorse polygamous marriages, polygamy is seen as the way of life and a strong indicator of a man’s masculinity (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). The dominant sexuality in this masculinity is heterosexuality (Tamale, 2011). Men who ascribe to homosexual masculinity are often perceived as outcasts because they do not conform to the dominant masculinity, which is heterosexuality (Tamale, 2011). However, even though sexuality plays a significant role in masculinity, it is important to note that masculinity can never be reduced to sexuality alone (Tamale, 2011). Masculinity can also not be reduced to the occupational role a man plays such as being a businessman, chairman, doctor or lawyer (Tamale, 2011). Masculinity is also not just the familiar relationships a man is associated with such as father, son, uncle and grandfather (Tamale, 2011). Masculinity is deeper and more complex than that and includes the way a man behaves, the people and things he associates with, and the disciplines he engages with that makes him more or less powerful than other men (Tamale, 2011). Thus, different African scholars have conceptualised masculinity differently within the African context.

Economic factors also play a big role in the construction of African masculinities. According to Barker & Ricardo (2005), the principal obligation for being a man in Africa is obtaining a source of income which enables one to become financially independent. In many parts of the African continent, the custom of paying a bride price is practised and a man cannot take a wife unless he has the financial means (Barker & Ricardo, 2005). We also cannot deny that colonialism in Africa brought economic globalisation to African countries; however, the

reality is that for ordinary people it brought great scarcity of financial resources (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). A few African men were able to climb the ladder as successful businessmen, millionaires and chief executives. These men enact and perceive masculinity differently compared to men who are street sweepers, mine workers and bus drivers.

Post-colonialism brought a lot of hardships in Africa which transformed the masculinity of African men; an example is economic hardships that propelled a lot of African men into toxic masculinity (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). Young boys turned to crime and gangsterism in order to be able to make ends meet. Men also took out their frustrations on women, hence the high rates of gender-based violence in Southern and West African countries. Things became even worse when women began to occupy and dominate economic sectors and African men adopted a type of fragile masculinities that meant women had to tiptoe around them to be careful not to bruise their vulnerable egos (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). The economic challenges further exacerbated issues as some African men enact violent masculinities and forcefully vandalise and terrorise communities (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). This can be seen in xenophobic acts in South Africa and in kidnappings in Nigeria. Although there are other factors that also contribute to xenophobia and kidnappings, the root cause is economic frustration because in South Africa when xenophobic people are asked to give a reason for their actions, they often say it is because foreigners take their jobs. In Nigeria kidnappers often demand high ransom payments before the victim is released.

In closing, African masculinity is dynamic and ever-changing. African men have maintained many elements of their traditional masculinities whilst they have also been influenced by historical, social and political events.

3.4.3 Masculinity and fatherhood

We cannot effectively study fatherhood, fathering and father and son relationships without closely examining masculinities (Mercuri, 2017; Pleck, 2010). In order to examine how fatherhood relates to masculinity, we must understand the difference between fatherhood as a parental activity and fatherhood as an identity (Pleck, 2010). There should also be a

distinction between masculinity as a way of being a man and masculinity as a choice (Pleck, 2010). The interrelations between fatherhood and masculinity are complex and their implications on how sons turn out are also multifaceted (Pleck, 2010). The impact a father has on the life of his son is of utmost importance to his growth and identity formation (Pleck, 2010).

In many literary texts that portray father and son relationships, masculinity is closely related with the authority that the father possesses (Andrews, 2021). Masculinity in society and in literary texts is represented through masculine symbols such as positions of power and influence in society, possession of financial resources and attachment to tradition or cultural practices, amongst others (Andrews, 2021). In terms of children's literature on fatherhood, it would be a great challenge to find a modern publication of a collection of children's stories that is mainly dominated by traditional fatherhood (Thunstedt, 2017). However, what you may anticipate finding is lingering characteristics of hegemonic masculinity and traditional fatherhood (Thunstedt, 2017). Fatherhood is a gateway to masculinity for many male characters (Andrews, 2021). In many stories, sons seek to discover their own masculine identities (Andrews, 2021). Some sons are depicted as competing with the masculinity of their fathers while in other instances, due to the contrasting personality traits of the father and son, their masculinities cannot harmoniously coexist (Andrews, 2021).

Different fathers enact masculinity in different ways (Pleck, 2010). Some fathers choose a traditional approach to masculinity when raising their sons while others practise a type of contemporary masculinity (Pleck, 2010). Masculinity influences a man's relationship with his son (Pleck, 2010). A father's masculinity may positively or negatively affect a son's masculinity (Pleck, 2010). In the same way, a father's parenting behaviour can be influenced by his own masculinity (Pleck, 2010). Fatherhood is also influenced by a number of external factors outside the father's control and these factors include the political environment in which the father raises his children as well as the economic state of his environment (Tereðkinas & Reingardienė, 2005). Contextual factors can also affect the correlation between masculine identity and fathering (Petts et al., 2018). These contextual factors can include the father's age, race, ethnic background, level of education, career occupation,

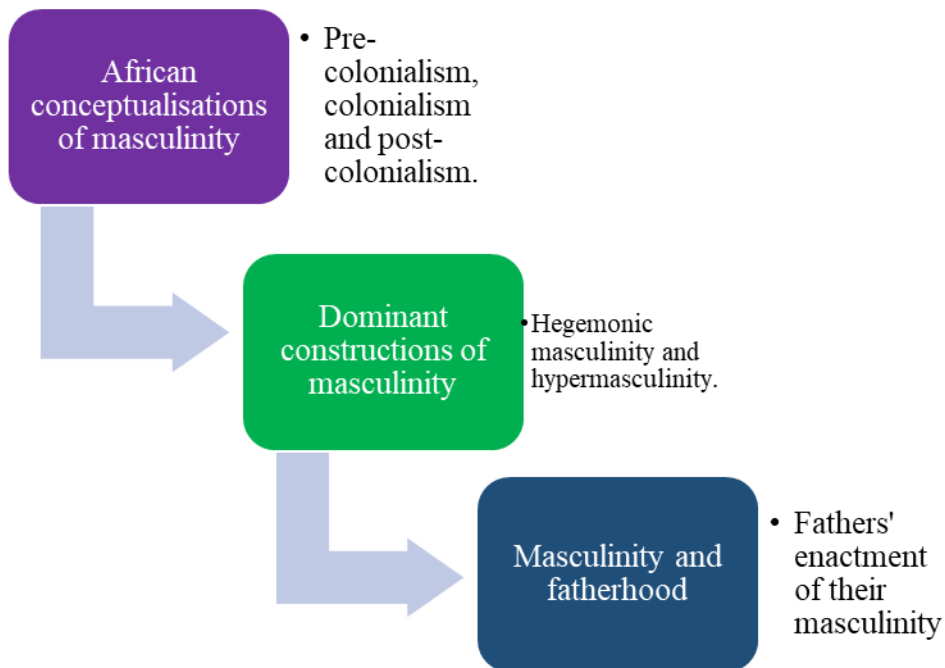
child's gender and family size (Petts et al., 2018). When examining males as fathers, we must also consider not only their duties but what various social structures such as the state, justice system, media and academic institutions expect of them (Tereðkinas & Reingardienė, 2005).

I can therefore conclude that fatherhood is not entirely dependent on a man's individual choices but that many macro and micro factors shape a man's ability to be a father. The micro factors include the man's relationship with his own father, the state of his immediate family, and his masculine identity. The macro factors include the economic conditions of his environment, the construction of masculinity in his society, and the historical and political systems surrounding men and gender roles.

3.4.4 Conceptual link diagram

The three concepts discussed above intersect in various ways. I have used the diagram below to illustrate how they are connected. The African conceptualisations of masculinity emanated from three historical eras in Africa: the pre-colonial era, the colonial era, and the post-colonial era. All these three eras informed the dominant constructions of masculinity in Africa. The hegemonic masculinity and hypermasculinity enacted by African men today is a result of the historical, political, cultural, social and economic events that occurred during those times. These dominant constructions of masculinity in turn affected how African fathers practise fatherhood as they enact their masculine identities.

Figure 1: Conceptual link diagram



3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided discussions of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this study. Firstly, I outlined the theoretical framework by discussing theories of masculinity in detail. Secondly, I provided the conceptual framework where I explained the three concepts that were selected to guide the analysis of data in this study. Lastly, I presented a diagram that shows the interconnection of the chosen concepts. In the next chapter, which is the research methodology chapter, I will discuss how this research study was conducted.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the theory and concepts the study utilises in the analysis and interpretation of the selected African fairy tales. In this chapter, I show how I conducted my research on father and son relationships in African fairy tales. The first part of this chapter outlines the research method, explaining which research method I had selected to conduct this study. The second part of the research methodology is the research design, which discusses the type of design within the chosen research method that was used to carry out this study. The third part of the research methodology is the sampling and data collection and here I explain which data I worked with and why I had chosen to work with the selected data. The fourth part is the data analysis. The data analysis describes in detail how the data was analysed. The last part comprises the ethical considerations for this study.

4.2 Research method

This research is a qualitative study of the representation of father and son relationships in African fairy tales. I chose a qualitative method rather than quantitative one because of the difference in how data is collected and how the research problem is solved (Jackson, Drummond & Camara, 2007). Although every research study has common features such as research questions, aims and literature review, the practical aspect of collecting and analysing data differs (Jackson et al., 2007). A quantitative study often involves numeric measurements, questionnaires and tests (Jackson et al., 2007) which are not things I wanted to do in this research. My research focused on the experiences and lives of fictional characters in fairy tales, making it a qualitative literary study. A quantitative study would have been restrictive for this research as it would not have allowed me to provide a detailed analysis of how father and son relationships are constructed in African fairy tales. A qualitative study allows the researcher to interpret and describe human behaviour (Jackson et al., 2007) and thus the method allowed me to interpret the behaviour of the characters in the selected African fairy tales. According to Smith and Sparkes (2020), qualitative research is not fixed but it is always

transforming and increasing in complexity. This flexibility in the characteristics of qualitative study makes it an ideal choice for my research on father and son relationships in African fairy tales.

4.3 Research design

A qualitative study can be conducted using various designs. In this research, I used a qualitative content analysis as the research design. The purpose of a qualitative content analysis is to find out the meanings in a text (Atkinson, 2017). Qualitative content analysis is important for researchers to discover tangible and abstract meanings that regulate patterns, power dynamics and conventions in texts (Atkinson, 2017). By contrast, a quantitative content analysis predetermines certain concepts, terminologies and themes and counts how many times they appear in a text to see if there is any significance in the number of times they appear to the patterns formulated in the text (Atkinson, 2017). However, just counting themes, concepts and terminology is not sufficient to find out the meanings that are expressed in a text (Atkinson, 2017). This approach would definitely not have allowed me to undertake a meaningful study of the selected African fairy tales.

Qualitative content analysis can be conducted using one of two methods (Atkinson, 2017). We can implement a qualitative content analysis using a deductive or inductive method (Atkinson, 2017). The deductive method is a close reading of the texts using codes (Atkinson, 2017). In this instance, the researcher reads each text and writes key factors that are aligned to the predetermined classifications or themes (Atkinson, 2017). In the inductive mode, texts are studied and analysed in order to evaluate the different parts of a story such as plot, characters, setting, tone and themes that are related to the research questions (Atkinson, 2017). When the important features of the texts are labelled, the researcher thereafter formulates classifications by continuously checking if the themes that emerge are similar (Atkinson, 2017). Similar themes are placed in the same category, whereas themes that are completely different are classified in their own category (Atkinson, 2017). As new themes come up, they are reclassified, whereas other themes are shifted according to the different categories that arise (Atkinson, 2017). In this research study, I used the inductive method to closely read the fairy tales, identify themes that emerge and analyse the themes in-depth.

4.4 Sampling and data collection

This is a qualitative literary study and I have purposively chosen a sample of ten fairy tales that are representative of different kinds of fathers and sons as well as their relationships, to be able to make arguments about fatherhood in African fairy tales. I selected the ten fairy tales because they contain appropriate stories for the analysis since they have male characters who are fathers or father figures; this was purposive sampling. Selecting ten fairy tales also ensures that my study is manageable at the level of a master's mini research. The authors of the selected fairy tales are from different parts of Africa, namely, Ghana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Kenya and the fairy tales also come from, or are set in, those respective countries. This is to provide a broad context for the data analysis. However, I do acknowledge that there is an unequal distribution of countries in the text selection. One text can never be representative of a country or region. There is also no claim of generalisability in the research study, so selecting those texts is justified. A qualitative literary study cannot be restricted to a single place because children are exposed to books from different parts of the world through libraries and technology. The fairy tales selected are from the African storybook website (<http://www.africanstorybook.org/>). This means that children who have access to the website and read these books are not only reading South African fairy tales but fairy tales from different parts of the African continent.

The selected fairy tales appear as individual storybooks on the African storybook website. The storybooks selected are as follows:

- I. *A father's lesson* by Abraham Bereket, Hardido Temesgen and Yohannes Firew (Ethiopian)
- II. *A fish and a gift* by Liesl Jobson (South African)
- III. *Advice from an old man* by Angesom Abadi (Ethiopian)
- IV. *Clever brother* by Merga Debelo and Elizabeth Laird (Ethiopian)
- V. *Demane and Demazane* (South African folktale retold)
- VI. *Man with a serious problem* by Ursula Nafula (Kenyan)
- VII. *Thoko's FantaPine seed* by Khothatso Ranoosi and Marion Drew (South African)

- VIII. *Sekuru Mkuku* by Blessing Nemadziva (Zimbabwean)
- IX. *My friend, my enemy* by Smangaliso Molebale (South African)
- X. *Result of disobedience* by Addison Gifty Naana, Aihoon Fatima, Biney Kwesi, Oduro Gifty and Sam Gabriel Ampa (Ghanian co-authors)

The African storybook website is a South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) project. The mission of the African storybook project is that underprivileged African children may have access to quality storybooks written in their native languages by local authors, and that the stories are set in the African context ([African Storybook, n.d.](#)). The storybooks have been translated in over 200 languages. There are about 3759 storybooks on the African storybook website ([African Storybook, n.d.](#)). The storybooks are children's picture books and they include fairy tales, myths and fables. The storybooks are available in reading levels one to five: reading level one is the easiest and reading level five is the most difficult. As mentioned before, these stories have been written and produced by teachers and other members of African communities. The ASb (African Storybook) along with accredited organisations and language experts thoroughly check and edit the stories before publishing them on the website (<http://www.africanstorybook.org/>). I used purposive sampling to select the ten African fairy tales based on the research topic; the stories that I excluded were not aligned to the research topic because they did not feature father and son relationships. In addition, amongst the many stories that were written about fathers and sons, I selected the ten fairy tales that portray key characteristics of father and son relationships. The criteria for the selection was fairy tales that featured sons and fathers or father figures within an African context and were relatable as they tell stories of things and events which possibly happen in African communities. These fairy tales also include characteristics of different types of father and son relationships in African fairy tales.

4.5 Data analysis

Studies that use a qualitative content analysis as research design tend to employ a thematic content analysis as the method of data analysis. Because my study utilised the inductive method of the qualitative content analysis research design, it makes sense that I analyse my

chosen African fairy tales using a thematic content analysis method. A thematic analysis of the data enabled me to identify the recurring themes that relate to the research questions. My data analysis took place in six stages. In the first stage, I familiarised myself with the texts (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This involved repeatedly reading the African fairy tales, making mental notes of important points and annotating as I read the texts (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In the second stage, I identified features of the data that are related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In the third stage, I used the features found in stage two to identify themes that relate to the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In stage four, I reviewed each theme that I identified in stage three (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thereafter, for stage five, I chose the themes that most directly answered the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I then stated and developed arguments on these selected themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In the final stage; that is, stage six, I wrote the report on the analysis of the themes identified in the texts (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The findings from the analysis formed the basis for making conclusions about the representation of father and son relationships in African fairy tales.

4.6 Ethical considerations

In this research, I studied ten African fairy tales taken from the African storybook website. No interviews and no questionnaires were used for data collection and therefore no ethical considerations such as anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent were required for the study to commence. Moreover, an ethics waiver certificate was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the School of Education before the study commenced. The ethics protocol number is 2022ECE003M.

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, a qualitative research method was suited for this study as it allowed the researcher to analyse, study and interpret the actions of the characters in the chosen fairy tales and their relationship with one another. The research design for this study was a qualitative content analysis, which allowed for reading texts indepth, formulating meaning and identifying common themes in the texts. The sampling was purposive and data collection was a selection of ten African fairy tales that represent father and son relationships in the African context. Lastly, the data was analysed using a thematic content analysis that allowed a step-

by-step analysis of the texts. In the next chapter, I present the data from the African fairy tales and thereafter undertake an analysis of the data.

Chapter Five

Data Presentation and Analysis

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the study's research method, research design, sampling method, and data analysis method. This chapter is a presentation and analysis of the selected African fairy tales which constitute the primary data for the study. Firstly, I provide a summary of the selected fairy tales, each of which appears as a book on its own on the African storybook website. Secondly, I discuss the types of father and son relationships depicted in the African fairy tales. Lastly, I discuss the factors that determine father and son relationships in the African fairy tales.

5.2 Summary of the fairy tales

5.2.1 *A father's lesson* by Abraham Bereket, Hardido Temesgen and Yohannes Firew (Ethiopian)

A father's lesson is about a young boy called Abula. Abula is a lazy learner as he does not read, and he also behaves badly. Abula steals his mother's money to buy sweets even when she hides the money from him. After eating the sweets, Abula goes to play with his friends. After a while, Abula stops going to school. He plays with his friends the whole day. This gets his mother worried and she tells his father about this. His father advises Abula's mother to hide the money in the pages of a book; since Abula never reads, he will not find the money. The next day Abula searches everywhere for his mother's money but does not find it. So his father tells him that he should search for the money in the books. Abula is confused but goes to look for the money in the books where he finds it. The next day Abula goes to look for the money in the books again but finds nothing. So his father asks him if he wants money to buy sweets to which he replies yes. His father tells him: "Listen to me carefully. Read your books and attend your classes. You will find rewards in books. Do not give up" (Bereket, Temesgen & Firew, 2018, p. 11). Abula replies saying that books are difficult and boring. So Abula's father suggests that they read together.

5.2.2 *A fish and a gift* by Liesl Jobson (South African)

A fish and a gift is about Yusuf and his father, who is referred to in the story as Papa. Papa is a fisherman who gets up early in the morning to go and fish. On a particular day as he waves goodbye to Yusuf, he makes a promise to him saying: “Today is the day I will catch a fish and bring a gift home for you” (Jobson, 2014, p. 1). Yusuf is curious and wonders what the gift will be. Yusuf’s great-grandfather and grandfather both were fishermen. Papa and other fishermen get into the boat to go and fish, a task which Papa does with singing, although it is physically strenuous. Meanwhile, at home, Yusuf keeps wondering what gift Papa will bring. Papa always sings a song regardless of what he is doing. The song says “Drop and swish. Find a fish. Pull and plop. Don’t you stop” (Jobson, 2014, p. 7). Yusuf’s grandmother, Ouma Safiya, hopes that Papa will bring a nice fat yellowtail for her supper. However, she is uncertain as there are not many fish left in the sea. The previous year the fishermen fought physically and verbally with the surfers and Papa had to show them Oupa Salie’s fishing license to continue fishing in the sea. The fishermen include Yusuf’s uncles and cousins who finally catch a small shark that leaves a yellowtail in the net. Papa brings home a shark’s tooth as a gift for Yusuf.

5.2.3 *Advice from an old man* by Angesom Abadi (Ethiopian)

Advice from an old man is about a man called Yihdego and his wife, Tiebe. The place where Yihdego and Tiebe stay has drought, so Yihdego leaves his son and pregnant wife to go search for work. After staying away for a long time, Yihdego decides to return home. However, before he starts out on his journey, he decides to seek advice from a wise old man. The old man gives him this advice: “Listen my son, on your journey home, do not use a shortcut. Do not comment on everything you see. Do not make a decision while you are angry” (Abadi, 2017, p. 4). In the journey, Yihdego comes across four merchants who decide to take a shortcut and are robbed by bandits. Yihdego, heeding the old man’s advice, takes the long route. After a day’s travel, Yihdego comes to a village where he goes to many houses to ask for lodgings for the night, but they all refuse, until a man directs him to a certain house. This house is the house of the king. Many who enter the house do not come out alive. Yihdego was welcomed and served fine food and drinks. When he sees the house, he is

inspired to ask questions and comment on the queen's beauty, but he keeps silent the whole night, recalling the advice of the old man not to comment on everything he sees. The next morning as Yihdego was preparing to leave, the king was impressed at his restraint for not asking questions or commenting on his wife's beauty. So, the king gave him gold, grain and mules. After many days, Yihdego arrives home. He knocks at the door, but no one opens. When he peeps into the house, he sees that his wife is lying on the bed with two young men. He wants to kill them but restrains himself due to the old man's advice. Soon after his wife Tiebe opens the door for him and says to the young men: "Come and meet your father" (Abadi, 2017, p. 11). Yihdego was happily reunited with his family. Through the advice of the old man, he escaped robbery and murder, became rich and also was reunited with his sons.

5.2.4 *Clever brother* by Merga Debelo and Elizabeth Laird (Ethiopian)

Clever brother is about a man who had three sons. The youngest is the cleverest and most liked by the father. However, his two brothers are jealous of him. When the man died, he left all his cattle to his two oldest sons and only an ox to the youngest son. One day, the two elder sons told the youngest son that they are going to slaughter his ox. Being the youngest, he does not challenge them. However, he asks if he may keep the hide. After they slaughtered the ox, he takes the hide and climbs a tree. As it gets darker, a group of merchants come to sleep under the tree. The young man starts beating the hide with a stick and it sounds like thunder. The merchants think that a storm is coming so they run off and leave their goods behind. The young man takes the goods home to his brothers. They ask him where he got all the goods from. He tells them that the price of hide is so high that he got all these goods with the money he made from selling the hide. The brothers slaughter their cattle and go to the market to sell the hides from them. When they see that no one is buying the hide, they are angry with their youngest brother and decide to burn his hut. Once again, the young man does not protest but only asks for the ashes. When it is time to sleep, he goes to a rich man's house and tells him to look after his bag (the one filled with ashes) as it has many valuables. In the morning he starts shouting and when the rich man asks him what is wrong, he says: "Someone has taken all my valuables and replaced them with ashes" (Debelo & Laird, 2016, p. 7). The rich man does not want his reputation to be ruined, so he offers to fill his bag with wheat, teff and other seeds. The youngest brother goes home once again and deceives his

brothers by telling them that ashes have become very expensive. They burn their houses and take the ashes to sell in the market, but no one buys them.

The brothers decide to kill the youngest brother. They tie him up and put him in a basket so that they can throw him over a cliff. While on their way, an old man asks that the brothers go and find his cattle that ran away and bring the cattle back to him. So they leave the basket and go in search of the cattle. The young man calls out to the old man from the basket and tells him that they want him to become king, but he does not want to. The old man asks the young man whether he will become king if he gets inside the basket. The young man replies yes and the old man enters the basket. When the brothers return from retrieving the cattle, they throw the basket over the cliff, assuming it is still their youngest brother inside. The young man takes the old man's cattle and when he arrives home his brothers ask where he got the cattle from. He tells them that there are many cattle over the cliff. The older brothers get into baskets and the younger brother throws them over the cliff. They die and he lives happily ever after.

5.2.5 *Demane and Demazane* (South African folktale retold)

Demane and Demazane is a story about a boy called Demane and his twin sister called Demazane. When their parents die, they go to stay with an uncle who physically abuses them and gives them only a small portion of porridge as a meal for the day. So, they run away from home. Frightened of the cannibals, they find a cave to live in and make only small holes in the door to let the air in. Demane goes out hunting and tells his sister not to cook any meat, as the scent of meat will attract cannibals. Every evening, Demane comes home from hunting and brings back an animal that he has killed. He calls out to his sister: “Demazane, Demazane, child of my mother, open this cave for me. The swallows can enter it. It has two holes” (South African Folktale, 2014, p. 7).

Demazane eventually becomes bored of staying in the cave the whole day, so she goes out to explore and play which makes her very happy. The next day she lights a fire in the cave and cooks some meat. When her brother gets back home from hunting and enquires about the

meat, Demazane lies and says she placed the meat outside in the sun and that is why the meat is cooked. The next day she cooks meat again but this time the voice of a stranger calls out for her to open the door using her brother's exact words. However, she recognises that this is not the voice of her brother and does not open. Later, a voice that sounds like her brother's calls out again, so she opens the door. But it is a huge hairy man who grabs Demazane. As she is being carried away, she drops ashes along the path.

That day Demane gets home from hunting with a hive of bees. He finds his sister gone, so he follows the ashes that leads him to the woods where there is a fire. Demane gets to the fire and pretends to limp. He asks the hairy man for some water. While the hairy man goes to fetch him water, he opens the bag where the hairy man had placed his sister and Demazane comes out. Demane then replaces the bag with the beehive. The brother and sister hide and wait for what will happen. When the hairy man sends his daughter and son to get the bag, the bees sting them. The hairy man goes inside, and the bees also sting him in his head, nose and eyes. Then he runs into a pond and turns into wood, which is just suitable for beehives. For a long time, the twins eat the tasty honey from the beehive.

5.2.6 *Man with a serious problem* by Ursula Nafula (Kenyan)

Man with a serious problem is about Muniafu who lives with his grandparents, aunt, uncle, a hen, a goat, a sheep and a pig. The hen stays in a small cage. The goat, sheep and pig are tied on the side of the wall. When Muniafu was young, the grandparents were still well, and the aunt and uncle helped with the work. After a few years, the grandparents age, the aunt becomes sickly, and the uncle no longer helps with the chores. The animals make a lot of noise because of hunger and Muniafu is exhausted all the time because he has to find food for everyone every day. Muniafu asks for advice but does not get any solution from his grandparents as they do not hear him due to old-age deafness, and his aunt says all she wants is to sleep and get up in the morning. His lazy uncle suggests that he sells the animals and buys alcohol for his grandparents so that they can sleep and not bother him.

Muniafu is upset and takes the animals to seek advice from a wise old man. The wise man tells Muniafu to leave the animals and go back home. The house becomes empty and quiet, so the grandparents and uncle complain and say that they miss the animals. Muniafu goes back to the wise man who tells him to send his grandparents away. The aunt and uncle plead with Muniafu not to send them away too. Muniafu returns to the wise man for a better solution. The wise man returns his animals and grandparents. His aunt now says she will be cleaning the house and the uncle stops being lazy.

5.2.7 *Thoko's FantaPine seed* by Khothatso Ranoosi and Marion Drew (South African)

Thoko's FantaPine Seed takes place in an area called Malealea. Thoko and other children sit in Thoko's father's wagon after working in the fields the whole day. The wagon contains a lot of mielies. Thoko works hard more than all the other children, so his father buys him a Fanta Pine at M'e Pontso's shop. It is his favourite drink, so he sips it slowly because he wants the drink to last till they get to the top of the hill. On the way, Thoko feels sleepy. Tired of holding the empty Fanta Pine can, he throws it as far as he can into the field. Thoko's father stops the wagon and asks Thoko what he threw on his field. Thoko tells his father that he threw the can because he was tired of holding it and it made his hands sticky. Thoko's father is upset and asks Thoko if he grows Fanta Pine in his fields. The children laugh but Thoko can see that his father is angry. Thoko's father asks Thoko why he is planting Fanta Pine in his fields when he knows that he only grows corn and sorghum. The children stop laughing. Angrily, Thoko's father orders Thoko to go get back the Fanta Pine can. So Thoko gets down from the wagon and goes to collect the empty can. He also finds a plastic bag and picks it up too. Proud of his son, Thoko's father and the rest of the children climb down from the wagon to pick up other things that Thoko's father does not grow in the fields. The children find a lot of rubbish which Thoko's father tells them to put back in the wagon so they can burn them at home. He asks Thoko if the field is happy now. Thoko replies saying the field is happy and so is he.

5.2.8 *Sekuru Mkuku* by Blessing Nemadziva (Zimbabwean)

Sekuru Mkuku is a story about a boy named Farai who lives with his parents in the city of Harare. It is the holidays and time for him to visit his grandparents. He, however, is not happy and wants to remain in the city and play with his friends. The grandparents, Mbuya and Sekuru, are happy to see Farai, so they decide to slaughter a hen for him. Although Farai's grandparents are happy to see him, Farai is tired and just wants to sleep. Mbuya gives Farai a drumstick and a lot of sadza (thick porridge). Farai goes to sleep with a full stomach. Mbuya spreads a blanket on top of a reed mat on the floor for him. The next morning, Mbuya wakes Farai very early to join the other boys in the village to herd cattle. Farai finds herding cattle a difficult task in the scorching sun. He misses his friends in the city and he misses watching cartoons. When the sun starts to set, the boys take the cattle to the river to drink water. The boys, along with Farai, swim in the river. Farai enjoys swimming. He starts telling the village boys about his friends in the city and computer games, but they are not interested. They talk about their family history and tease Farai because he knows nothing about his family history. When Farai gets home, he asks his grandfather to tell him about their family history and teach him praise poems. After supper, Sekuru tells Farai his family history. Farai is delighted to learn about his family history and clan names. He cannot wait to tell his mother and his friends in the city about his family history. He is happy that he came to the village and is grateful to his grandparents for their care.

5.2.9 *My friend, my enemy* by Smangaliso Molebale (South African)

My friend, my enemy is about a young man who lives in the village of Mphahlele with his parents. Thabo is very respectful to his parents and the people in the village. On his way to school one day, Thabo meets a boy called Sparks and they become friends. Sparks is a bully who bunks school and fights with other children. He starts influencing Thabo and Thabo copies his bad behaviour. Thabo starts disrespecting his parents and drinks too much alcohol to a point that he can no longer take care of himself. Thabo is sexually active and careless to the extent that he gets sexually transmitted infections. Sparks makes fun of Thabo and no longer wants to be his friend. Thabo's parents encourage him to visit the clinic. After taking the medication they give him at the clinic, Thabo recovers. Thabo then has a change of perspective and realises that Sparks is not a friend but an enemy. He goes back to school,

apologises to his parents and teachers and starts behaving in a respectful way again. Sparks is disappointed by Thabo's sudden change of behaviour but eventually becomes ashamed of his own behaviour and starts to change as well.

5.2.10 *Result of disobedience* by Addison Gifty Naana, Aihoon Fatima, Biney Kwesi, Oduro Gifty and Sam Gabriel Ampa (Ghanaian co-authors)

Result of disobedience is about a boy called Kwesi Gyasi who lives with his parents in a village called Asempaye. Kwesi's friend is Kweku Twum and he also lives in Asempaye. Kwesi's parents always advise him not to swim in the river because it is dangerous. During the school holidays, Kweku travelled to Simpa to visit his uncle, Kobina Amfo who is a fisherman. Kobina has many canoes in Simpa. After returning to his village, Kweku tells Kwesi about the wonderful time he had in Simpa swimming in the sea. Kwesi wishes he had also gone with Kweku to the sea. One day the two friends decide to swim in the village stream. Kweku calls Kwesi to get into the river, but Kwesi remembers his mother's advice. After multiple attempts, Kweku persuades Kwesi to come inside the water. The two boys have a great time in the river. When it gets dark, Kweku tells Kwesi to get out of the river so they can go home. Kweku has already started to put on his clothes. When Kwesi is about to get out of the water, he feels something pull his leg. It is a crocodile. He cries for help. Kweku rushes to help his friend out of the water. After pulling his friend to dry land, he runs to the village to get help. When the villagers come to the river, they rush Kwesi to the clinic. The following day Kwesi wakes up in a hospital bed with his mother, father and friend standing beside him. They inform him that his leg has been amputated. Kwesi cries and begs his mother to forgive him for not adhering to her warning to stay out of the river.

5.3 Types of father and son relationships portrayed in the African fairy tales

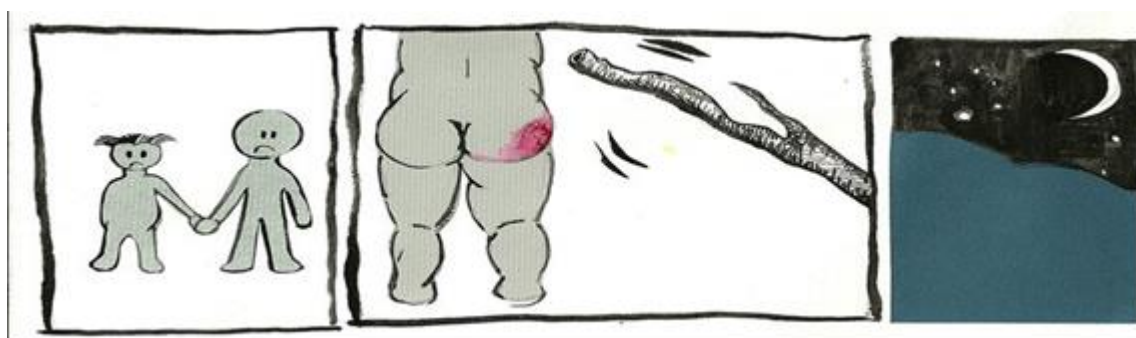
The thematic analysis of the selected fairy tales reveals five kinds of father and son relationships. However, it is important to note that in many of the fairy tales, the father and son relationships fit into more than one category; in some, there is a progression from one category to another. The first type of father and son relationship is the dysfunctional father and son relationship. This type of relationship is characterised by toxic masculine behaviour and unhealthy interactions. The second type of father and son relationship is the detached

father and son relationship. This type of relationship describes father and sons who talk and interact in other ways but are emotionally detached or disconnected from each other. The third type of relationship is distanced father and son relationships. These are father and son relationships where, although the father is present in the son's life, he is separated from his son physically. The fourth type of relationship is the absent father and son relationships. In this relationship, the father is absent completely for various reasons such as death, abandonment or not existing in the narrative at all. The fifth type of relationship is the positive father and son relationships; this type of relationship is where the father and son share a close emotional bond and the relationship is characterised by healthy and positive interactions.

5.3.1 Dysfunctional father and son relationships

In the story *Demane and Demazane*, Demane and his twin sister Demazane are orphans; they do not have a mother and a father. Since I am analysing father and son relationships, I looked at the relationship Demane has with his uncle as he is the father figure to Demane and his twin sister. As mentioned in the literature review, in the case of an absent father (whether due to death or any other reason) a father figure plays a vital role since he takes the place of the father. Demane and his father figure (his uncle) have a dysfunctional father and son relationship. This is because when Demane and his twin sister go to stay with their uncle, they are maltreated. The uncle physically and emotionally abuses the two siblings.

Figure 1 (Demane and Demazane - one of the twins is bruised from beatings)



As shown in Figure 1, the uncle beats Demane and his twin sister with long sticks. He also deprives them of food and only gives them thin porridge once a day. This forces the siblings to run away from home.

Dysfunctional father and son relationships are often characterised by one or more types of abuse. A dysfunctional father or father figure wants to make the child feel powerless. He displays a type of toxic and violent masculinity. In the mind of Demane, he has to develop a defence mechanism against his own uncle. This mechanism is not only to protect himself but also his twin sister. When he fails because the uncle is too strong for him, and he is too afraid, he then resorts to running away from home and living in a cave. A key thing to note in a dysfunctional relationship is the power dynamics that come into play. Demane and his twin sister are not only powerless because they are young children but also because they are orphans; the uncle takes advantage of that to abuse them. His depriving them of food can also suggest that he does not care about their physical well-being. When the twins do not do what he wants, that agitates him to a point where he even brutally hurts them.

The effect that the dysfunctional relationship Demane has with his father figure has on him later shows when he is out in the world alone with his sister. Like his uncle, Demane exerts a type of authoritative masculinity on his sister. He gives his sister instructions: “Stay in the cave while I am out hunting, and don't cook any meat. Cannibals love the smell of cooking meat” (South African Folktale, 2014, p. 5). Demane treats his sister like she is his daughter and not his twin sister, meanwhile they were born on the same day and are exactly the same age. Demazane is forbidden from going outside and cooking until her brother comes back. This makes us wonder what superpowers he possesses when he cooks meat that will make the cannibals fear him, whereas he is the same age as his sister. The response to that is that he possesses no special physical strength but masculine powers. Masculinity gives him the power to dictate what his sister can and cannot do. His masculine entitlement can be related to that of his uncle. Demane reduces his sister to a consumer, who just has to sit and wait for him to bring food for her to eat. Later when the hairy creature appears and abducts her, it is Demazane's quick thinking that helps her brother locate her, when she throws ashes along the road. Although the brother devises a strategy to get her back, it should be noted that it is a collaborative effort that enables him to save her.

In the story *Man with a serious problem*, Muniafu shares a dysfunctional relationship with the father figures in his life. There is no mention of Muniafu's biological parents in the

narrative. He lives with his grandfather, grandmother, aunt and uncle. Thus, I look closely at the relationship he has with both his grandfather and uncle as they are his father figures. When the story starts, the grandfather's health is still good. As a result, he can help with the housework. The uncle also helps with the chores and the running of the home. As time goes by, however, things change.

Figure 2 (Muniafu family – uncle and grandfather sleeping while aunty tries to clean)



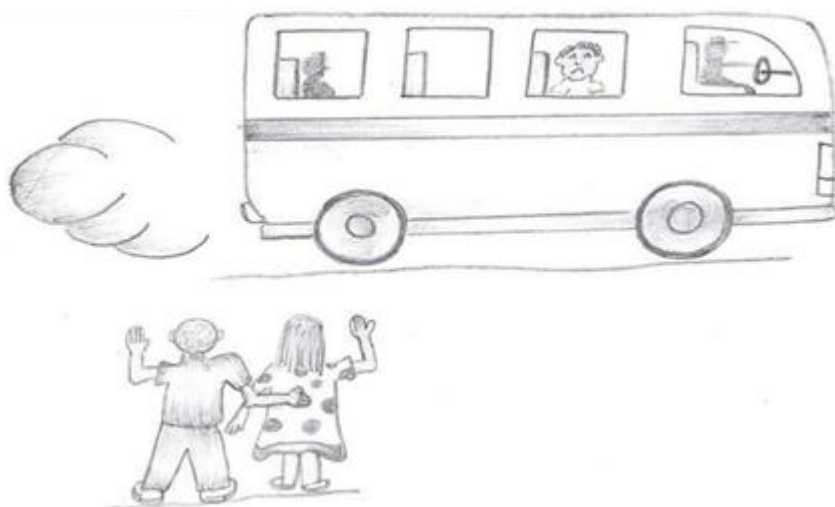
As shown in Figure 2, as the grandfather begins to age, he cannot hear and see properly anymore; he is often sick and does not help with any chores in the house. The uncle, who is full of life and healthy, adopts a bad habit of laziness and he sleeps all the time, not helping with taking care of the livestock. Although Muniafu is just a young boy, all the work and responsibility fall on him. He has to find food to feed the whole family every day. In addition to that, he comes back home to a dirty house. The animals make a lot of noise because they are hungry. When Muniafu confides in his father figures, wanting help to find a solution to their problem, the response indicates dysfunctionality. His grandfather cannot advise Muniafu on anything because he cannot hear him. His uncle suggests that he buys alcohol for his elderly grandparents and sells the only livestock that they own.

Muniafu cannot have a positive relationship with his grandfather because of old age and his ill health. His grandfather is more of a burden to him than he is of assistance. There is no small child that has to bear that responsibility. His uncle's advice suggests that he is financially irresponsible and that he abuses alcohol. Muniafu has to navigate between two masculinities that he sees in his home. His grandfather's masculinity is a weak masculinity, whilst the uncle's masculinity implies that he is a failure in life. As a result, Muniafu takes the drastic measure of going to look for a strong masculine figure outside his home and that is the wise old man. This causes even greater estrangement between Muniafu and his father figures as he throws them out of the house. When fathers do not model out the admirable behaviour for their sons, the sons lose respect for them and idealise men outside their kinship. Through this dysfunctional father and son relationship, this story shows us that the son of a dysfunctional father has to mature faster to close the gap of negative fatherhood in his life. When Muniafu throws his uncle and grandfather out of the house, it proves that the roles in their household have been reversed as he has become the adult.

5.3.2 Detached father and son relationships

In the story *Sekuru Mkuku*, Farai has a detached father and son relationship with his father. Farai lives in the city of Harare with his mother and father. Farai's father is a typical city working dad who rarely has quality time with his son.

Figure 3 (Farai leaving Harare and his parents waving goodbye)



In Figure 3, Farai's father and mother wave goodbye to Farai as he goes off to spend the holidays in the rural areas with his grandparents. The optimism of Farai's father regarding Farai's departure is an indicator that he is relieved that Farai is going to a place where they will give him something that he is not able to give his son and that is his cultural identity. We never get to see the face of Farai's father, which symbolises his detachment from his son; we only see his back.

When Farai gets to the village, he has social and cultural encounters that transform his identity. When Farai sits and interacts with the boys of the village in the river, for the first time in his life he comes to the realisation that he does not know his family history. As a result, he cannot contribute meaningfully to the conversation that the other boys are having, and they start to ridicule him. This points to the failure on the part of Farai's father who focused on the financial responsibility of fatherhood while ignoring the cultural responsibility, which is equally important. In the African culture, the younger generation learns their cultural identity through oral tales from the older generation. Farai's father did not pass on this knowledge. This suggests that he was too busy with the demands of city life and neglected his responsibility as a father. The only conversation that Farai can have with the village boys is about cartoons and computer games, which also suggests that Farai's parents use digital entertainment as a tool to keep their son busy, so they do not have to give him much attention. Later in the evening, Farai asks Sekuru (his grandfather) to teach him their family history and praise poems. After his grandfather has taught him the family history, "Farai was happy. Farai wanted to tell his mother the family history. Farai wanted to tell his friends in the city his family history" (Nemadziva, 2016, p. 11). This also indicates that Farai's father has also not told Farai's mother his own family history. Farai now is to play the role that his father was supposed to have played, that is, to transmit cultural values in the family.

In the story *Result of disobedience*, Kwesi has a detached father and son relationship with his father. Kwesi lives with both his parents in the village of Asempaye. Although Kwesi has a father, the dominant parental voice in his life is the voice of his mother who warns him about the dangers of swimming in the river. Kwesi's mother is the voice of counsel in Kwesi's life.

When Kwesi is still deliberating with himself whether or not to jump into the river, it is his mother's advice that he recalls. After the tragedy of being bitten by a crocodile (referred to as the god of the stream), he wakes up in a hospital bed with his left leg amputated. His father, mother and friend are standing beside him. Kwesi starts to cry and pleads with his mother for forgiveness.

Figure 4 (Kwesi in the hospital with his parents beside him after being bitten by a crocodile)

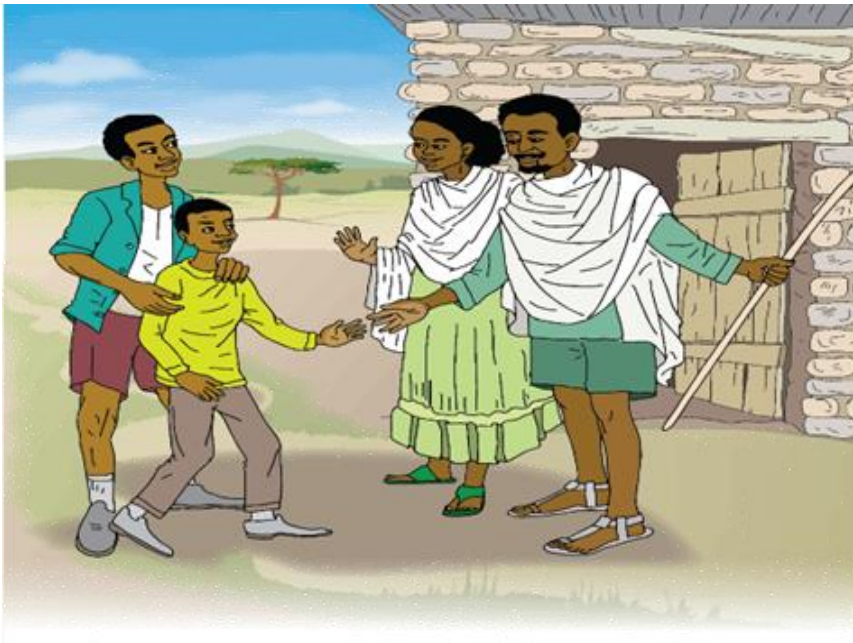


In Figure 4, we can see how intently Kwesi looks at his mother. Although his father is holding his shoulder, Kwesi seems unmoved by his presence. It is as if the father is not there, or his view does not matter. Kwesi's father only represents a presence and not an influence, suggesting that fatherhood and fathering are too separate things. Papa is a physically present father, but he fails in fathering his son. From what we deduce in the narrative, the story is set in a place surrounded by bodies of water such as rivers and seas. However, Papa never goes fishing with Kwesi like Uncle Kobina does with Kweku (Kwesi's best friend). When Kweku returns to the village, "he told Kwesi about his experiences and enjoyment, especially swimming in the sea! Kwesi was interested and wished he had travelled with Kweku to the sea" (Naana et al., 2017, p. 3). Kwesi's interest and envy at his friend Kweku's experience suggests that Kwesi does not have a male presence to take him out on leisure activities in the sea. So although Kwesi's father is present in his life physically, his relationship with his son is a detached one, lacking any real bonding.

5.3.3 Distanced father and son relationships

In the story *Advice from an old man*, Yihdego has a distanced father and son relationship with his two sons. Yihdego left home when his wife was pregnant, and his oldest son was just a minor. When he comes back home, because he has been gone for so many years, he does not recognise his two sons at all and almost kills them. Yihdego, although not on purpose, has neglected his sons' emotional and material needs. The writer makes us ask the question, did Yihdego ever support his family financially while he was away and the question is particularly significant because the fairy tale is set at a time when there were no cell phones and automatic teller machines. Yihdego returns home at a time when his sons have gone through many stages of their upbringing without him as a father.

Figure 5 (Yihdego returns home to his family)



As shown in Figure 5, Yihdego's sons have grown both physically and mentally without their father. The older son holds the younger son when the mother reunites them. It is as if the mother is introducing them to a strange man and the older son has to hold his brother in order to protect him. Yihdego's older son had taken the place of the man of the house when his father was away. Yihdego's relationship with his sons symbolises a ghostly relationship as there are no ties that bind them.

A distanced father and son relationship is different from a detached father and son relationship because in a distanced father and son relationship the father is present in the life of his son but separated from him physically. It is not that distanced fathers such as Yihdego do not love their children but due to serious social and economic situations, they have to live far away from them, whereas detached fathers live in the same house with their children but are separated emotionally from them. Unfortunately for Yihdego and his sons, they will never regain the time they lost. His sons, especially the eldest, have already formed their own masculine and cultural identities. Their father did not shape their identities at all.

5.3.4 Absent father and son relationships

In the story *Clever brother*, the eponymous clever brother and his two older brothers have an absent father and son relationship with their father who has passed away. When the father was alive, he had a distinct relationship with each of the three sons. The father liked the youngest son the most because of his intellect. We get the sense that because the clever brother was the father's favourite, he got preferential treatment. Unfortunately, when the father dies, the youngest is left with the two older brothers who hate him and are jealous of him. The father is now physically absent but the effects of his relationship with his son are still present.

Figure 6 (The Clever brother with his ox and his two elder brothers with their cattle)



Even though the father left all his wealth to the two older brothers and only an ox for the youngest as shown in Figure 6, the two older brothers are still envious of him. The two older brothers perceive the youngest brother as an adversary; they compete with him in everything. Later on, when they attempt to kill him, their relationship becomes dysfunctional since their hatred has driven them to the point of attempting to murder their younger brother.

There are a number of reasons for their hostile treatment of their youngest brother. The first reason is that even in the midst of the father's absence the two elder brothers still feel a sense of rejection. Secondly, they feel that the father did not love them or care about them. They are still competing for the father's approval even when he is deceased. The irony in the father leaving the bulk of his wealth to the older two is that the gesture does not mean he approves of them but that he knows they are likely to fail in life, so the wealth may give them a head start.

This absent father and son relationship signifies the importance of the nature of relationship a father has with his children prior to his death. One can say that in this fairy tale the father's absence worsens the damage that was already done in terms of the emotional bond of the three brothers. The two older brothers' unity is a result of their feelings of inadequacy in the eyes of their father. An absent father and son relationship is different from a distanced father and son relationship because an absent father is physically, emotionally and financially absent, whereas a distanced father can be present in other ways but physically absent.

5.3.5 Positive father and son relationships

In the story *A father's lesson*, the relationship between Abula and his father is a positive father and son relationship. At first Abula is not really interested in cultivating a positive relationship with his father. This is demonstrated by his bad behaviour: being lazy at school, stealing money from home, and spending the whole day playing with friends. All of these actions show that Abula took the presence of his father for granted. His father later devises a plan to make Abula change his ways after his mother complains about him stealing money from her and bunking school. Abula's father's patience is what brings him closer to his son.

He strategically instructs his wife to hide the money in books so that he can teach Abula a lesson about the treasures of knowledge found through reading. The father does not resort to harsh and strict punishment but takes the role of a teacher and mentor in the life of his son. His reaction when his son opens up to him and says that he wants the money so that he can buy sweets is gentle. He smiles and uses that opportunity to encourage his son. Abula is then able to open up to his father about the difficulty he faces in reading.

Figure 7 (Abula and his father teaching him how to read)



Abula's father then suggests that they do the reading activity together as shown in Figure 7. Abula's father advises his son that books are not just tools to attain knowledge and literacy, but they also symbolise wealth. The one who can read will later in life be able to accumulate riches due to the knowledge they receive from reading.

In Figure 7, Abula's father puts his hand around his son's shoulder while Abula is folding his arms and looking relaxed. This shows the extent of freedom Abula has in expressing his emotions to his father, as he knows that he will react in a loving way by embracing him. This story shows that although a father and son relationship can be positive that does not mean they will not face their share of difficult circumstances. What makes a father and son relationship positive is how they address the difficult situation, even if one of them is a direct cause of that situation. Abula's father is a positive example of fatherhood because he communicates with Abula's mother regarding their son's behaviour. Secondly, his reaction to

Abula's unruliness demonstrates a gentle masculine identity. Lastly, he uses a hands-on approach in transforming his son's behaviour not just at home but in his schoolwork as well. Positive fathering does not shift the responsibility to the other parent but the father takes initiative in shaping every troubled aspect of his son's life.

In the story *A fish and a gift*, Yusuf and his father share a positive father and son relationship. When Yusuf's father waves goodbye to leave for work, Yusuf's eyes brighten up as his father promises to bring back home a fish and a gift for Yusuf. Papa is both a friend and a role model to Yusuf. He is a role model because he is portrayed as extremely hard-working. He wakes up before dawn each day to go and find food for Yusuf and his granny. Another important aspect about Yusuf's father is that he is a single dad; there is no mention of Yusuf's mother in the narrative. He challenges the stereotype that single parents are predominantly mothers. He gets assistance from Yusuf's granny to look after Yusuf while he is at work. Papa's affectionate personality is also shown through his conduct at work. Even though his job as a fisherman is extremely tiring and he is faced with many environmental challenges such as the scarcity of fish, he is always joyous and frequently sings songs as a way to tell stories of what is happening around him. This positive father and son relationship shows that time limitations due to work commitments are not a hindrance for fathers to form positive relationships with their sons. Yusuf only gets to see his father early in the morning before he leaves for work and late in the evening when he comes back with a gift for Yusuf. However, Yusuf thinks about his father the whole day. When Yusuf's father arrives in the evening, he shares an intimate moment with Yusuf as Yusuf holds his gift up to the stars.

Figure 8 (Yusuf's father gives him a shark's tooth as a gift)



The gift that Papa gives Yusuf, as shown in Figure 8, is a shark's tooth. This gift signifies that positive fathering does not require expensive material things but sincere, thoughtful gestures. Papa uses the resources available to him at the sea and turns them into special gifts for his son.

In the story *My friend, my enemy*, Thabo and his father share a positive father and son relationship. In several parts of the story where there are images of parents, it is only Thabo's father's image that appears, as shown in Figure 9. This shows that Thabo's father is an active father, one who is involved in his son's life.

Figure 9 (Thabo waves goodbye to his dad)



Figure 10 (Thabo and his parents)



Thabo and his father had a friendly father and son relationship prior to Thabo's change of behaviour. This is evident in Figure 9 where we see Thabo waving goodbye to his father as he heads off to school. The smiles on both faces suggest a loving relationship between father and son. In Figure 10, although Thabo is standing with both parents, it is his father who is holding him, showing concern for his health. His father's concern is also seen on his face as his creased eyebrows and frown illustrate that he is very worried for his son. Thabo, however, looks happy to have both his parents supporting him to get medical help for his ailment.

Thabo is described initially as a respectful son to both his parents. However, later on Thabo encounters a new friend called Sparks and his behaviour changes. Thabo starts to be physically aggressive with his peers at school; he bunks school and engages in substance abuse. Thabo's bullying behaviour extends to his home where he starts disrespecting his father and becomes a drunk, to the detriment of his own personal well-being. The relationship Thabo has with his father deteriorates because of this. Thabo contracts a sexually transmitted disease and his father and mother advise him to go to the clinic and obtain treatment. It is this wise counsel that saves Thabo's life. When Thabo realises his mistakes, he apologises to his father and mother.

In this father and son relationship, we learn that positive fathering persists even when kind gestures are not being reciprocated. Positive fatherhood does not give up on the son, even when he has practically wasted his life. Thabo's father is with him in three vital stages of his life: when he is a respectful child under his care, when he enters through the changes of puberty and peer pressure, and when he changes after a journey of personal growth.

In the story *Thoko's FantaPine seed*, the relationship Thoko has with his father is a positive father and son relationship. Thoko and other children work very hard in the fields. On this particular day, Thoko works the hardest of them all. Even though the field belongs to his father, Thoko still has to put in the same amount of work, if not more, if he wants to be rewarded. Thoko's reward is a Fanta Pine drink. Thoko's father shows positive fathering because he teaches Thoko that in life there is no reward without hard work. The fact that Thoko has to work with many other children shows that his father is teaching him that the real world is competitive and tough. So, if you do something, you must be the best at what you do.

On their journey as they are travelling in the wagon, "at the top of the hill his father stopped to give the oxen a rest. 'What a beautiful valley we live in children,' he said. 'We are lucky to live in such a clean, fresh place.' He smiled" (Ranoosi & Drew, 2015, p. 3). This statement shows that Thabo's father has a deep appreciation for nature and cleanliness; once again, he is subtly instilling in Thabo and the other children the values of caring for their environment.

After drinking his Fanta Pine, Thoko gets tired of holding the empty can as his hands have become sticky from the sugar. He throws the empty can into the fields.

Figure 11 (Thoko and his father in the fields)



As shown in Figure 11, his father stops the wagon to assertively rebuke Thoko by questioning him and he then commands him to go pick up the empty can in a big, loud voice. In this instance, Thoko's father demonstrates that positive fathering also involves being a disciplinarian to your son. Discipline is a key component of raising a future exemplary man in society. Thoko rectifies his mistake and not only picks up the Fanta Pine can but also other empty littered plastic bags in the field. His father's response is that he is very proud of him. Thoko's father makes sure to praise or reward his son when he does well; that motivates him to do even better.

5.4 Factors that determine father and son relationships in the African fairy tales

In this section, I examine the factors that determine father and son relationships in the African fairy tales. There are five factors that I identified in the data analysis: (1) hard work; (2) wisdom and knowledge; (3) obedience and disobedience; (4) communication; and (5) reckless behaviour.

The first factor that is the most popular in the ten African fairy tales is hard work. Hard work is often related to a superior masculinity. Fathers who work hard are generally perceived as good fathers by their families and communities. The second factor is wisdom and knowledge; wisdom and knowledge from both father and son are factors that can positively contribute to their relationship. Fathers and sons who are wise and knowledgeable often avoid tragic situations. The third factor is obedience and disobedience, which is often tied to the power dynamics in father and son relationships. In most cases, it is the son who has to be obedient to the father and he is also the one who is prone to being disobedient since the father does not answer to his son. So the son cannot evaluate the father based on obedience and disobedience. The fourth factor is communication: fathers and sons who communicate often have the best relationships. Communication acts as a catalyst for personal and mental growth for fathers and their sons. The last factor is reckless behaviour, which can be a detrimental factor in father and son relationships. In various stages of their lives, both fathers and sons can be irresponsible, which can result in the breakdown of essential relationship values such as trust.

5.4.1 Hard work

Hard work is the most prominent factor in father and son relationships in the African fairy tales investigated. Hard work is an important trait for both fathers and sons as it often ensures that they are able to make a living. In the fairy tale *Thoko's FantaPine seed*, Thoko, the children and Thoko's father "were going home after spending the whole day in the fields. They had all worked hard that day" (Ranoosi & Drew, 2015, p. 1). Thoko had worked the hardest of all the children and his reward is a Fanta Pine drink. Through working together in the fields, the father gets a chance to teach his son the value of environmental protection. Thoko's father instils positive values and a strong work ethic into Thoko by working together with him. Thoko and his father's relationship centres around hard work. The story shows that from an early age, boys are groomed to see hard work as evidence of true masculinity. By rewarding Thoko's hard work, the father is insinuating that physical labour is praiseworthy; it is nothing to be ashamed of. Rather, it brings rewards. The father and son relationship in this story is cemented through role modelling as Thoko's father plays the role model to his son.

In the story *A fish and a gift*, Yusuf's father gets up before the sun comes up to go fishing so that his family can have something to eat. Fishing is hard work for Yusuf's father, uncles and cousins as they have to contend with many challenges in the sea such as high tides and dangerous creatures. Despite the physical strain involved in fishing, Yusuf's father persists in fishing because he has to provide food for his son. Hard work in this story is symbolic of the sacrifice a father makes to meet the needs of his family.

Muniafu in *Man with a serious problem* comes home tired every day because he has to go out and look for food. Although he is a child, Muniafu takes it upon himself to work hard both mentally (by thinking of solutions to his family's problems) and physically so that his family can survive. Muniafu's hard-working personality also changes the dynamics in the relationship he has with his father figures as he becomes the decision-maker. Hard work is a highly esteemed masculine trait. A young boy who works hard is likely to grow up as a responsible father who meets the material needs of his family.

5.4.2 Wisdom and knowledge

The display of wisdom and knowledge demonstrates the development of many characters in the African fairy tales. Abula's father in *A father's lesson* gives his wife advice on where to hide money from Abula where he will not be able to find it. His wisdom and knowledge play a central role in changing Abula's wayward behaviour by instilling in him valuable life lessons. If Abula's father did not have the wisdom to deal with his son the way he does, Abula would have drifted away from his father and possibly lost out on a good future as a learned person. His father's wise reaction to his lack of interest in reading enables Abula to build a positive relationship with his father.

In the story *Advice from an old man*, the wise old man gives Yihdego advice on his journey back home. The wisdom of the old man helps Yihdego to reach home safely where he can begin to cultivate a relationship with his sons. The wise man's advice also restrains Yihdego from killing his two sons, which would have caused the ultimate breakdown of his family. It

is through wisdom that Yihdego regains a second chance at being a present father to his two sons.

In *Clever brother*, the father had three sons: “The youngest son was the cleverest and his father liked him the most” (Debelo & Laird, 2016, p. 1). In this story, being the most intelligent makes the youngest son the father’s favourite. His relationship with his father was determined by the fact that he was the smartest. Likewise, his two older brothers had a less favourable relationship with the father because they did not show deep intellectual thinking in their actions. The lack of wisdom for the two older brothers also contributed to the inheritance that the father leaves them, in the same way that the clever brother’s inheritance symbolises the confidence the father had in his ingenious abilities.

In the story *Man with a serious problem*, Muniafu, through the advice of the wise man, is able to find solutions to his problems. The man is renowned to have wisdom that enables him to find solutions to all problems. Because of his wisdom, Muniafu perceives the wise man as a father figure and a role model. The wise man wins the respect of the young Muniafu, respect which Muniafu does not have for his uncle and grandfather who are his biological father figures. The story shows that the wisdom displayed by both older and younger men can turn them into father figures as both Muniafu and the wise man emerge as father figures in the story.

In the story, *Sekuru Mkuku*, Farai’s grandfather Sekuru, through his knowledge about his ancestry and family tree, teaches Farai his family history. It is Sekuru’s knowledge that ushers Farai into his cultural roots and masculine identity. When Sekuru imparts knowledge about their ancestry to Farai, he also portrays the dismal failure of Farai’s father in cultivating a positive relationship with his son. The story shows that when men possess knowledge of their cultural roots and history, they develop a healthy masculine identity, and passing on that knowledge to future generations of young men is a sign of wisdom.

5.4.3 Obedience and disobedience

Obedience is a desirable attribute for the male characters in the African fairy tales; it often leads to victory and a prosperous life, whereas disobedience can lead to great setbacks and calamities for the character. In the story *A father's lesson*, Abula starts off as a son who disobeys his mother by stealing her money. Abula also disobeys his parents by not attending school. Abula's father uses Abula's disobedience to cultivate a positive relationship with him. So Abula goes from being a disobedient to an obedient son after his father engages with him. Abula's father did not use Abula's initial disobedience as an excuse to have a detached relationship with his son. Instead, he worked through Abula's behavioural challenges; this shows that a good father can nurture his son to obedience.

In the story *My friend, my enemy*, Thabo starts off as an obedient son who has a positive relationship with his father. However, through peer pressure Thabo changes into a disobedient son. His relationship with his father declines because of his disobedience. Later, Thabo changes again to an obedient son through self-introspection and his father's correction. In this story, obedience and disobedience have a direct impact on the state of the father and son relationship at the different stages on the son's life. When Thabo is obedient, his relationship with his father is at its best, whereas when he is disobedient, he has the worst relationship with his father.

5.4.4 Communication

Communication is an important factor in positive father and son relationships. In the story *Result of disobedience*, the lack of communication between Kwesi and his father causes them to have a detached relationship. Just before Kwesi is about to make the biggest mistake of his life by diving into a crocodile-infested river, the voice of caution that plays in his head is that of his mother. When he wakes up from hospital with an amputated leg, his father is sitting next to him but he only looks at his mother and pleads with her for forgiveness. Kwesi's father's silence causes him to become invisible to his son; their relationship becomes non-existent.

In the story *A fish and a gift*, Yusuf and his father's communication is deep. It extends beyond words and encompasses emotions and gifts which are symbolic. The words that Yusuf's father says to him early in the morning dominate Yusuf's thoughts and mind the entire day. Papa tells Yusuf that "today is the day I will catch a fish and bring a gift home for you" (Jobson, 2014, p. 1). Not only is Papa telling Yusuf his plans for the day, but he is also offering Yusuf comfort that even though he will be gone the whole day he will bring him back a gift. Papa brings back home a shark's tooth; he calls it a lucky shark tooth. His gift is symbolic of the good fortune he wishes for Yusuf. Through communication, Yusuf and his father are able to formulate a pleasant father and son relationship.

In the story *Sekuru Mkuku*, Farai's father never communicated his cultural and ancestral history to his son. As a result of that, he robs Farai of his cultural identity. Farai is a child who is focused on digital entertainment such as computer games and cartoons; this implies that he does not have great communication system with his father. So he uses media and digital platforms as a way to keep busy and pass time. This father and son relationship is detached because the father neglected communication with his son.

5.4.5 Reckless behaviour

Irresponsible behaviour is a common factor in the father and son relationships in the African fairy tales. In the story *A father's lesson*, Abula is described as a lazy pupil who frequently bunks school. He uses the money he steals from his mother to buy sweets that he eats, and thereafter he plays with his friends. Abula shows no remorse for his bad actions or fear of the consequences. His behaviour displays carelessness concerning his life and future. This has direct implications for his relationship with his father because had Abula not changed, he would have brought shame to his father. His father hears about his reckless behaviour and draws closer to him so that he can change and become responsible.

In the story *Man with a serious problem*, Muniafu's uncle sleeps all the time and does not help feed the animals or do the housework although he is in good health. The uncle even suggests that he sells the animals and buys alcohol for the grandparents so that they will be

asleep all the time. Muniafu's uncle is a father figure to Muniafu but because of his irresponsible lifestyle, Muniafu takes the role of 'man of the house' in his family. As a result, his relationship with his uncle suffers, and he views his uncle as a failure. It is not unheard of that sons display irresponsible behaviour because they are still growing up, but when the father behaves recklessly the consequences become more grievous, especially for the son as that deprives the son of an enjoyable childhood.

In the story *My friend, my enemy*, Thabo's reckless sexual behaviour leads him to contract a sexually transmitted disease. His health also further deteriorates because of high alcohol intake. Thabo's reckless behaviour represents a type of toxic masculinity where men prove their manhood through having multiple sexual partners and consuming too much alcohol. This behaviour affects Thabo's relationship with his father as Thabo also becomes a bully, meaning that he displays some physical aggression to a certain extent towards his father. His reckless behaviour makes his interaction with his father unpleasant.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented and analysed the data by firstly providing a summary of the selected fairy tales. Secondly, I discussed the types of father and son relationships depicted in the African fairy tales. Lastly, I discussed the factors that determine father and son relationships in the African fairy tales. In the next chapter, the discussion of findings, I will discuss the findings in relation to the conceptual framework presented in Chapter Three and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six

Discussion of Findings

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented and analysed the data. In this chapter, I discuss the findings (which are the types of father and son relationships in the African fairy tales and the factors that determine father and son relationships) in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and the theoretical ideas presented in Chapter Three. In effect, I discuss how the types of father and son relationships portrayed in the African fairy tales affirm, contest or extend existing knowledge on fatherhood and masculinity.

6.2 Discussion of findings in relation to the literature reviewed

6.2.1 Challenging stereotypes of men in children's literature

In this section, I look at men (fathers, sons, husbands and father figures) in the African fairy tales whose representation challenges stereotypical depictions of male characters in children's literature. The literature says that men in fairy tales are depicted as saviours of women (Cekiso, 2018). However, in the story *Result of disobedience*, the character of Kwesi's father (Papa) disproves the stereotype, while the story challenges the stereotype. Papa's passive nature and extreme silence portray him as a man who hides behind the strong feminine presence that is Maame (Kwesi's mother). A character like Kwesi's father would never be able to rescue a strong woman such as Kwesi's mother because she does not need any rescuing. In the narrative, Kwesi's father disproves the stereotype that a man is a symbol of power because Kwesi's father symbolises powerlessness rather than power. This flawed characteristic of Kwesi's father ultimately becomes the reason he has a detached relationship with his son.

The second stereotypical representation that the African fairy tales challenge is the idea that men are fearless, passionate about dangerous outdoor activities and have physical strength

(Cekiso, 2013). In the story *Man with a serious problem*, the two men in Muniafu's life (his uncle and grandfather) are timid, lazy and weak. This also becomes the reason Muniafu has a dysfunctional relationship with his father figures because he is the one who displays the masculine traits of strength, hard work and leadership even though he is a child. Language also plays a vital role in how men are represented in children's stories: the language which is synonymous to male character includes a provider, a protector, a warrior and a leader (Shaheen et al., 2019). In the story *Man with a serious problem*, the language used to describe Muniafu's father figure (grandfather) includes words such as 'aged' and 'sickly'. The language used to describe Muniafu's uncle is that "his uncle slept all the time and did not help to feed the animals" (Nafula, 2016, p. 2). These men defy the stereotype that men are protectors and providers. Furthermore, Muniafu's father figures are men who do not manifest the authority that is predominantly associated with male representation in children's literature (Filipović, 2018). When Muniafu seeks this male authority, he has to go outside his kinship to the wise man.

6.2.2 Contesting images of masculinity

In this section, I discuss how the fathers, sons and father figures in the African fairy tales contest dominant ideas about masculinity. The fathers and sons who contest dominant images of patriarchal masculinity are Abula and his father. Abula's father interacts with Abula both as a friend and a teacher. Patriarchy would dictate that Abula's father first reprimands Abula's mother for her failure to keep Abula at school and well behaved at home. This is because patriarchy tends to shift the blame to women as the father can never be in the wrong. However, what we see in the story is that Abula's father works with his wife to hide the money in books so that Abula can never find it. When Abula's father counsels him about the importance of reading he lets Abula freely express his views without the fear that his superiority as the head of the household may be challenged.

In the story *My friend, my enemy*, the depiction of Thabo's father as a patient man challenges the idea that sons who misbehave have fathers who enact a type of toxic masculinity. Thabo's father enacts a positive and exemplary masculinity while Thabo copies toxic masculine behaviour from his friend, Sparks. This opposes the image of masculinity as something

imitated from one's father or father figure (Mahonge, 2017). In the story *A fish and a gift*, the representation of Yusuf's father opposes the image that men strive to fulfil patriarchal ideas of masculinity at the cost of positive relationships with their sons (Mahonge, 2017). Yusuf's father is a single father who still has a positive relationship with his son even in the absence of his biological mother. The story *Sekuru Mkuku* challenges the image that the masculinity of older men is boring, traditional and unaccommodating whilst the younger generation of men are perceived as progressive (Mahonge, 2017). Instead, it shows that the older generation's masculine image can represent wisdom, knowledge and profound cultural values, as it is Sekuru, Farai's grandfather, who teaches him about his cultural and ancestral roots whereas Farai's father neglected this responsibility.

In the story *Advice from an old man*, the wise man's counsel to Yihdego opposes the idea that the true display of a man's masculinity is through putting yourself in great danger so that you triumph at the end (Waliaula, 2010). However, the wise old man who can be viewed as a father figure to Yihdego advises him not to take the easy way in life, to practise restraint and control his temper. The wise man's counsel to Yihdego shows that masculinity can be displayed through wisdom instead of dangerous exploits. In children's literature, the masculinity of the male protagonist is often depicted as physical strength, societal influence and doing the impossible (Thyssen, 2013). However, the story *Clever brother* opposes that idea. The clever brother is the youngest, suggesting he has the least physical strength compared to his two older brothers. He also is the most disregarded in his family, but he does the simple things to achieve the best results. This shows that the male protagonist does not have to be the strongest or most popular character in the narrative.

6.2.3 Understanding absent fatherhood

Absent father and son relationships are the most common deficit father and son relationships. Absent fatherhood is both physical and emotional (Balcom, 1998). This study affirms this because in three out of the ten fairy tales, the fathers are absent fathers. When a father is absent, various members of the family have to adjust their roles to meet the demands of the situation (Tau, 2020). The story of the clever brother affirms this knowledge about role adjustment within a fatherless family. The two older brothers assume the role of heads of the

household after their father dies. In many African cultures, when the father passes away, the older brother takes his place as the leader in the home (Fazel, 2017). However, the relationship between the clever brother and his late father contest this traditional practice because although he is the youngest, he is also the cleverest and therefore ends up inheriting all his father's wealth while the two older sons lose out because of their greed and hatred.

The late father, like many wealthy fathers, left his wealth to his sons, thereby passing on to them economic and social privileges (Morelli, Nolan, Palomino & Van Kerm, 2021). Ironically, he left the least amount of wealth to his favourite son. This implies that he trusted and believed in the youngest son's capabilities to a point where he knew that the clever son could generate his own wealth. This relationship extends the knowledge that an older brother can groom the younger brother with the same authority as the father if he is esteemed in the home (Awino, 2010). In this case, it is the youngest brother who acts as a mentor to the oldest brothers. Many times, older brothers are expected to sacrifice their own needs for the greater good of the younger siblings (Awino, 2010). The story challenges this notion as it is the youngest brother who is most sacrificial in the narrative.

There is immense pressure in society for men to carry the financial burdens of their family on their shoulders (International Labour Organisation, 2013). Demane and Muniafu's stories both affirm this knowledge. Although they are only young boys, masculinity has placed pressure on them to be perceived as the financial backbone of the home (International Labour Organisation, 2013). It comes as no surprise that Demane and Muniafu run their homes in a way that displays dominant hegemonic masculinity. Demane undervalues his twin sister Demazane by viewing her as a helpless consumer, while Muniafu perceives the other men and women of his household as a burden. What makes a masculinity dominant is its contempt for other masculinities and femininity as well (Connell, 2015). A child-headed family is a home where both mother and father are absent and the daily running of the home is left to the child or children (Mogotlane, Chauke, van Rensburg, Human & Kganakga, 2010). The duties of the head of the family include providing food and other necessities for the family (Mogotlane et al., 2010). Contrary to popular ideology, although Muniafu runs a child-headed

home, he is the head, not of children, but of helpless adults such as frail grandparents, a lazy uncle and a sickly aunt.

A common trait of absent fathers is that they are often gone without a trace or valid explanation, like Muniafu's father (Balcom, 1998). Absent fathers never want any contact with their children; no letters, no phone calls no occasional visits (Balcom, 1998). Many children of absent fathers suffer abuse at the hands of their relatives (Balcom, 1998). The story of Demane and Demazane's abusive uncle affirms this knowledge. Muniafu's story affirms the knowledge that different masculinities exist and that they do not all occupy the same social hierarchy (Fernández-Álvarez, 2014). Muniafu and the wise man are an example of dominant masculinity (Fernández-Álvarez, 2014). The lazy uncle who suggests alcohol for the grandparents is an example of complacent masculinity and the frail grandfather is an example of marginalised masculinity (Fernández-Álvarez, 2014). Absent fatherhood has direct consequences for sons as they have to take on the role of being men at an early age. This means they have to make decisions about the type of masculinities they will choose to enact and adopt.

6.2.4 Conceptualising fatherhood and fathering

To conceptualise fatherhood and fathering, I examined the types of fathers in the African fairy tales and their relationship with their sons. As mentioned in the literature review, fatherhood and fathering is complex and multiple types of fathers exist in the African community (Van den Berg et al., 2018). The African fairy tales affirm this because all the fathers had different styles of fathering and their perception of fatherhood was not identical. For example, in the stories *A father's lesson* and *Result of disobedience*, Abula and Kwesi live with both parents. However, the style of parenting for both fathers is vastly different. One uses a hands-on approach to fathering while the other leaves everything to the mother.

The circumstances surrounding fathers are diverse. Some fathers, like Yusuf's father, is a single father who lives with his mother and son whereas other fathers, such as Thabo's father, is a father who is married and lives with his wife and son. Depending on the father's

emotional and mental abilities, these conditions can impact his relationship with his son positively or negatively. Yusuf's father makes a deliberate effort to have a pleasant relationship with his son regardless of his physically demanding work as a fisherman and the fact that he has no spouse to go home to, whereas a father like Yihdego has the support of his wife and mother of his children but he still disappears for many years when famine hits the village. One needs to think critically about Yihdego's actions and ask why he did not take his family along and instead left his wife with his sons to withstand the harsh economic conditions. Fathers have always been given the leisure of choice when it comes to parenting, whereas societal pressure dictates that mothers are a compulsory feature in the life of a child (Cabrera et al., 2000). These ideas are affirmed by a father like Yihdego who leaves his heavily pregnant wife by herself. According to Malherbe & Kaminer (2022), children with absent fathers such as Demane and his twin sister as well as Muniafu and the clever brother face the harshest social, economic and emotional conditions. Demane and his twin sister, after losing their biological father and mother, face physical abuse and hunger. Muniafu is forced to become a man at a young age and the clever brother faces animosity from his older brothers. Fatherhood is largely associated with financial responsibility both in the African culture and as a social construct (Makusha et al., 2019). However, when a father solely focuses on the financial aspect of fatherhood, like Yihdego and Farai's father, he neglects other cultural and emotional responsibilities associated with bringing up a child. The relationship of such fathers with their sons becomes detached or distanced due to the unavailability of the father.

The findings in the study also show that father figures are an important feature in the lives of sons. Some father figures like Sekuru (Farai's grandfather) are outstanding and contribute positively to the life of the son, whereas other father figures like Demane's uncle and Muniafu's uncle are abusive and irresponsible, so their relationship with their sons becomes dysfunctional.

6.3 Discussion of findings in relation to the theoretical and conceptual ideas

6.3.1 New understandings of masculinity as a theoretical construct

The findings of the types of father and son relationships affirm that men enact their masculinity according to what their culture, society and historical background dictates (Langa, 2012). In the story *Sekuru Mkuku*, Farai makes an important distinction between the boys he encountered in the village and his friends in the city. On his first day in the village,

he joined the other boys from the village. They went to the pastures. The boys drove the cattle with sjamboks. The sjamboks were scary, they sounded like gunfire. Herding cattle was hard. The village boys enjoyed it. Farai did not enjoy it. The sun was too hot. The cattle ran too fast. Farai missed his friends in the city. Farai missed watching cartoons. (Nemadziva, 2016, p. 5)

Based on this quotation, Farai sees cattle herding as hard work whereas the village boys enjoy it. When Farai the city boy and the village boys both grow up, they will perceive and interpret masculinity differently. For the village boys, their construction of manhood will be that a man is a person who has physical strength, works hard and is fearless, whereas for boys in the city, masculinity can be symbolised by a comfortable office job. In the same way, the masculinity of Farai's father is different to the masculinity of Sekuru (Farai's grandfather). Sekuru's masculinity is rooted in culture and ancestral pride whereas Farai's father's masculinity is career orientated.

The findings of this study show that the social setting a man finds himself in plays a central role in how he constructs his masculine identity (Itulua-Abumere, 2013). In the story *My friend, my enemy*, when Thabo encounters his friend Sparks his masculinity changes from a gentle masculinity to a toxic, hypermasculinity. The findings show that multiple masculinities can exist within the same space. For example, in the story *Man with a serious problem*, there are four men in the story: Muniafu, Muniafu's uncle, Muniafu's grandfather and the wise man. How these men enact their masculinity is different. The wise man represents masculinity that is symbolised by intellectual depth; Muniafu represents masculinity that is symbolised by hard work and accountability; the uncle represents masculinity of a failure (a lazy man and drunk); and the grandfather represents weak masculinity. Although all of these masculinities coexist within the same family and community, there is a hierarchy among

them. The dominant masculinities rule over the weaker masculinities. In the story *Advice from an old man*, the masculinity of the king is honoured because he possesses power as the king of the village, a beautiful wife (an important part of dominant masculinity is their possession of femininity), and wealth. This masculinity works well in patriarchal societies which celebrate hegemonic masculinities.

6.3.2 The multiple versions of hegemonic masculinity

In this section, I look at the multiple versions of hegemonic masculinity in the African fairy tales and how they impact on father and son relationships. A key feature in hegemonic masculinity is the excessive control some men use to dominate other men perceived as weak, as well as women and children (Langa, 2012). Hegemonic masculinity uses physical strength, social influence and economic privilege as a tool to control others in society (Langa, 2012). In the story *Demane and Demazane*, Demane's uncle uses violent hegemonic masculinity to raise the twins. He beats them with long sticks and deprives them of food on purpose. He is using his strength as a grown man and power as their uncle to cause physical and psychological harm to Demane and his sister.

Violent hegemonic masculinity always results in dysfunctional father and son relationships and it uses fear and not love to interact. In the story *Advice from an old man*, the narrator mentions that in the king's house many did not leave his house alive. The king symbolises a dictatorship type of hegemonic masculinity: when his visitors innocently compliment his wife, he gets offended and kills them. The king rewards Yihdego for not saying anything about his wife's beauty. The king uses his power to silence and oppress his wife and other men who occupy a lower social hierarchy. Later when Yihdego gets home, he wants to use the same authoritative hypermasculinity to kill his two sons when he sees them napping next to his wife.

Hegemonic masculinity functions effectively when there is a hierarchy in a particular community, institution or social gathering (Wedgwood, Connell & Wood, 2022). In the story *Clever brother*, the two elder brothers use their positions as elder (family hierarchies)

brothers to mistreat the youngest brother. This takes place because the father, who occupies the highest position in the family hierarchy, is absent. Hegemonic masculinities also thrive on competitiveness whether in the workplace or in the community (Mincey et al., 2014). In the story *Thoko's FantaPine seed*, a competitive spirit among the children is encouraged by Thoko's father when he rewards the one who has worked the hardest with a Fanta Pine drink. This cultivates a sense of masculine triumph: the one who conquers is perceived as superior and celebrated. Lastly, hegemonic masculinity is closely related to toxic sexuality where men have multiple partners and view women as sexual objects (Langa, 2012). In the story *My friend, my enemy*, Thabo adopts a reckless sexual lifestyle to be perceived as cool by his friend Sparks. This type of hegemonic masculinity celebrates men who are womanisers.

6.3.3 African masculinity in transition

African masculinity is in a continuous process of transformation due to pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial events (Ozugane 2005). In this section, I discuss some of the African masculinities presented in the African fairy tales. In the story *A fish and a gift*, Yusuf's father and other fishermen fought with the surfers. Yusuf's father had to show them a fishing licence that belonged to his father, Oupa Salie. These men represent two different kinds of post-colonial masculinities in Africa. One is an elite masculinity (that is, the surfers) and the second is the fishermen, who represent an endangered masculinity. As the economic system of Africa has evolved with globalisation, certain careers such as hunting and fishing are in the process of becoming extinct. This is exacerbated by the global calls to preserve nature, wildlife and natural resources. In the story *Sekuru Mkuku*, Sekuru (Farai's grandfather) represents a traditional African masculinity whereas Farai's father represents an estranged masculinity. The traditional African masculinity of Sekuru has tied his masculine identity to his cultural roots even before colonialism, whereas Farai's father has alienated himself from his cultural roots. He is preoccupied with the commercial fast-paced lifestyle of the city. In the story *Thoko's FantaPine seed*, Thoko's father represents a hybrid masculinity: he is a traditional African man who works the ground with his own hands, but he is also modern in the sense that he is aware of current environmental challenges caused by land pollution. His hybridity shows in his relationship with his son: he disciplines him assertively for damaging the environment by throwing a can into the field but also rewards him for excellent behaviour when he picks up all the cans and plastic bags in the field. In the story *Sekuru Mkuku*, Farai

represents an African masculinity that is prevalent among young men in Africa today, which is a non-rigid masculinity. He is a city boy who is proud of his ancestral roots and has knowledge of his culture, yet he also explores the modern way of living, especially through digital media. In the story *Result of disobedience*, Kwesi's father represents an invisible masculinity. His extreme silence can be the result of a number of factors, such as feeling intimidated by a woman who is the social backbone of the household. This masculinity also represents a transition because in the pre-colonial era it would not have been socially acceptable that a man becomes passive and submissive to the woman.

6.3.4 Fatherhood and masculinity

In this section, I discuss the findings in relation to fatherhood and masculinity. This study has shown that fatherhood and masculinity are closely related, as fathering involves an enactment of a man's masculine identity (Pleck, 2010). For example, Demane's uncle performs a toxic masculinity that results in a dysfunctional father and son relationship with Demane. In the same way, Yusuf's father enacts an affectionate masculinity that causes him to have a positive relationship with his son. On his part, Kwesi's father enacts an invisible masculinity that causes him to have a detached relationship with his son. Fathers who possess power, social influence and financial resources often enact dominant masculinities. For example, in the story *Clever brother*, the father was a man of great wealth and influence and even when he is late the impact of his life is still felt by his sons. His masculinity dominates even in his absence. In the story *Man with a serious problem*, Muniafu's father figures are men with no financial resource or social upstanding, so they enact a masculinity that is perceived as that of a failure and weakness. Their failed masculinity results in a dysfunctional relationship with their son (nephew and grandson). Fatherhood helps us make a distinction between the types of masculinities different men perform (Andrews, 2021). When the father and son have clashing masculinities, their relationship suffers. An example is Thabo and his father. When Thabo was still practising his wayward behaviour and displaying a toxic, hyper and violent masculinity, he bullied and disrespected his parents.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the findings of this study in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and the theoretical ideas presented in Chapter Three. Firstly, I discussed how the findings challenge stereotypes of men in children's literature. Secondly, I discussed how the findings contested dominant images of masculinity. Thirdly, I discussed the understanding of absent fatherhood in relation to the findings. Fourthly, I discussed fatherhood and fathering in relation to the findings. Lastly, I discussed the findings in relation to the theoretical and conceptual ideas, which include new understandings of masculinity, multiple versions of masculinity, African masculinity in transition, and fatherhood and masculinity. The next chapter is the last chapter of this research report and, as such, it is the conclusion of the study.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion of the study

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the findings of this study in relation to the literature reviewed and theoretical ideas presented in previous chapters. This chapter is the last chapter for this research study. In this concluding chapter, I will first provide a summary of the findings. Secondly, I will discuss how the study contributes to knowledge. Thirdly, I will discuss the limitations of the study. Lastly, I will outline the recommendations for policy, practice and further research.

7.2 Summary of findings

The research problem that triggered this study is the scholarly neglect of African fairy tales in terms of how they contribute to understandings of fatherhood and masculinity. There have been multiple studies on the representation of femininity in fairy tales but masculinity and father and son relationships in African fairy tales have been largely ignored. There were two research questions for this study. The main research question for this study was how representations of father and son relationships in African fairy tales contribute to understandings of fatherhood and masculinity. To answer this question, the study addressed three sub-questions. The first one was: what types of father and son relationships are portrayed in the African fairy tales? The second sub-question was: what factors determine father and son relationships in African fairy tales? And the third sub-question was: how do father and son relationships in African fairy tales affirm, contest or extend existing knowledge on fatherhood and masculinity?

The research findings show that there are five types of father and son relationships in the African fairy tales. The types of father and son relationships in the ten African fairy tales are: dysfunctional father and son relationships, detached father and son relationships, distanced father and son relationships, absent father and son relationships, and positive father and son

relationships. The dysfunctional father and son relationship was between Demane and his uncle. Their relationship was dysfunctional because the uncle physically abused Demane and his twin sister and also deprived them of food. The second dysfunctional father and son relationship was between Muniafu and his father figures (uncle and grandfather). This father and son relationship is dysfunctional because Muniafu, albeit being just a young boy, has to go work to feed the adults in his household. The detached father and son relationships were between Farai and his father and Kwesi and his father. Farai and his father have a detached father and son relationship because Farai's father is a typical working city dad whose career occupations do not let him spend quality time with his son. Kwesi and his father have a detached father and son relationship because Kwesi's father is physically present but emotionally detached. It is Kwesi's mother who is his counsellor and mentor. The distanced father and son relationship is between Yihdego and his two sons. Yihdego and his sons have a distanced father and son relationship because he has been away from home for many years and his sons have not seen or communicated with him. The absent father and son relationship is between clever brother (and his two elder brothers) and their father; the father is absent because he is late. The positive father and son relationships are between Abula and his father, Yusuf and his father, Thabo and his father, and Thoko and his father. The positive father and son relationships are characterised by affection, communication and emotional presence. These fathers work through challenges and difficulties of life together with their sons.

The five different father and son relationships affirmed, contested and extended our knowledge on fatherhood and masculinity in different ways, as shown in the study. Some men (fathers, sons, husbands and father figures) in the African fairy tales disproved stereotypical representations of male characters in children's literature. These men include Kwesi's father and Muniafu's uncle and grandfather. Their representation went against the dominant perception of a father or father figure as being the symbol of power and source of provision in the home as they were represented as weak, silent and lazy. The fathers, sons and father figures in the African fairy tales also contested dominant images of masculinity. The men who contested dominant perceptions of masculinity were Abula's father, Thabo's father, Yusuf's father, Sekuru (Farai's grandfather), the wise man who counsels Yihdego, and the clever brother. These men enacted masculinity in ways that stand in contrast to the popular perception of masculinity as fearless, ruthless, unaffectionate and aggressive. The father and

son relationships in the African fairy tales also affirmed our existing knowledge of absent fatherhood. Firstly, the study affirmed that absent fatherhood is common, and the impact of absent fatherhood varies according to the existing family structure, financial resources and social environment the son finds himself in. The clever brother and Demane suffered mistreatment and abuse because of an absent father. Muniafu, the older siblings of the clever brother, and Demane had to also take on the financial responsibility of the household because of an absent father. The masculinity or masculinities that sons of absent fathers in the fairy tales adopted was a direct consequence of their fathers being late or non-existent in the narrative. The types of father and son relationships also extended our existing knowledge about fatherhood and fathering. Fatherhood and fathering is represented as complex and different for each father and son. For example, Kwesi and Abula both live with their fathers but the relationship they have with their fathers is different. One relationship is positive and the other is detached. A father's perceptions, approach to fatherhood and masculine identity all contribute to what kind of father he becomes. However, it is undeniable that fatherhood has one of the most significant effects on the life of the son. This impact can be positive like in Abula's and Yusuf's story or negative like in the case of the older brothers of the clever brother and Demane. The study of the types of father and son relationships also affirmed that masculinity is socially constructed. Masculinity is directly impacted by social, historical, cultural, political and economic events. African masculinity as shown in the study is constantly transforming due to three significant historical eras which are: the pre-colonial period, colonial period and post-colonial era. These political time periods are constantly impacting how men perceive and enact masculinity, with education, financial resources and political transformation being the driving force.

The five factors that determined father and son relationships in the African tales are hard work, wisdom and knowledge, obedience and disobedience, communication, and reckless behaviour. Hard work was the most prominent factor in father and son relationships, as both fathers and sons in the African fairy tales valued hard work. A hard-working father symbolised a provider and responsible man. Fathers who were the most hard-working in the African fairy tales are Thoko's father and Yusuf's father. Sons who worked hard in the African fairy tales are Thoko and Muniafu. The second significant factor was wisdom and knowledge. The five men who were characterised as wise and knowledgeable in the African

fairy tales are: Abula's father, for his wisdom in handling his son's misbehaviour; the wise old man who gives Yihdego advice about his journey back home; the clever brother who acquires wealth and escapes death; the wise man in Muniafu's village who gives him solutions to his problems; and Sekuru (Farai's grandfather) who imparts ancestral history and knowledge to his grandson. The third factor was obedience and disobedience. In the African fairy tales, the characters who had to obey were the sons; when the sons failed to obey, they were characterised as disobedient. Many sons, such as Abula and Thabo, shifted from being disobedient to obedient after they had learned hard life lessons from their actions. Communication was the fourth factor in determining father and son relationships. Fathers and sons who had a positive relationship communicated well whereas detached and distanced fathers and sons had poor communication. The last factor was reckless behaviour. Reckless behaviour was portrayed by father figures and sons in the African fairy tales. Abula and Thabo are sons who displayed reckless behaviour at some point in their lives whereas Muniafu's uncle is a father figure who displayed irresponsible behaviour.

7.3 The study's contribution to knowledge

The contribution of the study to knowledge is a codification of the types of father and son relationships that exist in African fairy tales. This knowledge can be used to study other African fairy tales based on fathers and sons by using the findings to ascertain if the types of father and son relationships featuring in the stories differ or are similar to the ones presented in this study. It can also be extended to other masculine relationships such as relationships between brothers, men in families and older and younger generation of men in communities. By presenting factors that influence father and son relationships, this literary study adds to knowledge about father and son relationships and what defines them. This knowledge can be used by English teachers in the Intermediate Phase to help their learners think carefully about circumstances that happen in reality between fathers, father figures and sons. Another important contribution of this study is extending knowledge about masculinity and fatherhood. This study showed how a man's masculinity – which is based on his geographical, cultural, political, economic and social location – directly influences how he views and practises fatherhood. The knowledge about how fatherhood and masculinity are intertwined can be used to study the masculine behaviour of fathers in other contexts in Africa and other parts of the world. The knowledge in this study can also be used to

investigate the masculinities that young boys enact in relation to the type of relationships they have with the men in their lives, particularly those in close contact with them such as their fathers and father figures.

7.4 Limitations of the study

In any research project there will be flaws that the researcher cannot control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). These flaws can be related to the methodology, data collection or other aspects of the research project (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). These shortcomings are regarded as limitations and should be clearly outlined as they may influence the research findings (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). A limitation to this study is the geographical location of the authors of the fairy tales. Three regions are represented in the selection: East Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa. Only one fairy tale is from West Africa; the others are from East Africa and Southern Africa. Thus, the selection in terms of geographical location of the authors is not evenly distributed. However, for me these were the most suitable stories to analyse in order to find answers to the research questions. Even within the same geographical locations, for example Southern Africa, the selected fairy tales do not represent everything about father and son relationships in that entire region. Southern Africa is too broad to be represented by five fairy tales in the same way East Africa has a rich diversity of cultures and four fairy tales can never fully encompass that.

7.5 Recommendations

7.5.1 Recommendations for policy

There are five recommendations that I suggest for the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) Grade 4-6 English Home Language. These recommendations are based on the findings and observations made in this study and my experience as an Intermediate Phase English teacher. The first recommendation is that the CAPS policy document for English Intermediate Phase should make it explicit that African fairy tales should be used as learning materials. Currently the CAPS policy document for English Intermediate Phase only says 'fairy tales'; the threat in that is that teachers continue to predominantly use Western fairy tales whereas we are in a decolonisation era in academia. In my school, only two reading

materials are distributed for English Home Language: the first is the Oxford English for Success textbook and the second is the Department of Basic Education English workbook. The Oxford English for Success is filled with texts including fairy tales from Western literature. Therefore, it is important that CAPS makes it explicit that African fairy tales should be prioritised and used over European fairy tales.

The second recommendation for policy is that the policy should give a clear theme for the fairy tales that are to be chosen. For example, CAPS can say for Week 3 and Week 4, fairy tales that are about father and son relationships should be the selected texts and for Week 9 and Week 10 fairy tales that deal with mother and daughter relationships should be the chosen texts. The reason there should be a balance in the themes explored is because of the diversity of circumstances learners are confronted with in their everyday lives. Some learners may not relate to the theme of father and son relationships but can relate to mother and daughter relationships. I also acknowledge that this recommendation may create other problems such as exclusion for learners who are orphans, in single parent households, child headed households, grandparent households and non-heteronormative households. Thus, it is up to the teacher to decide how to handle this in class in a manner that will show sensitivity.

The third recommendation for policy is that CAPS should change the prescribed structure for learning about fairy tales. Currently CAPS suggests that all texts encompass the following format: listening and speaking, reading and viewing, language structures and conventions, and writing and presenting. This structure is good but along with the strict timeframes suggested by CAPS it can be rigid and rob the learners of a chance to learn something meaningful. For fairy tales CAPS can say that learners should start with individual reading and viewing followed by collective reading and viewing. Thereafter, listening and speaking can follow as learners take turns to discuss the fairy tales they have read. Then reading comprehension can come in, and lastly writing and presenting. This will help learners improve their reading and writing skills as teachers will have the opportunity to support them in these activities. At the same time, these activities will cultivate learners' passion for literature and stories.

The fourth recommendation is that CAPS should allow teachers to work with multiple fairy tales in a two-week cycle. Currently CAPS only recommends that teachers select one text that must be done in a two-week cycle. Working with multiple fairy tales will enable learners to make comparisons and engage with the different fairy tales in various ways. The last recommendation is that CAPS should make it compulsory that each grade or class includes a fair representation of authors from different parts of the African continent. This will promote African cultural tolerance which is highly required in South Africa, especially after recurring xenophobic incidents around the country.

7.5.2 Recommendations for practice

There are five recommendations that I suggest for practice, based on the findings of this study and my own experience as a fulltime English Home Language Intermediate Phase teacher. The first recommendation for teachers is that teachers should be critical of the fairy tales they choose. Being critical means teachers should interrogate the text before using it in the lesson and during the lesson as they engage with their learners. This will accomplish two things: the first is that teachers will select content-rich texts and the second is that teachers will teach learners how to apply critical thinking when they read texts.

The second recommendation is that teachers should always choose fairy tales that relate to learners' psychosocial issues. Fairy tales are a light, fun and creative way to address real life issues. So when the teachers select fairy tales that relate to learners' life experiences, they give learners an opportunity to reflect and talk about the challenges they encounter in life. The third recommendation is that teachers should select fairy tales that they will use according to their classroom diversity. Diversity in this case extends beyond race and ethnicity to other differences among learners. These include children who are orphans, children who live in child-headed households, and children with one absent parent. Selecting fairy tales according to classroom diversity will promote social justice as all learners, irrespective of their home situations, will feel welcome and accepted in class.

The fourth recommendation is that teachers should use male-dominated fairy tales to get young boys talking about the social and emotional issues that lead them to self-destructive behaviour. This is because in many African communities boy children are discouraged from talking about their feelings as they have to maintain a type of macho masculine image. This later leads to them growing up to become men who enact toxic masculinity because they never had the opportunity to properly deal with things that were troubling their lives over the years. The fifth recommendation is that teachers should follow their own informed intuition when teaching fairy tales and not dutifully follow the rigid structure that CAPS advises. This is because each learning environment is different, so the situations that educators are confronted with are peculiar and rigidity will never enhance the learning process.

7.5.3 Recommendations for further research

There are four recommendations for further research based on the observations and experiences in this research study. The first recommendation is that scholars should study African masculine representation in children's literature in depth. They should include other male figures in their studies such as the representation of male characters in the workplace in African fairy tales, the relationship between men in African fairy tales, and the representation of relationships between male siblings in African fairy tales. This is because there is a scarcity of studies that examine male characters in depth in African fairy tales.

The second recommendation for further research is that scholars should study masculine representation according to the different parts of the African continent. For example, representation of West African father and son relationships or East African men in professional spaces in fairy tales. This is because men in the different parts of the African continent have different masculine identities according to their cultures and historical context. The third recommendation is that researchers should select a large number of African fairy tales when conducting this type of research as ten fairy tales are not enough. The large number of fairy tales will mean that the data is extensive and can be applied to multiple scenarios.

The last recommendation is for the topic: the representation of father and son relationships. When scholars study representations of fathers, they should analyse single fathers separately, fathers in nuclear family set-up separately, and late fathers separately. Thereafter, they can select a collection of fairy tales with different types of fathers that fit into the same category so they can compare the patterns that emerge in each and how they are different. This will make for richer findings that can be more generalisable.

7.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I concluded the research study titled “The representation of father and son relationships in African fairy tales”. Firstly, I summarised the findings of this research study; this summary includes the types of father and son relationships presented in the study and the factors that determine the father and son relationships. Secondly, I discussed the contribution of this research study to knowledge, which includes how this investigation extends and expands existing knowledge about fatherhood and masculinity. Thirdly, I discussed the limitations of the study; these are the flaws that were outside my control as the investigator. Lastly, I provided recommendations informed by this research study for three things: (1) for policy, that is, the CAPS curriculum; (2) for practice, that is, everyday teaching and learning; and (3) for further research. On the whole, this chapter has brought the study to its end.

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Appendix 1: Ethics waiver certificate



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2022ECE003M

PROJECT TITLE

The representation of father and son relationships in African fairy tales

INVESTIGATOR

HLENGIWE NKOSI

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR

WSoE

DATE CONSIDERED

17 January 2022

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

Approved unconditionally

RISK LEVEL

No Risk

EXPIRY DATE

Report

Date of submission of the Research

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Goldschagg', written over a horizontal line.

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE

CHAIRPERSON

Dr. Paul Goldschagg

cc: Dr Naomi Nkealah

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Departmentethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to theCommittee.

H.Nkosi

Signature

Date

31/01/2022

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