

**THE IMPLICATIONS OF SETSWANA HARE FOLKTALES CONTEMPORARY  
FOR SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN**

by

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DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

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**MARCH 2023**

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to the feminine sources of power and pillars of strength who have always been there for me; my mother, Louisa Boya; my sister, Koketso Boya; my grandmother, Annah Boya; and my late great-grandmother, Lena Boya.

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**ABSTRACT**

In previous research, it has been stated that folktales are primarily told to teach moral lessons to children. However, this study demonstrates that Setswana hare folktales potentially teach the opposite of the intended lessons based on the behaviour of hare characters, which generally contravenes the notion of morality. Behaviour such as violence, murder, theft and manipulation is prevalent in folktales and the hare is often the perpetrator who is seldom caught or punished for his immoral behaviour. Research claims that South Africa is currently experiencing a crisis of moral degeneration through which people employ inappropriate social behaviour. The main concern is that children are exposed to immoral behaviour, thereby posing a potential risk of them mimicking such behaviour displayed by society and in folktales. In this study, potential implications of Setswana hare folktales in terms of the moral degeneration crisis affecting children in contemporary South Africa are investigated. Furthermore, it is revealed that some folktales might perpetuate and justify issues of moral degeneration in society. In this qualitative study, 19 Setswana hare folktales were collected and thematically analysed emphasising the common behaviour portrayed by hare characters. Secondary data on the recent South African incidents depicting behaviour associated with moral degeneration was obtained through perusing popular local newspapers and digital media. This was to demonstrate the degree to which hare folktales mirror the crisis of moral degeneration in contemporary society. The study is based on the Theory of Moral Development, Behaviourist, as well as Functionalist theories. Moral development and behaviourist theories are used to study the behaviour of hare characters and children in society, while the Functionalist Theory is used to study the phenomenon of moral degeneration as social change and folktales as a social construct. A number of folktale studies have been conducted, which have had a positive impact on teaching moral lessons. However, in this study, the very few studies that exposed the potential implications of folktales in perpetuating societal issues are expanded on. The researcher discerns that Setswana hare folktales do not embody moral elements, consequently and potentially perpetuating and justifying the moral degeneration crisis in children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the crisis. It is concluded that Setswana hare folktales may not be effective in instilling morality in children without meaningful intervention.

**Key words:** Behaviour, children, contemporary South Africa, hare character, immoral behaviour, implications, moral degeneration, morality, Setswana folktales

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Folktales are part of indigenous literature narratives encompassing the cultures and traditions of societies that have been passed on from generation to generation through word of mouth. According to Lubambo (2015), African folktales were usually narrated in the evenings after day chores were completed. Moreover, Akoni and Anigala (2022), Mmila (2006) and Malunga (2012) aver that folktales were told by the fireside with family members gathered to buy time. Folktales were told for different purposes in African communities. Lubambo (2015) further mentions that folktales were told for entertainment in emaSwati communities. Similarly, Ngapo (1995), Katide (2017), Dukil and Kitting (2019) and Quintero and Makgabo (2020) add that folktales were told primarily for the purpose of teaching moral lessons to the audience who were usually children.

The researcher observed that moral teaching has gradually been increasingly ineffective in contemporary South Africa, considering the rapid spiraling out of morality in children and adults in society. The KZN Online Government Communication (2020) affirms that “there is a moral decay in communities and the whole of South Africa”. Similarly, they also maintain that society is largely deviating from morality. This confirms the observed immoral behaviour and conduct, such as ill-discipline, bullying, murder and violence in children and adults in schools and communities. The prevalence of this behaviour reflects the growing trend of the moral degeneration crisis affecting children as perpetrators, victims and observers of such immoral behaviour.

In previous research, it has been reported that one of the important functions of folktales is to teach moral lessons (Ngapo, 1995; Motshwari, 1998; Dukil and Kitting, 2019; Quintero and Makgabo, 2020). However, Setswana hare folktales, to some extent, do not seem to serve this function. To attest to this argument, Ashdown (2012:11) states that “many African hare characters are amoral, without social values”. The behaviour of the hare character in folktales does not mirror that of morality, as described in this study. Additionally, the perpetrator of immoral behaviour in folktales often escapes from possible punishment and knows how to cover its tracks and eliminate threats. According to Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007), the hero in hare

folktales, the hare, is frequently flawed because he is portrayed as the smartest character who knows how to lie, steal, deceive, and get away with murder. This does not expose the inappropriateness of immoral behaviours, instead the behaviours are followed by positive outcomes such as getting what is desired and accomplishing missions. This strengthens the argument that hare folktales perpetuate and justify behaviours associated with moral degeneration in that the perpetrator is often not caught. In this respect, it is questionable as to how do Setswana hare folktales teach moral lessons.

With the perceived increase in morally wrong and socially inappropriate behaviours in the children of contemporary South Africa (KZN Online Government Communication, 2020), it is necessary to conduct this study to investigate the possible implications of Setswana hare folktales for moral degeneration crisis affecting children. For this study, 'implication' is adopted to refer to the potential ability to can influence and affect the object. In other words, implications in this study refer to the potential ability of Setswana hare folktales to influence society to adopt behaviours associated with moral degeneration which could potentially affect children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the issue. This is a cause for concern as children are, to some degree, exposed to hare folktales at home and school, and are expected to carry the teachings of folktales to adulthood.

In this study, the researcher studies the possible implications of Setswana hare folktales for justifying and perpetuating behaviours which in our modern societies are associated with moral degeneration. The study provides insights on the behaviour of the hare character in folktales, which were observed to mirror instances of moral degeneration crisis currently occurring in contemporary South Africa as confirmed by popular newspapers including the Daily Sun and Sowetan as well as the digital media such as News24 and eNCA.

## **1.2 Research problem and justification of the study**

It has been observed from previous research that the degeneration of morality in the children of contemporary South Africa is rapidly becoming a national crisis. According to Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011:207), "this moral crisis has negative implications for schools and the society, amongst others the lack of discipline in children, and an

increase in crime and substance abuse, especially among young people”. Additionally, behaviour such as dishonesty, ill-discipline, bullying and violence in children are a concern. Observably, these behaviours appear as a common theme in many Setswana hare folktales. Numerous research indicates that one of the main functions of folktales is to teach morality (Ngapo, 1995; Motshwari, 1998; Chinyowa, 2001; Quintero & Makgabo, 2020). However, based on the behaviour of the hare character, hare folktales do not seem to teach good morals. Since little has been researched on the possibility of folktales in teaching immorality and justifying moral degeneration, the researcher sought to expose moral degeneration as it dominates the behavioural themes of the Setswana hare folktales and reflects more in contemporary societies. This study coincides with the study of Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) who exposed the social issue of child abuse in Setswana folktales. The argument was that some folktales, such as *Monna wa moswagadi* and *Mosetsana Saitane*, perpetuate and justify child abuse occurring in modern society. The present study investigates the social issue of moral degeneration in hare folktales and its potential implications for children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the issue. As mentioned in the introduction, the hare often lies, steals, cheats and kills in folktales, and this kind of behaviour exemplifies behaviour that is perceived to be instances of moral degeneration in contemporary society. The main issue under investigation in this research is that hare folktales might be a possible factor in perpetuating and justifying moral degeneration that affect children. The aim of this study is therefore to investigate the potential implications of hare folktales towards moral degeneration in contemporary South Africa.

### **1.3 Rationale and purpose of the study**

In this research study, an investigation is conducted into the potential implications of Setswana hare folktales for the crisis of moral degeneration affecting children in contemporary South Africa. The behaviour of different hare characters, as well as the themes usually featured in hare folktales, will be analysed to determine the extent to which hare folktales maintain or contradict the concept of morality.

South African society faces a challenge of children and adults who conduct themselves in a morally unacceptable manner. This is realised by government’s initiatives, such as the Moral Regeneration Movement, which attempts to reinvigorate

the endangered morality in contemporary South Africa (South African Government, 2021). Morally wrong and socially inappropriate behaviour is also observed in hare folktales, to which South African children are exposed to a certain degree. Therefore, it is imperative for this study to be conducted to address the possible implications of Setswana hare folktales for the moral degeneration crisis in children in modern society.

The findings of this study could be useful to –

- find a loophole to approach hare folktales so that children do not learn inappropriate behaviour;
- the teaching of hare folktales, emphasising appropriate behaviour to allow children to learn only what is desirable for moral regeneration;
- give pointers for further research, particularly in the literature–psychology interdisciplinary to study the possible relationship between folk narratives and the audience’s behaviour and attitudes toward others in society; and
- recommend strategies to address the moral degeneration crisis through folktales.

The researcher believes that this study reveals the often overlooked possibility of some folktales endangering the moral behaviour and conduct of children, perpetuating and justifying the moral degeneration crisis. The study sheds light on folklorists, folktale narrators, children exposed to folktales and adults, that even though folktales can teach morality, some folktales may, unless meaningful intervention is implemented, teach immorality, thereby perpetuating and justifying the moral degeneration crisis.

This study is guided by a set of primary and secondary research questions, which are discussed in the following section that follows.

#### **1.4 Research questions and objectives**

The following primary and secondary research questions have aided in addressing the research problem, guiding data analysis and interpreting the findings.

### **1.4.1 Primary question**

What are the potential implications of Setswana hare folktales for the current crisis of moral degeneration in the children in South Africa?

### **1.4.2 Secondary questions**

- What common behaviour and conduct of hare characters are featured in Setswana folktales?
- To what extent do hare folktales affect the function of teaching morality?
- How does the moral behaviour of children in contemporary society compare to the behaviour of hare characters in folktales?

## **1.5 Research aim and objectives**

### **1.5.1 Aim**

The main aim of this study is to investigate the potential implications of Setswana hare folktales for the current crisis of moral degeneration affecting children in contemporary South Africa to add to existing attempts for moral regeneration.

### **1.5.2 Objectives**

In addition to the research aim, this study sought to meet the following research objectives to address the research questions:

- To analyse the behaviour of hare characters in Setswana folktales;
- To determine the extent to which hare folktales maintain or contravene the notion of morality;
- To examine manifestations of moral degeneration crisis implicating children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the crisis today;
- To determine how the behaviour of hare characters in folktales could influence the behaviour of children in real life; and
- To investigate possible implications of hare folktales in perpetuating and justifying moral degeneration that affects children.

## 1.6 Research methodology and design

### 1.6.1 Research method

The two common research methodologies, namely qualitative and quantitative methods, are used by various researchers to conduct meaningful research. The present study adopted the qualitative research design to analyse the data and address the research questions. According to Lubambo (2015), qualitative research explores a phenomenon and thoroughly explains it to provide appropriate responses to research questions. Similarly, Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard (2022) assert that the qualitative method is phenomenological and that it helps researchers to interpret and describe data. In the same wise, Mokgoko (2019) cites Blanche et al. (2006) who aver that qualitative researchers seek to understand social circumstances and phenomena as they transpire in the real world. In this study, the researcher sought to make sense of the circumstance of moral degeneration as a social phenomenon affecting children as perpetrators, victims and observers in contemporary South Africa, which is evidently mirrored in Setswana hare folktales that are supposed to teach morality.

The researcher used a qualitative research method as the study is content bound and subjective to the analysis of written texts, including Setswana folktales, popular newspaper articles and digital media. Setswana folktales were selected and analysed to explore behaviours commonly associated with moral degeneration, as depicted by the hare character in these tales. The moral degeneration phenomenon, as portrayed in folktales and in reality, is explored and then explained in detail to provide appropriate responses to the research questions. Moreover, Brynard et al. (2022) assert that in the qualitative method, the researcher's perspective is used as the empirical point of departure. In this study, the researcher's perspective was that Setswana hare folktales do not seem to teach moral lessons to children.

In qualitative research, "the researcher is focused on describing and understanding human behaviour" (Brynard et al., 2022). Similarly, Makgai (2015), as cited by Mokgoko (2019:31), states that a "qualitative method aims to provide an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour". The present research is qualitative as it is also focused on describing the behaviour of children and adults in contemporary South Africa which, according to previous

research, is largely associated with moral degeneration (Masase, 2016; Tinyani, 2018).

### **1.6.2 Research design**

A research design is a strategy that gives guidance to a research study and comprises sampling strategies, data collection and data analysis (Lubambo, 2019). Mokgoko (2019) describes a research design as a plan of how a researcher conducts research.

In this study, a desktop research design is adopted, using various text data sources from the Internet, published journal articles, previous research theses and other relevant sources. The researcher mostly worked on a desktop to gather information about Setswana hare folktales and incidents of real occurrences of the manifestation of moral degeneration affecting children in South Africa. Data on the real occurrences of moral degeneration was based on the recent incidents reported to have occurred around South African communities as featured in popular local newspapers and digital news sites such as the Daily Sun, Sowetan, News24 and eNCA. Local newspapers were selected because the researcher maintains that local news sites will effectively demonstrate the recent trend regarding the incidents that depict moral degeneration in the local context. This design validates the aim and objectives of this research in investigating moral degeneration directly and indirectly affecting South African children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the issue. A literature review was conducted on folktales and the phenomenon of moral degeneration, as investigated in previous research, to assist in addressing the research questions.

### **1.6.3 Data collection**

As a desktop research design has been adopted in this study, a secondary data collection technique was used to collect non-empirical data from various literature sources. Purposive sampling was used to collect 19 Setswana hare folktales. The folktales were chosen for a particular purpose of specifically exposing the behaviour of the hare characters across folktales to make general conclusions about folktales that may expose children to immorality (Lubambo, 2019).

The criteria used to identify and select the folktales included the hare as the main character and it had to be written in Setswana. It was realised that all the selected

folktales had the hare character mentioned in the title – *Mmutla*, interchangeably used with *Mmutle*. However, the researcher used *Mmutla* throughout the analysis. The 19 identified and collected folktales that supported this study are listed below, along with their respective sources:

1. *Tau le Mmutla* (Rantao,1988)
2. *Noko le Mmutle* (Rantao,1988)
3. *Mmutla le Khudu* (Leeuw, Lekome & Mooa, 2016)
4. *Mmutla le Tholo* (Leeuw et al., 2016)
5. *Mmutle le Phiri* (Mohulatsi et al., 2015)
6. *Mmutle le Phokojwe* (Mohulatsi et al., 2015)
7. *Phiri, Mmutla le dijana* (Trok, 2015)
8. *Mmutla o tsietsa tlou gape* (Trok, 2015)
9. *Mohatla wa Haruki* (Nal'ibali Organisation, n.d)
10. *Mmutle le Lekgowa* (Mogapi, 1993)
11. *Mmutle le tlou* (Mogapi, 1993)
12. *Mmutle le diphologolo* (Mogapi, 1993)
13. *Tlholwe le mmutle* (Mogapi, 1993)
14. *Mmutle le sediba sa diphologolo* (Mogapi, 1993)
15. *Mmutle le phokojwe le senonori* (Mogapi, 1993)
16. *Mmutle le tau* (Mogapi, 1993)
17. *Mmutle le diphologolo tse dingwe* (Mogapi, 1993)
18. *Tau le ntšhwe* (Mogapi, 1993)
19. *Mmutla le Tau* (Mogapi, 1993)

The study analyses Setswana hare folktales against the crisis of moral degeneration. Secondary data that describes the extent of moral degeneration was obtained through media perusal of incidents of the issue occurring in society. According to Brynard et al. (2022:54), secondary data is “data collected by other researchers concerning other research problems”. In other words, secondary data includes a readily available factual evidence. The media reports on incidents relating to the degeneration of morality were approached as secondary data which formed a basis for comparative conclusions between Setswana hare folktales and moral degeneration in contemporary society. Media such as popular newspapers including the Daily Sun and Sowetan as well as

the digital media like SABC news, News24 and eNCA formed a significant source of secondary data regarding the incidents associated with moral degeneration reported to have occurred recently in South Africa. The incidents were analysed to determine the degree to which moral degeneration is potentially affecting children in South Africa. Incidents which includes children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the behaviour associated with moral degeneration were collected and analysed in this study.

#### **1.6.4 Data analysis**

This study is analytical qualitative, with non-empirical data being analysed. The researcher used the thematic analysis method to analyse the 19 Setswana hare folktales. Joffe (2011) describes thematic analysis (TA) as –

...a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. Through focusing on meaning across a data set, TA allows the researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences.... This method, then, is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities.

The researcher analysed the behaviour of hare characters. Common behavioural patterns across the folktales were identified and organised into themes. It was observed that these themes contravened the concept of morality, as described in this study. These common patterns of meanings were also observed to mirror the behaviour of children and adults in contemporary South Africa. The themes assisted the researcher in exploring the manifestations of the moral degeneration crisis implicating children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the phenomenon, which has recently occurred in modern society.

#### **1.6.5 Conceptual–theoretical framework**

This study assumed a theory borrowing technique by employing theories from the psychology and sociology disciplines. The Behaviourist Theory and Theory of Moral Development were employed to assist in analysing and understanding the observable behaviour of hare characters in folktales and humans. The Functionalist Theory was employed to explore the phenomenon of moral degeneration as a social change

threatening societal stability and folktales as social constructs serving particular functions in society.

The concept of morality was also used as a comparative tool to compare the behaviour of the hare characters, as well as children and adults in society with acceptable moral standards to determine the extent to which folktales maintain or contravene the presumed function of teaching morality.

## **1.7 Clarification of key terms**

### **1.7.1 Folktales**

Several authors describe the term 'folktales' adopting similar approaches by referring to indigenous narratives that are handed over from one generation to the next through word of mouth. Bascom (1965:4) defines folktales as "prose narratives which are regarded as fiction". Although folktales are fictional, Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1993) maintain that folktales are rooted in the experiences of people. This implies that folktales reflect the generational experiences, culture and beliefs of the people to which folktales are narrated. Similarly, Finnegan (1970) describes folktales as prose narratives that are narrated from generation to generation. These narratives comprise the stories that may have or not have happened in the past; however, folktales should not be confused to dogma or history (Bascom, 1965).

Lubambo (2015) avers that folktales include the different types of oral stories that are told to children for a particular purpose. She further argues that the purpose of folktales is to impart knowledge and entertainment. Most folktales carry a humour element, providing amusement and laughter in children. While some folktales are told because they are funny, Lubambo (2019) acknowledges that they have an additional and important function, such as the element of moral teaching. Ngapo (1995), Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007), Katide (2017) and Quintero and Makgabo (2020) concur that folktales were primarily told to teach moral lessons particularly to children as the target audience. The content of such folktales reprimand inappropriate behaviour and action, and applaud good behaviour in an attempt to instil moral values in children.

This study is based on folktales and is mainly focused on the behaviour of hare characters and its potential ability to can perpetuate behaviour associated with moral degeneration that affects children. The argument is that Setswana hare folktales depict behaviour which contravenes the concept of morality, thus seem to teach the opposite of their intended lessons.

### **1.7.2 Morality**

Morality is a psychosocial phenomenon concerned with discerning between right and wrong, good and bad, or acceptable and unacceptable social behaviour. According to Bull (2010), it is the generally accepted code of behaviour in society that all members of society are subjected to abide by to lead moral lives.

Haidt and Kesebir (2010) explain morality as a culture of not hurting others and not infringing on their rights. A group of people who live together in harmony and who are considerate of others' well-being upholds morality. This reiterates the African philosophy of Ubuntu/botho which, according to Mangwegape (2020:1), simplifies this philosophy to mean that "...we need each other, we create each other and sustain one another..., we owe to each other". The approach of the present study to morality is similar to the former and the latter scholars who coincide that people should not intentionally hurt one another and should always take care of each other as manifestations of morality and Ubuntu/botho.

The study concerns whether the behaviour of the hare character maintains the notion of morality or not. This study is based on the observation that Setswana hare folktales contravene the notion as the hare character is observed to intentionally hurt other characters in folktales.

### **1.7.3 Children**

The term 'child' or 'children' may generally refer to anyone born of somebody. However, the context of this study adopts the definition of children, as stipulated in Chapter 2 of South Africa's Bill of Rights, 1996. According to the Constitutional Court of South Africa (2017) and the Bill of Rights (<https://www.concourt.org.za/index.php/children-s-rights>), a child refers to "a person under the age of 18 years".

The manifestations of moral degeneration occurring in and implicating persons under the age of 18 years as perpetrators, victims and observers of such behaviours, as well as the possible implications of hare folktales influencing children to mimic immoral behaviour are investigated in this study.

#### **1.7.4 Moral degeneration**

The prevalence of wrong, bad and inappropriate social behaviour and activities lead to the deterioration of morality in society (Masase, 2016). This means that the more people adopt unseemly behaviours, the more morality relapses within society. Previous studies such as those conducted by Louw (2009), Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011), Masase (2016) and Tinyani (2018) describe the phenomenon of moral degeneration in the context of decaying, deteriorating, perishing, decreasing and a loss of sense of moral values, attitudes, behaviour and general humanness within modern societies.

In this study, moral degeneration occurs when people behave in a manner that contravenes the set moral standards, social codes and African philosophy of Ubuntu/botho portray a sense of degenerated morality. With the increase in media reports about juvenile delinquency including crime, substance abuse, ill-discipline and violence, society is under threat of the crisis of moral degeneration, especially in children (Louw, 2009). While children as perpetrators of moral degeneration is a concern, they still remain victimised by adults who adopt ill behaviour toward them.

#### **1.7.5 Behaviour**

According to Piaget (1979:xiii), behaviour is “all action directed by organisms toward the outside world to change conditions therein or to change their own situation in relation to these surroundings”.

According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2022) (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/behavior>), behaviour is “the way in which someone conducts oneself”.

A combination of the two definitions of behaviour provided above is adopted in this study. This implies that behaviour in this study refers to the actions by hare characters

in folktales and members of modern society in response to their surroundings. The study is focused on the way the hare character conducts himself in folktales. The manner in which children and adults conduct themselves in society is also examined in the study.

### **1.8 Outline of the study**

In this chapter, the study is introduced with a discussion on the background of the study, research questions, rationale and the problem statement. The research methodology and clarification of key terms are also presented in this chapter.

In Chapter 2, the literature review is presented where previous studies on folktales and morality are reviewed and discussed in relation to the context of the proposed study.

The conceptual-theoretical framework applied in this study is presented in Chapter 3. The Behaviourist Theory, Theory of Moral Development and Functionalist Theory are discussed. The concept of morality, which assisted in investigating the stated problem, as well as the application and limitations of the theories to the study are also stated.

Chapter 4 is aimed at presenting and analysing the data. Summaries of the collected Setswana hare folktales are presented and analysed to identify and discuss the recurring themes featured in the hare folktales. The themes are compared to the concept of morality to determine the extent to which hare folktales maintain or contradict this concept.

In Chapter 5, real-life occurrences of the crisis of moral degeneration affecting children in South Africa are discussed and compared with the thematic data in Chapter 4.

Chapter 6 is aimed at stating general observations and conclusions regarding the possible implications of hare folktales for moral degeneration affecting children in South Africa. Recommendations for future research and teaching hare folktales in combating the crisis of moral degeneration are also presented.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

The study was introduced in this chapter, outlining the background to the study, problem statement, rationale, and research questions that are investigated in this study, as well as the aims and objectives of the study. The research methodology was discussed to describe how the research problem will be investigated. Key terms adopted in the study were also clarified. Lastly, the outline of the study was presented in this chapter.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, existing literary works of other scholars on folktales and the phenomenon of moral degeneration affecting society are presented. It outlines folktales as a form of folklore that serves imperative functions in society. The moral, cultural and recreational functions of folktales are reviewed, as inferred by previous research. Other significant facets of the study of folktales, such as characterisation, narratological setting and the setting of telling folktales, are discussed in this chapter to provide a sensible and sufficient review of African folktales. Some of the scholarly works reviewed are not specific to Setswana folktales; nevertheless, in this study, the Batswana societies are viewed as belonging to the larger African society. This implies that Setswana folktales share similar elements and serve similar functions when compared with other African folktales. This literature review begins with a general discussion on African folklore and folktales. It then focuses on hare folktales and moral degeneration as a societal crisis. A part of this review evaluates individual previous papers on folktales chronologically to highlight the common trend in research knowledge over the years. The chapter indicates that previous research has focused more on the positive impacts of folktales in developing morality and not on the possibility of perpetuating and justifying moral degeneration in society. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to extend on the research gap identified in Chapter 1 and provide a basis for the problem under study.

### 2.2 Heritage of African folklore

Initially, African people were not a writing nation; however, they secured and preserved their culture and tradition through word of mouth. Malunga (2012:3) attests to this by saying that –

the African cultural heritage suffered from a culture of non-documentation. African culture was passed on from generation to generation through oral instruction, stories, mythologies, rituals and ceremonies, and customs.

African people often told stories in the oral tradition to communicate and preserve their culture and tradition. William Thomas, a literature scholar, coined the term ‘folklore’ to describe the oral tradition of telling stories in 1846 “after realising that scholarly works

on this field were conducted under different names such as popular antiquities and popular literature” (Lubambo, 2019:1). In this study, the term ‘folklore’ is used over other names to refer to this notion.

Many authors, including Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007), Malebye (2015) and Quintero and Makgabo (2020), define folklore adopting similar approaches, and they seem to all point to folklore as a formulation of traditions and culture in oral narratives. Lubambo (2019:1) describes folklore as “a generic term where traditional beliefs, customs, and verbal art are comprehended” through word of mouth. Similarly, Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) define folklore as the body of verbal expressive culture, such as tales, legends, oral history, popular beliefs, and proverbs comprising the oral tradition of a certain group of people of the same ethnicity. In simpler terms, folklore can be defined as a form of culture shared by a specific group of people through oral tradition, and it encompasses traditions common to that group. Therefore, the position of folklore in African societies goes beyond being a mere collection of stories, but a paramount heritage and vehicle for the effective teaching and learning of African culture and tradition.

Folklore exists in African societies as a wide range of oral narratives. Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007:436) provide forms of folklore, including “tales, legends, oral history, proverbs, jokes, and popular beliefs”. Lubambo (2019) also identifies other forms of folklore, including proverbs, myths, riddles, fables and folktales.

The present study is focused only on folktales as a type of folklore. Folktales have been and still are vital to the Batswana people as a medium of passing information on to generations, culture and tradition through the oral narration of stories.

## **2.3 Folktales**

### **2.3.1 Folktales defined**

Bascom (1965:4) defines folktales as “prose narratives which are regarded as fiction”. He further insinuates that folktales are not dogma or history, that they may or not have happened, and are not to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, these narratives serve significant functions in the lives of the Batswana people.

Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1993) define folktales as narratives that are rooted in the experiences and thoughts of people or groups. Finnegan (1970) describes folktales as narratives passed on from generation to generation. Bascom (1965), Finnegan (1970) and Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson (1993) describe folktales as narratives that date from generations back. From this view, it can be deduced that folktales are popular stories handed down from generation to generation, originally through the oral tradition.

In his description, Bascom (1965) further distinguishes folktales into subtypes that include human tales, animal tales, trickster tales, moral tales and fables. Similarly, Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) cite Carney (2006) who distinguishes folktales into seven categories, namely cumulative tales, talking beast stories, humorous tales, realistic stories, religious tales, romances and tales of magic. All the hare folktales collected for this study can be categorised between animal tales and talking beast stories. Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) describe talking beast stories as narratives in which animals talk and act similar to the way in which humans talk and act. In the Setswana hare folktales that were collected, all the characters are animals that talk and act similar to the way humans in which humans talk and act.

### **2.3.2 Types of Setswana folktales**

Several scholars such as Bascom (1965) and Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) categorise folktales into various types; however, scholars who specifically study Setswana folktales, present only four major types of Setswana folktales. Leeuw et al. (2016) distinguish between *mainane* (fables), *dianelabatho* (human tales), *dikinane* (myths) and *dinoolwane* (legends) as types of Setswana folktales. Similarly, Ngapo (1995) classifies Setswana folktales into the same four types and maintains that this classification is the most common for Setswana folktales. This sub-subsection discusses the four types of Setswana folktales.

#### **2.3.2.1 Fables (*Mainane*)**

Fables (*mainane*) are tales that narrate stories using animals as primary characters and are often written from the creative imagination of the narrator. This means that there are no reality and truthful events in fables (Leeuw et al., 2016). Malebye (2015) claims that characters in *mainane* are only animals, but Ngapo (1995) and Leeuw et

al. (2016) argue that human beings may also appear as secondary characters in fables. Although most characters are animals, human elements appear through the personification of animals that assume humanly roles in the story. They portray humanly behaviours, talk, build, marry and bury one another as if they are humans (Leeuw et al., 2016). The Setswana hare folktales collected for this study all feature only animal characters that assume human roles and behaviours. Only one human character, the white man, appears in one of the collected folktales, in other words, *Mmutle le Lekgowa* (Mogapi, 1993).

### **2.3.2.2 Human tales (*Dianelabatho*)**

According to Ngapo (1995), human tales, commonly known as *dianelabatho* in Setswana, are tales that feature human beings as main characters. Although human beings are primary characters, animals may also appear as secondary characters; however, to a certain degree of limitation, such as an animal featured as a pet in the story. This varies from fables, as described earlier, which feature animals as primary characters and humans as secondary. Leeuw et al. (2016) state that the secondary animal characters in *dianelabatho* are often personified and portray humanly behaviours such as jealousy, love and cleverness. Similar to Ngapo (1995), Leeuw et al. (2016) argue that human tales also include magic and mystical events that form part of the supernatural beliefs of indigenous African societies. This postulates that human tales relate closely to human beings' way of life.

### **2.3.2.3 Myths (*Dikinane*)**

*Dikinane* are prose narratives that are considered truthful and believed to have occurred in the remote past within the society in which they are narrated (Ngapo, 1995). Society perceives myths as truthful even though they do not have sound evidence that they have indeed happened. Bascom (1965:4) alludes that myths are "accepted on faith; they are taught to be believed, and they can be cited as authority in answer to ignorance, doubt, or disbelief". Myths are often used to account for the mysteries of nature, dogma and sacredness of some beliefs and rituals. According to Leeuw et al. (2016), characters in myths are mythical gigantic beings, animals and ancient heroes such as *Dimo* in *Mmutle le Tholo* (Leeuw et al., 2016). They further claim that myths seek to answer questions regarding the interaction between God, ancestors, human beings and nature, which a non-believer cannot explain.

#### 2.3.2.4 Legends (*Dinoolwane*)

*Dinoolwane* are tales that reflect on the history of tribal groupings, heroes of the past, wars and traditional chieftainship (Leeuw et al., 2016). It is widely believed that legends feature true events that may have occurred in the past. For this reason, *dinoolwane* are sometimes referred to as *dikahisetori* – historical tales. However, Malebye (2015) claims that people who narrate *dinoolwane* to children sometimes add events that are not included in the original tale or have never occurred in the past. This means that *dinoolwane* might or might not have occurred exactly as they are told in the tales. Therefore, the element of truth in the tales becomes flawed. Similarly, the credibility of *dinoolwane* to tell history lacks and needs to be regularly questioned through research. Observably, there are very few legends in Setswana literature. The most common legend tells the story of the culture and tradition of Batswana from ancient times, such as *Tlholego ya Bahurutshe le Barolong* – the origin of the Bahurutshe and Barolong (Leeuw et al., 2016).

#### 2.3.3 Narratological setting

The events in folktales are annotated with location and time as components of setting. Setswana folktales were typically told during the evenings around the fireplace (Mmila, 2006). This illustrates the setting of performance which describes the time and place at which folktales are narrated – story time. Apart from the setting of performance, the narratological setting is also important when studying folktales. According to Smith (1990), a narratological setting describes when and where events of the story occurred. It particularly asks two questions about the story, namely where the event was and when it took place. This setting is divided into narratological time and narratological location.

Narratological time assists in making sense of the order of events in folktales. One event occurs at a specific time before or after another event. The main function of narratological time is to realise the moments, seconds, hours, weeks, months or years at which an action performed by characters or any other event takes place. Most of Setswana folktales use opening phrases to introduce the story. It can be argued that opening phrases are a description of the time at which the events occurred. Folktales such as *Bilo le Bilwane* (Mogapi, 1993:38-39) use “*ga twe bogologotala...*” and “*go kile ga bo...*”, which translates to ‘long, long ago’ (Ngapo, 1995) and ‘once upon a

time', respectively. According to Smith (1990), 'once upon a time' "indicates that the story is set in the indefinite period...". This means that all Setswana folktales that begin with either of the opening phrases are set in olden times. Sone (2018:143) describes folktales as an "age-long tradition" that is passed on from generation to generation.

Time frames such as day, night and seasons appear in folktales either by stating the time or describing it. Folktales show time by stating the actual period of the event such as 'at the ninth hour, at day or night, today or tomorrow'. For example, in the folktale *Senanapo* (Mogapi, 1993:30), "Letsatsi lengwe..." – some day – is used to describe the time a group of girls invited Senanapo to fetch wood with them. Similarly, in the folktale *Tselane* (ibid:83-85), "Kgantele..." is used to refer to the time when an event occurred 'earlier'.

Some folktales describe the characteristics and conditions associated with the time at which an event occurred. Weather conditions such as cold temperatures, cloudy, overcast or blazing sun assist in determining the time of an event. As an example, the folktale *Mmutla le Khudu* (Leeuw et al., 2016) describes a situation where *Khudu* (tortoise) becomes tired as a result of racing with *Mmutla* (hare) in the extreme heat of the blazing sun – "O ne a lapile a utlwaletswe ke mogote..." (ibid:10), which translates to 'he was tired and feeling hot'. Although the folktale does not mention a specific time, hot weather is commonly associated with summer times. In yet another folktale, namely *Mmutle le Tau* (Mogapi, 1993:17-18), the condition of the clouds can be used to deduce time. To illustrate this, "...maru a kwetoga" (ibid) translates to 'rain clouds gather' and it can be concluded that it is commonly during rainy seasons when it is likely to rain.

### 2.3.4 Characterisation

Similar to other folklore narratives, folktales feature characters that take part in the development of the plot of the tale. The construction of these characters varies according to unique folktales. Finnegan (1970:346) argues that characterisation "vary in different areas and according to different narrations". This means that the type of folktale determines the characters featured in the folktale. The characters' behaviour and appearance are also largely influenced by the theme of the folktale. Although most folktales feature various characters, the theme and plot of the folktale revolves around

the main character around whom the main events of the folktale are centred. While the type of folktale determines the featured characters, Finnegan (1970) also mentions that folktales may be differentiated based on the main characters.

According to Quintero and Makgabo (2020), African folktales reflect a culture where animals abound, which is no exception to Setswana folktales where the hare, monkey, lion, crocodile and tortoise commonly appear. Considering the type of folktales collected For this study, Setswana hare folktales are classified as animal tales or fables as they are commonly known. In animal tales, characters often featured are primarily animals; nevertheless, Ngapo (1995) mentions that human figures may also appear as secondary characters. It was observed that all the characters in the collected hare folktales are animals, with the hare being the main character. These animals are commonly personified and portrayed as “thinking and acting like human beings, in a human setting” (Finnegan, 1970:337). This is observed in the behaviour and actions of the characters in folktales, which mirror those of humans. Similarly, Quintero and Makgabo (2020:40) aver that “these animals and birds take on human characteristics of greed, jealousy, honesty, loneliness, and so on”. This is evident in the Setswana personified subject pronouns of ‘o’/’ba’ – he/she/you/they, which are often used to refer to animals or non-living characters brought to life in folktales. Finnegan (1970:337) further states that “the animals act like human characters, experiencing human emotions” in response to situations similar to those that humans are likely to encounter in their lives.

To comprehend these characters, “readers tend to resort to their knowledge about real people” (Jannidis et al., 2013). This elucidates that the scenes in folktales are very close to reality, in trying to bring reality into narratives. Quintero and Makgabo (2020) add to this idea that many insightful lessons are learnt through the behaviour of characters in folktales as the audience can relate to the characters and events of the story. Although the events in folktales are fictional, the personified behaviour of animals and non-living characters still persist and encompass valuable lessons.

When studying characters in narratives, two important aspects of characterisation are taken into account, namely character and appearance. The aspect of character concerns the behaviour, actions and personality of characters, while the aspect of

appearance is focused on the characteristics of the physique of characters, as described in the stories. Despite the equal significance of the two aspects in understanding characterisation in narratives, in this study, only the aspect of character is adopted to evaluate the behaviour and actions of hare characters across the collected Setswana folktales to address the problem stated and achieve the set aim and objectives.

According to Jannidis et al. (2013), “to understand a character in a fictional text, one need only to analyse its role in the action”. It can be argued that a character’s role in narration is best observed by studying the behaviour and personality of the character concerned. In this regard, the hare is analysed in terms of its behaviour and actions, as portrayed in the collected Setswana folktales, to determine its role in the narrations. Moreover, the role of hare characters is, therefore, used to determine the possible implications of hare folktales for the moral behaviour of children in contemporary society in that narrations can influence the behaviour and attitudes of the target audience. Hoeken (2017) asserts that stories can have an impact on what people view to be true, believe to be good and how they conduct themselves. This emphasises the main argument in this study, that some behaviours of characters in folktales may impact how children exposed to the folktales behave and that they believe to be true and good conduct to adopt in social settings.

The most commonly used labels for characters focus on their role in the story. Jannidis et al. (2013) identify the protagonist and antagonist as the two commonly used character labels in narration. They describe the protagonist as the main character in the narrative and the antagonist as its main opponent. In simpler terms, the antagonist opposes the plans and actions of the protagonist. This proposes the notion that folktale narratives typically begin with the protagonist having a plan to achieve a certain goal. The antagonist interferes and hinders the protagonist from administering his or her intentions in the story. In their study, Porteous and Lindsay (2019) attest to this impression by contrasting the role of the protagonist and the antagonist in narration. They describe protagonists as “relatively simple agents”, which entails that “they have some goal that they wish to achieve, and they make a plan that they hope will lead them to achieve it” (Porteous & Lindsay, 2019:1 070). Moreover, they describe the role of antagonist characters as “act(ing) as the force of opposition to interfere and obstruct

the protagonist in achieving their goals” (ibid, 2019:1 071). Taking characterisation into account, determining the role of a character in a folktale should start by studying the behaviour, personality and intentions of that character. Although this study does not dwell much on the labelling of characters, it remains paramount that the main character is known because in this study, it is believed that the audience of folktales is more interested in the main character than any other characters in narration. Moreover, the audience may choose to emulate a lot from the character they admire. For this particular reason, the present study is focused on analysing the behaviour and conduct of the main character, namely the hare, to determine which type of behaviours children are likely to mimic from the collected hare folktales, and how those behaviours maintain or contravene the notion of morality.

It was observed when perusing the tales that the same animals are persistently featured as characters in many African folktales. The same animal typically portrays common behaviours and assumes similar roles across the various types of African folktales, despite the theme variance. For this study, hare characters are studied across the collected Setswana folktales. The behaviour displayed by hare characters is used to determine the extent to which folktales affect the notion of morality.

A review of published Setswana hare folktales reveals recurring behavioural and personality traits of the hare, to which previous studies attest. In her dissertation titled ‘The social function of Setswana folktales’, Ngapo (1995:5) describes the hare character as the “most common and popular animal trickster in Setswana”. She adds that the hare is a small animal, yet wily and cunning. Similarly, Chinyowa (2001) describes the hare as a popular trickster and identifies deceit, pretence, cunning, wit and disguise as the common devices of the hare character in many African folktales. In the same vein, Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) argue that the main character in folktales, for example, the hare, is often flawed in that he knows how to lie, steal and get away with murder.

### **2.3.5 Setting of telling Setswana folktales and folktale tellers**

Although folktales may be regarded as stories similar to any other, Setswana folktales were set to be narrated in a unique setting. Grandparents played a key role in transferring stories and values to children growing up (Malunga, 2012). In the

evenings, grandparents narrated folktales to the children as a form of entertainment and teaching of tradition and culture.

In their study, Akoni and Anigala (2022:18) reflect on their childhood when they used to “listen to the folktales told outside the house, under the moon, with different siblings sitting down in different corners”. They suggest that this setting was part of their daily routine growing up. Folktales were only narrated during the night to guard against interfering with the day’s chores. Similarly, Mmila (2006:75) describes this setting by saying that “a common context for telling *mainane* in a Setswana society is in the evenings around the fireplace when the day's work is over to pass away the evening pleasantly”.

While the primary reason for narrating folktales at night was to guard against interfering with the day’s work, some scholars speculate that it was taboo to tell a folktale during the day. Smith (1940:65) alleges that some tribes believe that “you will go bald if you tell them during the day”. In a study of Nigerian folktales, Lamela (2020:138) mentions that in Nigeria, it is believed that “everyone who told stories during the day would grow a nail on his bottom”. Similarly, Seboni (2010) also alludes that Bapedi people believe anyone who tells a folktale during the day will grow horns. In yet another study, Cole-Beuchat (1958:188) divulges that in the Tsonga culture, “if a child tells a tale during the day, he will be told that his parents might die if he does such a thing”. It can be concluded that these beliefs across different tribes result from the impression that no daytime work should be disturbed by storytelling and that folktales should be told in the evenings during leisure time after all the work has been completed.

In her study of magic in Setswana folktales, Motshwari (1998) holds that folktales maintain a dialogue relationship between the narrator and the audience. Malunga (2012) perceives grandparents as key role players in storytelling. Motshwari (1998:20) further demonstrates a typical dialogue between a grandmother and her audience:

**Grandmother:** *Ga twe e kile ya re:* (It is said once upon a time)

**Audience:** *jalo, jalo:* (and so on...)

The preceding quotation typically appears at the beginning of the narration of folktales, and Motshwari (1998) describes it as the opening formula. Additionally, Motshwari (1998:19) mentions the closing formula as '*E felela fa*' (It ends here) to indicate that the narrative has ended.

Some researchers, such as Kganyago (2000), indicate this as two introductions and two endings in Setswana folktales. He states that usually the narrator starts with one of the two opening phrases, namely *ga twe e rile* (It is said) or *bogologolotala go ne go le* (Once upon a time).

Similar to Motshwari (1998), Kganyago (2000) describes opening phrases as dialogues between the narrator and the audience. Kganyago (2000) typically illustrates the dialogue as follows:

**Narrator:** *Ga twe e rile/bogologolotala go ne go le...* (It is said/long-long ago there was...)

**Audience:** *Keleketla*

The audience's response, namely *jalo jalo* and *keleketla* are an affirmation to the narrator that they are listening and he/she may continue with the folktale.

The two typical closing formulas, according to Kganyago (2000:71), are '*ya bo e nna tsona tsotlhe*' (That is all) and '*gotlo ke leo*'. The closing formulas, which may also be referred to as folktale endings, indicate that narration has ended.

## 2.4 Functions of folktales

Folktales play a significant role in the lives of African people. In her study of Siswati folktales, Lubambo (2019) pronounced that folktales have since been used to educate, warn, direct and instil knowledge and culture in young children. The general use of folktales is to teach tradition; however, this study presents three functions reported by many folktale scholars in their various inquiries, namely the functions of morality, culture and recreation.

### 2.4.1 Moral function

According to Amali (2014:89), “folktales are an integral part of the African oral society”. This means that the life of an indigenous African person evolved around the teachings of folktales through the message delivered by folktales. Amali (2014) further mentions that folktales serve as sources of tradition, thereby educating children about the aspects of controlling and maintaining order in society.

Dukil and Kitting (2019:5 523) argue that the tradition of folktales “contain[s] elements of teaching and moral education especially for children”. Research on the functions of folktales reflects the element of moral education. Ngapo (1995), Katide (2017) and Quintero and Makgabo (2020) agree that the element of moral education in folktales is directed at children to instil desirable and socially acceptable behaviour and conduct in them. Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) coincide with these scholars and acknowledge that folktales are bound to embody moral and value-teaching elements. In this study, it is acknowledged that folktales embody moral elements; however, some folktales seem to lack the moral teaching element based on the behaviour of the characters and themes often featured in some folktales.

Young African people learn about appropriate and moral behaviour from their family as they grow (Katide, 2017). The teachings assist children to act in a moral manner and model good behaviour in society. This occurs with the objective of moving toward moral regeneration. One effective way of addressing moral degeneration is the use of the teachings of folktales that were observed to embody moral teachings.

Amali (2014:89) states that the significance of teaching folktales to children includes “building of character, behaviour, social attitude and intellect”. Similarly, Hazarika and NET (2019:62) also assert that “people used these oral tales to teach moral lessons to their own children”. According to several scholars, one main function of folktales revolves around teaching good behaviour and moral lessons. Correspondingly, Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007:439) argue that “folktales are used as a teaching aid for children to instil good behaviour”, which is desirable and acceptable to moral standards in society. Amutabi (2018:204) enhances this impression that “the most important function of folktales is ... teaching of the moral lesson in it”. In this regard, folktales may have a paramount impact on the societal values and beliefs about

behaviour and conduct from childhood to adulthood, and from generation to generation in that children exposed to the folktales are taught moral lessons through their content.

Research, such as that of Ngapo (1995), Katide (2017) and Lubambo (2019), has been conducted into the element of moral education in folktales. Research has adequately illustrated that folktales encompass moral lessons and were primarily narrated to teach morality to children and adults in African societies. However, there is a research gap in the possible implications of some folktales, which observably depict behaviours associated with moral degeneration, thus they do not seem to encompass moral lessons for the degenerating morality of children in contemporary society. The moral degeneration depicted in Setswana hare folktales has been limitedly addressed in previous research. This research fills the gap by analysing the potential implications of Setswana hare folktales for influencing behaviour of moral degeneration by and affecting children in modern South Africa.

#### **2.4.2 Culture function**

Folktales are often referred to as embodiments of African wisdom; a heritage carried from generation to generation. Lubambo (2019:26) argues that “folktales are rich in culture, Ubuntu/botho and philosophy: losing them would be tantamount to losing one's identity”. The culture, norms and values embodied in folktales constitute the identity of an African person, which one is taught from a young age and is often expected to uphold into adulthood.

One way of preserving culture and instilling African societal norms and values was by creatively using folktale narration such that the folktales carry out particular societal beliefs and values to the audience. Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018) insinuate that folktales were used to validate and safeguard society's cultural values. Folktales were one method that traditional society used to ensure that its cultural practices were promoted, secured and preserved for future generations.

The famous African philosophy of Ubuntu/botho has always been widely upheld and encouraged in African societies. Children are taught the significance of this philosophy and encouraged to carry it with them into adulthood. Mangwegape (2020) studied Ubuntu/botho as a concept that has always governed the Batswana societies. Her

study examined Ubuntu/botho as depicted in Setswana drama texts as a form of indigenous literature texts. The study effectively illustrated that literature texts embody the concept of Ubuntu/botho. One can argue that some folktales as a form of indigenous literature, namely folklore, also encompass Ubuntu/botho lessons and messages in an attempt to teach the target audience the significance of the Ubuntu/botho culture.

Mangwegape (2020) and Eze (2015) concur that the culture of Ubuntu/botho is of the perspective that one is through others, that everyone should be treated as belonging to oneness and that we need each other to sustain one another. This implies that Ubuntu/botho culture encourages the togetherness of people in African societies. The culture of Ubuntu/botho is also evident in folktales such as *Molao wa popagano* – the law of togetherness (Rantao, 1988). In this folktale, an old man asked his children to try break a pile of wood; however, as the bunch was tied together, none of the children were able to break the wood. The old man used this event as an indication that when people remain together, nothing will ever break them apart. The morale behind this folktale is to encourage people to live together in harmony, care for one another and help each other to uphold the culture of Ubuntu/botho in society. Through the teachings of some folktales, important aspects of culture are instilled in children who are narrated these folktales, thereby serving the important cultural function of folktales.

### 2.4.3 Recreational function

According to Smith (1940:64), the most obvious function of folktales is “the recreative use of the tales”. This means that folktales are widely used for entertainment by African societies. Similarly, Akoni and Anigala (2022) state that folktales are a source of humour and entertainment, which helps children deal with personal and social dilemmas while growing up. It was a norm for African people that after a long day of work and supper, there was a time for recreation. Folktales were told in the oral tradition before they were written, and this was done to buy time during the long cold winter evenings by the fireplace. In the olden days, folktales served as a comic relief to provide entertainment and relaxation after a long day of hard work on farms (Binta, 2018).

In modern society, folktales are usually written and read. They are not orally told as they were in the olden days. However, folktales still serve the same purpose. The recreational use of folktales can still play a paramount role in people's state of mind and well-being, even in modern times. Smith (1940) mentions that in modern society, if one ever does read a folktale, they read it to amuse themselves.

According to Dukil and Kitting (2019), folktales have humour elements. They mention elements such as humorous jokes, wonders and beautiful stories that can entice the listeners' interest and attention to the folktale. These elements create a fun narrative atmosphere that keeps listeners present in the moment and throughout the narration of the folktales.

Another significant element of recreation in the life of an African person is songs. In her study of songs in Zulu folktales, Ntuli (2010:216) states that "to the Zulu the singing of songs is an essential element of their lives and culture". This is no exception for the Batswana people.

For entertainment, many Setswana folktales contain songs that form part of the narration. Folktales such as *Tiholwe le mmutle* (Mogapi, 1993:19-20) feature a song. After killing Tiholwe, the hare started singing in rejoice:

*'nakana tsa ga tiholwe le mmutle,  
Tiholwe ke mosimane...  
E rile ba rutana bongaka,  
Tiholwe ke mosimane,  
Tiholwe a swa, mmutle a sala  
Pee, pee, pee!  
Tiholwe ke mosimane.*

Tiholwe's and hare's horns,  
Tiholwe is a young boy...  
When they were teaching each other traditional healing,  
Tiholwe is a young boy,  
Tiholwe died, hare remained  
Pee, pee, pee!  
Tiholwe is a young boy.

In the folktale *Tselane* (Mogapi, 1993:83-85), the mother of the young girl, Tselane, used to bring her food at her house. The mother always sang a song to let Tselane know that she had arrived with food. The mother sang:

*Tselane...ngwanaka,  
Ntlo-ntlo o tseye bogobe o je,  
Tselane...ngwanaka.*

Tselane...my child  
Come-come take food and eat,  
Tselane...my child.

According to Kganyago (2000:73-74), folktale songs may be used as “a means of audience involvement, to dramatise action..., to convey the theme and to reveal characters”. In this sense, folktale songs are in close meaning to the theme and message delivered by folktales. This means that the songs do not exist in isolation, but that they are part of folktales and are in line with developing the plot. Moreover, Ntuli (2010:217) argue that one function of a folktale song is “to a certain degree to tell the story in the form of a song”. This means that songs add to the theme and storyline of folktales. Ntuli (2010) suggests that it becomes easier to follow the storyline of a folktale as the theme is revealed through narration and song.

The narrator drives the folktale; however, he/she may involve the audience in narration. The narrator may sing the folktale song alone to infuse life into the tale; nevertheless, the audience may also actively participate in the narration by singing along as part of the entertainment. Ntuli (2010) mentions that this is very interesting and fun for the audience. However, the song may trigger sad emotions depending on the theme of the folktale and the message that the song intends to deliver.

## **2.5 Hare folktales**

Even though folktales are allegedly narrated to children to teach them good behaviour and moral values, many hare folktales do not seem to serve this purpose. According to Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007:440), the hare character in folktales is often “portrayed as the clever one because he knows how to lie, steal, cheat and get away with murder”. These traits are commonly associated with moral degeneration and exemplify behaviour that contravenes the notion of morality, as described in this study.

This is in contrast with what research has stated about folktales, that they teach moral lessons (Ngapo, 1995).

In her study of Setswana folktales, Ngapo (1995:5) portrays the hare as “the most common and popular animal trickster in Setswana”. She contends that even though the hare is a small animal, it is wily and cunning. In Setswana folktales, the hare often cheats and outsmarts bigger and more powerful animals. “The hare character is frequently used in African folklore to denote one who is clever and tricky” (Ashdown, 2012:10). This is not in line with morality, as described in this study. Ashdown (2012:11) further argue that “many African Hare characters are amoral, without social values and use trickery as a means of hurting others purely for amusement.” It can therefore be argued that hare folktales seem to lack a moral function and are likely to expose children to traits of immoral behaviour, thereby perpetuating the adoption of bad, wrong and inappropriate behaviours. Any child mirroring the hare’s behaviour does not lead to moral conduct. Therefore, the rationale of this study is to investigate whether Setswana hare folktales might perpetuate and justify moral degeneration affecting children.

The following section reviews contemporary studies of African folktales. It is focused on summarising the main points of each study, methodologies used, findings, conclusions reached, and recommendations made. In this section, views of studies are compared and contrasted to identify similar trends across various folktale studies. Studies are reviewed in chronological order with the earliest first and the most recent last.

## **2.6 Previous studies on Setswana folktales**

### **2.6.1 Serekoane (1996)**

Serekoane (1996) explores the trickster behaviour that prevails in Setswana folktales. She identifies trickster folktales and the leading characters involved in trickery in these folktales. The hare takes the lead in the characters that are depicted as trickster figures.

Serekoane (1996) adopted Propp and Dundes’ theories of folktale analysis. Propp’s theory is focused on the structural analysis of folktales. Folktales are analysed

according to the types of actions in the story and these actions are referred to as the functions performed by different characters. While the present study is not concerned with the structure of folktales, it may be useful to apply Propp's theory to analyse characters' actions to determine the functions present in these folktales. This has enabled the present study to illustrate the plot, theme and morale of the story in the selected folktales. It was found that not all 30 functions of Propp are relevant to the trickster tales. Serekoane (1996) identified only eight functions as being relevant to her study, namely, lack, absentation, interdiction, trickery, escape, gloat, pursuit and consequences. The study defined the functions and described how they occur in the Setswana trickster tales. Her description of the function of trickery is the most relevant to the present study.

According to Serekone (1996:33), "trickery is a popular function in Tswana trickster tales". Trickery occurs when the villain tries to deceive his or her victims to steal their belongings, run away from responsibility, shift the blame or to succeed in their cunning. Similar to Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) and Ashdown (2012), Serekoane (1996) portrays the hare as the famous trickster character in Setswana folktales. The hare commonly tricks bigger animals to get what he wants. He is a killer who is full of pretense, a thief, a liar and a cheat. It is notable that this kind of behaviour is against the social codes predetermined by society and are considered immoral. Although in her study, she was more interested in identifying and describing how trickery is depicted in Setswana folktales and not in the possible influence of trickster tales on society, Serekoane (1996:42) acknowledges that "the actions of trickster characters are socially unacceptable". This statement justifies the present study as previous research convincingly holds that folktales teach what is socially acceptable; however, unacceptable behaviour such as trickery prevails in folktales. Arguably, some folktales, such as the hare folktales in the context of the present study, might negatively implicate the moral behaviour of children who are exposed to these folktales.

### **2.6.2 Chinyowa (2001)**

Chinyowa (2001) explored the phenomenon of African storytelling, with a focus on Shona folktales, as pedagogical tools to communicate through the powerful knowledge

and wisdom of African people. In this article, the author used a popular Zimbabwean Shona trickster folktale, titled “*Tsuro Nedzimwe Mhuka*” – The hare and other animals (Chinyowa, 2001:20-22), to illustrate the potential of storytelling in accomplishing a positive contemporary social change. If storytelling has the potential of encouraging positive social change, it may also have the potential of perpetuating negative social change such as the current crisis of moral degeneration which occurs as people’s behaviour and actions spiral away from the notion of morality.

First, Chinyowa (2001) described the role of the narrator in African storytelling and labels this role as the “artist” in narration. Similar to the Setswana society, as highlighted by Motshwari (1998), Chinyowa (2001:19) mentions that in a traditional Shona society, the storyteller is commonly an old woman who –

proclaims the moral laws of society through story, song and dance, and in the process, created the mental images and ethical principles that ultimately guided the people’s lives.

The foregoing quote attests to what previous scholars have indicated about folktales, that they teach moral lessons (Ngapo, 1995; Sone, 2018; Quintero and Makgabo, 2020). The fact that the moral factor of folktales recurs in numerous studies and folktales convincingly strengthens the reliability of society on folktales in maintaining positive social codes. It also illustrates that the potential negative influence of folktales on morality has been evaded by many scholars. The present study, therefore, seeks to evaluate the potential negative implications that folktales might have on the moral behaviour of children and perpetuating moral degeneration, taking into account the behaviour of hare characters and themes often featured in Setswana folktales.

Secondly, Chinyowa (2001) evaluated what he called “pedagogical possibilities”. These are the four possible levels in which the Shona folktales can be employed by Zimbabwean societies for social change, namely “the aesthetic level”, “the behavioural level”, “the cognitive level” and “the emotional level”. The levels are aimed at developing the audience of folktales, particularly children, into better members of society who obey the set social norms and display appropriate behaviours within the respective level. In other words, the objective is to appreciate the aesthetic nature of folktales, adopt good behaviour, enhance cognitive skills and develop the emotional

sensitivity of children through the narration of folktales. In comparison to the present study, the four pedagogical possibilities are likened to the functions of folktales, as described earlier in this study, namely the function of morality, culture and recreation. The four pedagogical possibilities, as posited by Chinyowa (2001), are described below, beginning with the behavioural level, which is most applicable to the present study:

- **Behavioural level:** According to Chinyowa (2001:25), the behavioural level is concerned with “how the story socialises the individual into the moral ethics...of the community”. Previous studies have illustrated that folktales embody the African moral philosophy. This implies that folktales may be used to immerse the audience into the social values and moral behaviour expected in society by listening to folktales. Each folktale introduces to the audience appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, with everyone being expected to uphold good behaviour from childhood in order for the community to exist in harmonious cooperation with others. Therefore, if an individual deviates from the social code, he or she could be asked: “Didn’t your grandmother tell you the stories?” (Chinyowa, 2001:25). This implies that African people value the moral teachings of folktales, with the aim of instilling social order in society and teaching good behaviour.

Despite Chinyowa’s (2001) view of folktales as effective pedagogical tools to mould behaviour, he also acknowledges that the behaviour of the hare in folktales deviates from acceptable moral standards. The hare character is a cheat, hypocritical, dishonest and disrespectful in many folktales. This echoes the argument of the present study, that hare folktales might stimulate deviation from social morality, thereby becoming a possible factor in perpetuating moral degeneration affecting children who are exposed to hare folktales. Chinyowa (2001) also provides a different perspective on the hare character, that it can “also be taken to embody some positive behavioural qualities that are necessary for individual survival”. This justifies the trickster and astute behaviour of the hare, which may be helpful to the audience in protecting themselves against potential perpetrators in real life. Chinyowa (2001) further argues that the audience might admire the hare

character for its “capacity to effect change by breaking the barriers of social conformity”. As a result, the audience could break social norms and employ immoral behaviour, with the intention of effecting change, thereby perpetuating the moral degeneration crisis which continues to implicate children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the crisis.

Chinyowa’s (2001) behavioural level reiterates the morality function of folktales, as discussed earlier in this study. They are both concerned with the element of moral education encapsulated within folktales, which is aimed at effecting positive change regarding the behaviour of the audience who are usually children.

- **Aesthetic level:** This level is concerned with the creative art of storytelling which the narrator uses to “influence, to manipulate and to move the audience, leading them to act, think and feel with her” (Chinyowa, 2001:23). The narrator’s ability to personify characters, use language skills, expressive voice and body movements assists in capturing the attention of the audience and enhancing their responsiveness to the performance. Exceptional performance by the narrator makes the folktale more humorous and interesting to listen and learn from.

Similar to Motshwari (1998) and Kganyago (2000), as illustrated earlier, Chinyowa (2001) also holds that the Shona folktale narration assumes a dialogue approach in the beginning and throughout. This occurs when the narrator utters a phrase to alert the audience that storytelling has commenced, respond to the alert and give the narrator the go-ahead, with the audience also uttering a phrase. The opening phrases are common across African storytelling. They obviously differ in language, but are similar in a sense. Motshwari’s (1998) “*ga twe e kile ya re...*” in Setswana is equivalent to Chinyowa’s (2001) “*paivepo...*” in Shona and they both translate to “Once upon a time”. The audience then responds by saying “*dzefunde...*”, which means “Please go on”.

- **Emotional level:** This level involves the ability of folktales to arouse, direct and purge the audience's emotions. The performance of the narrator and the folktale itself may affect the emotions of the audience and convert them into pedagogical values. The values can either be aesthetic, behavioural or cultural in the sense that folktales may trigger happy emotions, a change in behaviour or change in the way individuals perceive their cultural norms. The narrator carries the audience through an emotive journey throughout the folktale, which may provoke feelings of anxiety, frustration, disappointment, surprise, hopelessness and pity in addition to the obvious amusement and excitement. Furthermore, Chinyowa (2001:28) states that folktale narration can also be considered as "a form of emotional therapy" through which the human spirit is restored.
- **Cognitive level:** This level "involves the manner in which the audience comes to learn and understand the values, knowledge and wisdom that are being generated by the story" (Chinyowa, 2001:26). In simpler terms, folktales help train the cognitive skills of all the parties involved in storytelling, namely the narrator and their audience. Through the folktales, the audience is encouraged to envisage, remember and associate folktale events and human experience. The narrator also memorises the folktale and recalls main events which he/she then adds to the performance. The ability of the narrator to recall and perform main events, enabling the audience to learn more from and about the folktale.

Chinyowa (2001) concludes by emphasising that Shona folktales offer a wide range of pedagogical possibilities for the enhancement of human experience. Folktales do not only offer amusement, but are also an embodiment of morality as an additional African philosophy to Ubuntu/botho. They train human minds to think and challenge society to solve the world's social ills. African folktales should be regarded as an expression of creativity, "a regulator of moral behaviour, a validation of the people's thought patterns and a celebration of their emotional feelings" (Chinyowa, 2001:29).

### 2.6.3 Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007)

Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) studied the possible role of Setswana folktales in perpetuating and justifying child abuse in contemporary society. They are of the idea that abusive behaviour is often witnessed in society in response to traditional beliefs of outdated views about children. The study is aimed at exposing issues of child abuse in black families, which are often kept a family secret.

Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) reviewed 30 folktales and the results were that almost all the folktales exemplified the most types of abuse commonly written about in popular newspapers. The main concern was that victims and perpetrators of abuse are exposed to the same folktales that allegedly justify and perpetuate abusive behaviour.

The present study is concerned with the morally degenerated behaviour portrayed by the hare characters across Setswana folktales, which consequently might perpetuate inappropriate behaviour in children who are exposed to the folktales. The study is parallel to that of Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) in the sense that they are both concerned with potential negative implications that folktales might have on modern society, which is what many folktale scholars have overlooked in previous studies. Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) claim that “in many folktales, children are depicted as co-perpetrators with adults who abuse other children”. This reifies the assumption of the present study, that children are likely to mimic the behaviours that are portrayed by characters in folktales, whether good or bad, and end up victimising other children in the real world. Previous studies have been conducted on the positive impacts of folktales, but few have been conducted on the potential negative implications. Studies such as that of Smith (1940) on functions of folktales, Ngapo (1995) on the social functions of folktales, Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018) on folktales as lessons on democracy, Dikul and Kiting (2019) on folklore as educational entertainment all dwell on the possible positive impacts that society might yield from narrating folktales and tend to neglect possible negative impacts, in accordance with the values and norms embedded in folktales.

Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) adopted the discourse analysis approach to review Setswana folktales, collecting them from primary and secondary sources. A two-part data analysis was assumed in the study, where in the first part, folktales were collected

on the criteria 'folktale' and 'child abuse'. In the second part, Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) reviewed the folktales as narratives and analysed them thematically to depict instances of child abuse in folktales. Similar to Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007), a thematic analysis approach was adopted in this study, which assisted the researcher in exposing morally degenerated behaviours portrayed by characters and themes in folktales. This study is concerned with the investigation and interpretation of potential implications of hare folktales, which, potentially, is perpetuating immoral behaviour of children who are exposed to hare folktales.

Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) found that only one folktale out of the 30 that they studied addressed positive and appropriate behaviour intended to occur in society. The study indicates that some Setswana folktales illustrate four different forms of child abuse, namely physical, sexual, educational and emotional abuse. Below is the summary of brief definitions of the four forms of abuse, according to Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007), in the context of their study of child abuse:

- **Physical abuse** is manifested in smacking, beating, injury and the intentional taking of the life of a child by an adult.
- **Sexual abuse** is sexually exploiting a child for the satisfaction of an adult. It may include sexual acts such as penetration, fondling, inappropriate exposure for arousal, and voyeurism.
- **Educational abuse** occurs when a child is permitted to absent themselves repeatedly from school, with an adult denying them the opportunity to enrol at a learning institution when the child has reached the mandatory school-going age.
- **Emotional abuse** is manifested when a child is continuously ill-treated emotionally. This may involve verbal abuse, humiliation, a lack of affection and rejection.

#### 2.6.4 Sone (2018)

In the article titled 'The folktales and social values in traditional Africa', Sone (2018) explored Cameroonian folktales. The relevance of African folktales in encouraging social values was examined. The study was based on the assumption that Cameroon

folktales endorse human understanding of appropriate social behaviour, values and thoughts that are aimed at a positive change in society.

According to Sone (2018:143), folktales “facilitate the elimination of anti-social behaviour and help in the construction of social identity”. This statement reiterates the views in many studies on the functions of folktales in society, which states that folktales promote good socio-moral behaviour and guard against the reinforcement of immoral behaviour. The works of Smith (1940), Ngapo (1995), Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018) and Quintero and Makgabo (2020) share similar views as Sone (2018) on the socio-moral function of folktales.

Sone (2018) randomly selected folktales from various Cameroon regions for his study through primary and secondary data collection strategies. He assumed that since Cameroon is an African country, the findings thereafter will apply, to a larger extent, to folktales in other parts of Africa. To explain this, he says that “the elements identified in the tales I have used to illustrate my discussion can be found in tales all over Africa” (Sone, 2018:144). Sone’s study is, therefore, relevant to the present study as it is focused on Setswana folktales; a language and culture practised in Africa. Therefore, what applies to Sone’s study on Cameroon folktales, is also applicable to Setswana folktales. Nevertheless, the points of view are contrary in the sense that the former dwells on the positive impacts of folktales, while the present study is focused on the possible negative outcomes. However, both concern the moral behaviour of people in contemporary society.

Sone (2018) based his study on Piaget’s 1973 Social Constructivism Learning Theory and Sociology Theory. “Social constructivists posit that knowledge is constructed when individuals engage socially in talk and activity about shared problems or tasks” (Smith, 2018:144). According to Sone (2018), social engagement occurs through folktale narration where narrators share the knowledge of folktales with young individuals. Sociology Theory “examines the relationship between literature and society” (Smith, 2018:145). This theory is based on the fact that the subject matter and themes in the literature mirror those of society. The two theoretical frameworks adopted by Sone (2018) are also relevant to the present study; nevertheless, the researcher holds that the Behaviourist Theory, Theory of Moral Development and

Functionalism Theory best assist in analysing the behaviour of hare characters, the crisis of moral degeneration as social change and in answering the research questions.

### **2.6.5 Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018)**

The study conducted by Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018) reflects on democracy, equal opportunities and human rights among the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe. Ndebele folktales are examined against the notions of democracy and human rights, which are meant to develop and maintain social order in Zimbabwe. It is argued that Africa has been portrayed as a continent where oppression, dictatorship and violation of human rights prevail. However, Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018) refute this impression and argue that Ndebele folktales are indigenous knowledge systems that are aimed at social conformity and show that indigenous African people have always had respect for human rights and equal opportunities for all members of society.

Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018) adopted a content analysis method to demonstrate how indigenous African people used Ndebele folktales to encourage democracy in their communities. The study is grounded on the Afrocentricity Theory which, according to Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018:3), “calls for the analysis of African phenomena from the standpoint and worldview of Africans”. In other words, issues of democracy and human rights in Africa should be addressed in the context of African philosophy. The Afrocentricity Theory is relevant to the study as it deals with how African literature embodies the societal elements of democracy and human rights.

Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018) found that African societies, particularly the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe, have always observed democracy, human rights and equality as systems of governance in their communities. This is illustrated in the lessons of folktales revealed by the social behaviour of characters, of which Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018) believe that they also appear in systems of governance of indigenous African societies, which include the following:

- Characters protecting one another: Africans protecting their fellows against possible threats

- Adherence to the ‘animal’ constitution: In real life, the constitution of African societies
- Teaching the values of Ubuntu/botho, including “respect, altruism, tolerance, and co-existence” (Ndlovu & Sibanda, 2018:7).
- Collaborative decision making in finding solutions to communal problems.
- Equal opportunities for all, including the vulnerable in the community.

Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018) conclude by accentuating that modern societies can learn from indigenous knowledge systems, including folktales, about the fundamentals of democracy and human rights. The study further recommends researching the past for sustainable knowledge.

In comparison to the present study, Ndlovu and Sibanda (2018) explored only the positive outcomes that are reflected in African folktales, contrasting the possible negative impacts that folktales might have on the moral behaviour of children, which is the focus of the present study. Democracy and human rights are socio-moral norms that are widely acceptable and encouraged in contemporary societies. This resonates with previous studies such as those conducted by Ngapo (1995), Sone (2018) and Lubambo (2019), which eulogise folktales as embodiments of socio-moral values and lessons.

#### **2.6.6 Lubambo (2019)**

Lubambo (2019) explored manipulative behaviour in Siswati folktales. She explored how manipulative behaviour is used in folktales, emphasising causes of manipulation and manipulation strategies used by characters. Moreover, the practice of manipulative behaviour in today’s society is reviewed in the study. A total of 28 Siswati folktales depicting manipulative practices were purposively collected and data analysed using analytical comparison. According to Lubambo (2019:10-11), analytical comparison is “the method of differences and method of similarities”. In other words, analytical comparison is concerned with the differences and commonalities across the collected data.

Despite the fact that manipulation forms part of undesirable social behaviours, it is argued that folktales do not perpetuate and justify manipulative behaviour. Instead,

folktales “alert and warn contemporary citizens about manipulative behaviour taking place in various social structures” (Lubambo, 2019:2) rather than promoting behaviour. Moreover, Lubambo (2019) argues through her study that society will gain knowledge to guard against being victims of manipulative behaviour. In essence, Lubambo (2019) studied a negative behavioural trait in Siswati folktales with the objective of learning how to avoid such behaviour in real life. In yet another study conducted by Lubambo (2015), a masters dissertation titled ‘The role played by Siswati folktales in building the character of boys: a socio-functionalist approach’, she reveres folktales for assisting boys in fighting bad behaviour that they are exposed to in modern society. She identifies problems such as drugs, alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases and peer pressure as monsters that boys may be able to curb and avoid through the teachings of folktales, which allegedly directs young boys in how to solve problems. In a different way, the present study reviews inappropriate behaviours in Setswana hare folktales, but with an objective of realising the possible negative implications of folktales in perpetuating and justifying moral degeneration through teaching children immoral behaviour.

The findings indicate that manipulative behaviour triumphs in Siswati folktales. Different characters manipulate other characters for their selfish motives using various manipulative strategies. Lubambo (2019:v) describes manipulative behaviour as manifesting when “the powerful manipulate the less powerful, the intelligent manipulate the less gifted, and the rich manipulate the poor, while the knowledgeable manipulate the ignorant”. In the study, it is further claimed that these practices relate well with the manipulative behaviours experienced in contemporary society. The one strategy that Lubambo (2019) recommends to curb manipulative behaviour is for victims of manipulation to join forces in exposing manipulators in various social settings.

### **2.6.7 Quintero and Makgabo (2020)**

In an article, Quintero and Makgabo (2020) compare the folktales of two countries, namely South Africa and the Philippines, specifically on the portrayal of animal characters as females who assume domestic roles and “feminine” behaviours. They argue that folktales serve as an important pre-colonial heritage for both focal countries.

This is yet another form of evidence of the value of folktales in regulating African societies.

Quintero and Makgabo (2020) adopted the functional approach to discuss the social motive behind African folktales. The functional approach is concerned with how society constructs an understanding of their social surroundings, such as cultural settings, languages and the world's perspectives on the role of women.

It was found that the identified recurring themes of female characters' roles in folktales are similar to the roles played by women in our societies. Three female roles emerged from the study, namely female characters as mother and wife, friend and confidante, and polygamy.

The study indicates that in all the folktales selected, animal characters such as the hen, lion and the lizard assume the role of mothers who take responsibility of the growth of their young ones and ensure that they are taken care of and are well fed. It further maintains that in some folktales, male parents are absent, which arguably reflects the "single-working-mother phenomenon" common in contemporary society (Quintero & Makgabo, 2020:44). Female animal characters befriend other female animal characters who assist in babysitting. This proposes that women often seek assistance from other women who share common needs and responsibilities.

Quintero and Makgabo (2020) conclude their study by recommending further research on the study of folklore, which examines issues affecting society, such as gender roles and their implications on modern South Africa and the Philippines. The present study concurs with this recommendation, taking into consideration that it examines the possible implications of hare folktales for the moral degeneration crisis, which is yet another social issue affecting contemporary South Africa.

Literature indicates that African folktales encompass an element of morality. Ngapo (1995), Serekoane (1996), Sone (2018) and Quintero and Makgabo (2020) agree that folktales are effective in teaching moral lessons to solve social ills, especially among children. In contrast, Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) considered the possible negative implication of folktales on society. Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) illustrate that Setswana folktales perpetuate and justify child abuse, which is yet

another social ill, based on the content of the tales. While there has been much research on the element of moral education in folktales, few researchers such as Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) have taken into consideration the potential of folktales in perpetuating immorality in society. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to add to bridging this gap by investigating the possible implications of Setswana hare folktales for the rapid moral decline affecting children as perpetrators, victims and observers in contemporary South Africa.

## **2.7 Moral degeneration**

Previous studies have proven that African folktales, including Setswana folktales, encompass the element of morality, which is aimed at educating children about social norms, moral values and behaviour acceptable to society. However, as discussed earlier, Setswana hare folktales do not seem to embody the element of morality based on the observed behaviour of the hare, which generally contravenes the notion of morality, as described in this study. Morality concerns appropriate good behaviour and the values upheld by members of society. It supports in evaluating right or wrong in the interaction with others. Duhl (2019) identifies welfare, rights, fairness and justice as orientations of morality. This implies that behaviour becomes moral if it upholds the welfare of others, does not infringe on their rights, and is fair and justifiable to other people. This reiterates the African principle of Ubuntu/botho – ‘I am because you are’ – by which African societies have always lived from ancient times.

The principle of Ubuntu/botho concerns the harmonious and fair collaborative relationship of humanness with others. Mangwegape (2020:1) simplifies Ubuntu/botho to mean that “...we need each other, we create each other and sustain one another..., we owe to each other”. This means that people need to become cautious of how they conduct themselves and behave around others in order not to infringe on their human rights, and ensure that their behaviour is fair, humane and justifiable according to moral standards.

Any behaviour and conduct that does not uphold Duhl’s (2019) orientations of morality contravenes the notion of morality and Ubuntu/botho. The behaviour increasingly displayed by children in modern society such as ill-discipline, violence, mockery and bullying do not uphold the orientations of morality. Similar behaviours are also

witnessed in adults who are implicated in committing child murder, child abuse, manipulative acts and exploitation, which continues to victimise children with the effects of such immoral behaviour of adults in society. Children who grow up in households and society in which behaviours contrary to morality prevails are exposed to immorality and are influenced to employ similar behaviour as a newly established culture. This remains a concern in that children increasingly become perpetrators, victims and observers of immoral behaviour. As a result, the sense of morality which initially governed societies becomes threatened in that a notable shift from moral values, standards and behaviours is observed in the broader society. Morality in society is lost and degenerates, thereby further degrading our communities into moral degeneration slumps. A significant degeneration of morality develops into a national crisis which negatively impacts the healthy functioning of relationships and disintegrates society.

Moral degeneration results from people displaying behaviour that contravenes the philosophy of humanness and circumvents ethical and moral values, and appropriate and good behaviours. According to Louw (2009), South Africa is presently facing a moral crisis, especially in the youth. The KZN Online Government Communication (2020) shares the same sentiments and affirms that "...there is a moral decay in communities and the whole of South Africa...." This is also evident through the South African government's initiatives, such as the Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM), which is aimed at regaining the lost morality in society (South African Government, 2021). Louw (2009:45) further lists some of the immoral traits of moral degeneration to include "selfishness, cruelty, dishonesty, greed, heartlessness, disrespectfulness, and a loss of integrity", which have been observed to increasingly be displayed by children and adults in contemporary South African society. Similarly, Tinyani (2018) mentions the manifestations of moral degeneration, including, among others, gender-based violence, vandalism, bullying and different forms of abuse. The present study is concerned with children as perpetrators, victims and observers of behaviours of moral degeneration. Since children are regarded as the future of society, the current moral degeneration crisis is likely to persist and lead to a never-ending cycle of the prevalence of the adoption of immoral behaviour, thereby implicating impending societies.

Children belong to the community and the school environment. This means that both the community and the school are implicated by the immoral behaviour and conduct often displayed by children. Louw (2009) and Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011) concur that the current crisis of moral degeneration has also affected schools. The former scholar further alleges that a lack of discipline, disrespect to teachers, violence, crime and substance abuse in schools have left many learners dispirited and hopeless. Substance abuse has a direct impact on children's behaviour. Heavy consumers may develop behavioural problems such as anger issues, stress and violent behaviour which, consequently, negatively implicates the consumer's social relationship with others. The main concern with the current crisis of moral degeneration is that children adopt and display similar anti-social and immoral behaviour even in their adulthood (Louw, 2009). This jeopardises society in accepting and adopting behaviours of degenerated morality as a new value system and newly developed moral culture.

The following section reviews the phenomenon of moral degeneration affecting children as perpetrators, victims and observers. In the section, previous research studies are reviewed individually to enhance the argument of the present study which views moral degeneration as a crisis affecting South Africa. Studies conducted on moral degeneration as it occurs in South Africa are discussed in the following section.

## **2.8 Previous studies on moral degeneration in South Africa**

### **2.8.1 Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011)**

Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011) explored the crisis of moral degeneration in South African schools. Similar to Masase (2016) and Tinyani (2018), Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011) attest that South Africa is currently experiencing a challenge of escalating moral decline, which indicates that moral degeneration is a societal threat that needs to be prioritised when addressing societal issues. In yet another earlier study of Jaysveree (2009), a doctoral thesis, he investigated the socio-educational implications of moral degeneration in South Africa. All the latter scholars recommend further research on moral degeneration. The present study coincides with the recommendation by investigating the potential influence of Setswana hare folktales, which observably do not uphold morality, on the crisis of moral degeneration implicating children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the phenomenon.

In their article, Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011) particularly focused on how teachers and parents can be equipped with skills to instil positive morals and values in children. The study is also focused on determining whether the teaching of morals and values shape the moral development of children. Through a qualitative research method, in the study, literature and data obtained from interviewing parents, teachers, learners and community leaders in in-depth semi-structured interviews were compared.

It was found that a large proportion of learners who participated in the study have engaged in at least one of the following behaviours associated with moral degeneration, inclusive of drug and alcohol abuse, crime, and physical and sexual violence:

- **Drug and alcohol abuse:** Data show that drugs and alcohol consumption have a notably significant effect on the behaviour of learners in schools. Some learners reported that they become violent and promiscuous when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- **Crime:** Most of the learners acknowledged to have committed a form of crime as they were bored or merely wanted to determine whether they would be caught and test what could be the consequences of such behaviour. Only 1,25% of the learners felt remorse after having committed crime.
- **Physical and sexual violence:** Fewer learners engaged in physical fights, with some even instigating these fights. On the other hand, some learners indicated that they had engaged in sexual activities and that for some, it had been non-consensual.

According to Tinyani (2018), the three themes mentioned above that emerged from the study are manifestations of moral degeneration. Moral degeneration has affected schools and society, and has, among other things, manifested through a lack of discipline, violence and bullying in schools. “Teachers often complain of unruly, undisciplined, disrespectful and disobedient learners” (Bayaga & Jayseveree, 2011:208). Despite adults agreeing that South Africa is facing moral decline, children who participated in the study seemed to approve ill manners, dishonesty and disrespect. This implies that most children are informed of the inappropriate behaviour

from which they are expected to refrain; nevertheless, they are possibly still perpetuated by various factors to employ ill behaviour.

According to Quintero and Makgabo (2020), it forms part of the language curriculum in South African schools. Hare folktales, as discussed earlier, feature a lot of immoral behaviour and the main argument is that the folktales potentially perpetuate and justify behaviours of moral degeneration in children who are taught hare folktales. The main finding of the study was that parents are mainly responsible for instilling moral values in children, but that school educators also carry this responsibility. Adults tell folktales to teach moral lessons to children; however, some adults adopt immoral behaviour and continue to victimise children with the effects of moral degeneration, such as adults who murder children, abuse them and exploit them into risky practices such as selling drugs and becoming involved in sexual activities. In some households, children observe gender-based violence, survival means on crime and manipulative behaviour for self-gain. This implicates children as observers of moral degeneration, thereby posing potential risks of children adopting similar behaviour modelled by the adults whom they are meant to trust and from whom they are supposed to learn valuable life lessons. This is a concern as some of these children are exposed to hare folktales that potentially teach them immoral behaviour.

The works of Bayaga and Jayseveree (2011), Masase (2016) and Tinyani (2018) have adequately indicated that South Africa is currently experiencing a crisis of moral degeneration, especially among young people. Previous research recommends investigating the moral degeneration phenomenon, particularly in defining the causes, manifestations and strategies to renew the decaying morality. The present study serves to evaluate the potential implications of Setswana hare folktales for the current crisis of moral degeneration, especially in children exposed to hare folktales, which, according to previous research and observation, feature characters' behaviour that contravene the notion of morality, moral values, and appropriate social behaviour and conduct, as discussed earlier.

### **2.8.2 Masase (2016)**

Masase (2016) argues that South Africa is presently facing a relapse of morality toward a moral decay and argues that the crisis came with the inception of apartheid

and is still in progression. Similar to Louw (2009) and Tinyani (2018), Masase (2016) asserts that moral degeneration manifests in South Africa through, among other patterns, a lack of accountability, honesty, professionalism and but not limited to corruption within the Government of South Africa. He further claims that South African politicians behave as if they are above the law, which exposes the immorality that governs politics. The fact that these are behaviours associated with moral degeneration indicates that this phenomenon concerns the behaviour displayed by the mass society.

Masase (2016) contends that moral decay in South Africa began with the inception of the apartheid system's government. Therefore, the aim of the study was to investigate the role of the South African government in moral regeneration in an attempt to solve moral degeneration issues that have developed as a result of apartheid systems. The reformed paradigm was used to investigate the problem of moral decay of society. The reformed paradigm acknowledges the authority of Christian religion over facets of society. Masase (2016) contends that biblical teachings contribute positively to the development of communities and are a potential tool to moral renewal. The study sought to determine the role of government in the renewal of morality from Christian and constitutional perspectives of study, respectively.

Biblical teachings are relevant at all times and the relationship between theology and the government ought to be reinforced to solve problems affecting society, such as moral degeneration (Masase, 2016). Theologians such as Abraham Kuyper and John Calvin of Protestantism and Dutch Calvinism, respectively, are considered prominent religious and political leaders of the early centuries. Through them, the need for religious intervention in governments was realised and established effectively. A leader should be responsible and "...answer to God under whom he exercises his authority, but he also has to answer to the people over whom he is appointed ..." (Masase, 2016:17). This means government authority needs to adopt characteristics of leadership, as stipulated in the scriptures, of which many of them such as "absolute transparency, openness, honesty and integrity" (ibid, 2016:20) maintain the notion of morality. Therefore, a government that exercises these characteristics has authority to instil traits of morality in society.

From the constitutional perspective, Masase (2016) acknowledges that attempts to build a united democratic South Africa has the potential of enabling the renewal of morality. Government is perceived as a moral agent in the study which can be effective in regaining the lost morality in society. It identifies strategies that government should implement to regain morality in society, which include, among other factors, the establishment of healing and reconciliation, unity in diversity, social justice, human rights and democratic values.

Masase (2016) claims that government authorities are servants of God and the people, and are, therefore, responsible for protecting the teachings of the Christian ministry, as well as promoting reconciliation, unity and the social welfare of citizens. In the study, the involvement of chaplains in government institutions, particularly in schools, to teach moral lessons to school learners is recommended. He claims that chaplains are effective for teaching learners positive morals, a holistic lifestyle and providing spiritual support. The study embraces that people can learn moral values from the Christian religion, such as the Ten Commandments for Christians, which generally guard against immorality and encourage morality. Similarly, Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011), in their study, found that some community leaders believe that the church has the ability to revive morality in children, provided that they attend and learn from the teachings of the church.

### **2.8.3 Tinyani (2018)**

Tinyani (2018) observed the prevailing juvenile delinquencies and social ills that lead to the increasing youth moral degeneration. Youth moral degeneration at the Makuya area in the Limpopo province in South Africa was explored in the thesis. Factors contributing to moral degeneration were identified and the effects and strategies to address moral degeneration in the South African context were explored. The Afrocentric approach was adopted in the study, which advocates for the African reality, history and centeredness (ibid, 2018). The approach was appropriate as it provides relevant ways of promoting moral behaviour specific to African societies based on African people's needs, identity and perspective.

Tinyani (2018) describes moral degeneration as a decline of morality in society and having negative effects on the social stability of a country. The reference used to

determine the decline is the generally accepted societal norms and standards which, when deviated from, morality is said to degenerate, decline and decay. In this study, morality is also used as a reference to determine whether the behaviour displayed by hare characters in folktales uphold appropriate societal norms and moral standards.

Tinyani (2018) identifies factors contributing to youth moral degeneration, including negative media influence, a lack of positive role models, misunderstanding of democratisation, materialism and neglect for the African value system. It was found that young people copy and adopt even the immoral behaviours displayed by their idols in the media. According to James (2010), folktales in the modern times are shared through digital media, unlike through the old traditional oral narration. This suggests that children might be influenced to mimic the behaviour of characters in folktales that were possibly shared and narrated in the media and folklore anthologies. In this study, contemporary Setswana folktales are shared in the media such as the *Nal'ibali* website in writing and South Africa's public radio stations in the form of audio clips, for example, on Motsweding FM during the 09:20-9:30 slots on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Children may mimic and adopt the behaviour of the hare character despite the behaviour being commonly immoral and reflecting moral degeneration.

Tinyani (2018) recommends strategies that may be implemented to regenerate morality among the youth of South Africa. The following is recommended in the study:

- The education department should develop a policy that stipulates and encourages matters of African humanness and value systems.
- Practical interventions should be established, such as youth organisations assisting in stabilising the collapsed youth society.

Since Tinyani (2018) indicates that society is faced with a challenge of increasing youth moral decline, the study concludes by recommending further research on the phenomenon of moral degeneration in an attempt to regenerate morality. Similar to Tinyani (2018), the present study seeks to address the escalating moral degeneration in young people in contemporary South Africa. Although Tinyani (2018) is limited specifically to the Makuya area, the study is still relevant to the present study for the

reason that Makuya is in South Africa and the present study observes moral degeneration as a national crisis and not limited only to the Batswana societies.

## 2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, an extensive and critical review of the three main aspects of this study is provided, namely folktales, morality and moral degeneration, as presented in existing literature. In the first instance, the review presented folklore as heritage for African societies with a specific focus on Setswana folktales as a form of folklore. Folktales were described and categorised into four common types of Setswana folktales, namely human tales, fables, myths and legends. Previous research indicates that folktales play a paramount role in society and, in this regard, morality, recreation and culture functions to which folktales serve in society were identified and discussed in the chapter. An overview of characterisation in folktales was presented to justify the ability of characters, the protagonist and antagonist influencing the behaviour of the audience (children) who tend to admire and identify with certain characters, thereby mimicking their behaviours. Previous work of other authors in the African folktales discipline was extensively reviewed individually in terms of the approaches, objectives, methodology, findings and conclusions of their respective studies. The trend observed is that most scholars overlooked the possible negative implications of some folktales on moral issues, instead they mostly explored the positive role of folktales in instilling morality in children.

Secondly, the phenomenon of moral degeneration as a current crisis affecting modern South Africa was discussed. Manifestations of the crisis in the South African context were also provided, as identified in existing research. Previous works of other scholars were reviewed and it was found that moral degeneration is a social issue that requires immediate intervention. Studies recommend further research on the issue of moral degeneration in South Africa, thereby justifying the relevance and significance of the present study.

In the following chapter, the concepts and theoretical frameworks informing the study are presented to investigate the potential implications of Setswana hare folktales for the moral degeneration in children exposed to the folktales. The argument of the study is strengthened through the theories that are presented.

## **CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL–THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Concepts used in the study, theories applied to the analysis of the collected hare folktales and possible implications of the folktales for perpetuating and justifying the crisis of moral degeneration in children are discussed in this chapter. According to Davis et al. (2015), a conceptual–theoretical framework is defined as a framework of –

a set of concepts and/or statements with specification of how phenomena relate to each other. Theory provides an organising description of a system that accounts for what is known, and explains and predicts phenomena.

In an attempt to specify how hare folktales might relate to the phenomenon of moral degeneration, the researcher applied three theories, namely Skinner’s Behaviourist Theory, Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development and Functionalist Theory. Theory borrowing is adopted in the study, where the Behaviourist Theory and the Theory of Moral Development were borrowed from the psychology discipline and the Functionalist Theory from the sociology discipline. The Behaviourist Theory assisted in studying the behaviour of the hare character and children in modern society. The Theory of Moral Development was used to describe the notion of morality, while the functionalist approach assisted in unpacking the phenomenon of moral degeneration affecting children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the phenomenon in society. All three theories were linked by the concept of morality. This concept assisted in determining to what extent the hare folktales contravene good and appropriate social behaviour.

### **3.2 Concept of morality**

The concept of morality is a psychosocial phenomenon concerned with people displaying socially appropriate and acceptable social behaviour. According to Bull (2010:2), ‘morality’ is a term used to refer to “the generally accepted code of conduct in a society, or within a sub-group of society”. The accepted social code of conduct regulates the ‘good’ behaviour and conduct that individuals should adopt and display in social communities. Ellemers et al. (2019:333) add to this point and contend that morality evinces “what is a good, virtuous, just, right, or ethical way for humans to

behave”. This implies that the notion of morality determines how humans should behave in social settings. Therefore, a person is said to be leading a moral life when they display ‘good behaviour’, while individuals who deviate from the good behaviour are said to be immoral. In this regard, morality is observed through how individuals behave and conduct themselves, treat others and how they relate accordingly to the larger society.

The manner in which an individual is expected to conduct oneself remains part of the culture accepted by a social community to maintain social order. Haidt and Kesebir (2010:800) elucidate morality as a culture of not hurting others, not infringing on their rights, “and if some people are having serious problems, then it is good – but not always obligatory – to help them”. In addition, Ellemers et al. (2019:333) expound morality as a “do no harm” guideline, which induces individuals in society to display good behaviour and show “empathy, fairness, or altruism” toward others in social communities. Consequently, individuals will know that they depend on one another and should treat others as they would want to be treated. In this sense, morality concerns healthy social relationships between people of a social community where everyone observes and reciprocates good behaviour. Morality, therefore, induces peaceful mutual existence in society to enable societal stability with less or no social deviance and delinquencies (Tinyani, 2018).

Morality is germane in maintaining social order, through which every member of society feels the need to exist with or without less infringement on their human rights. This develops a need to educate children about morality in an attempt to induce a persisting display of moral conduct and behaviour throughout generations. Moral education takes place when more experienced members of society teach good and appropriate behaviour, social codes, norms, values and attitudes toward other people who subsequently are expected to conform to the social codes and conduct themselves in a sound manner in various social settings.

Across African societies, moral education begins at an early age in households where more experienced and wise adults teach young ones about the importance of moral values and the notion of morality. Wang, Bernas and Eberhard (2012:69) state that “parents frequently talk about moral values and address children's moral

transgressions in daily interactions.” Addressing bad and inappropriate social behaviour is one of the most effective methods to discipline and teach children about good, acceptable behaviour expected to be modelled by everyone in society. Frequently talking about good behaviour and addressing transgressions discourages children from adopting unseemly behaviour and conduct.

Moral education is imperative to allow children to develop social behaviour that is commonly good and valued by society to remain acceptable members of society. According to Katide (2017:4), moral education pertains to the –

...teaching of right knowledge, attitudes, values, and skills. These teachings impact how a person will behave in situations as well as how a person leans towards wrong or right choices.

Moral education assists in comprehending human morality and distinguishing between good and bad behaviour, and right or wrong conduct. The choice of acting in a good or bad and right or wrong manner is entirely that of the individual who will either maintain or contravene the notion of morality through the behaviour they display in social settings.

The notion of morality manifests particularly in the generally appropriate behaviour and conduct that individuals display in different situations. The behaviour is generally accepted and encouraged in society. Behaviour and conduct such as honesty, empathy, fairness, hospitality, respect, generosity and solidarity depict the notion of morality and are often encouraged in African societies (Wang et al., 2012; Masase, 2016; Tinyani, 2018). As mentioned earlier, moral education is directed especially at children and the youth in African societies. They are, therefore, expected to internalise and display moral behaviour at all times and maintain morality into adulthood. Anyone who deviates from the moral behaviour is labelled as immoral. The persistence of immoral behaviour among individuals deteriorates morality, thereby escalating moral degeneration in society. According to Tinyani (2018:12), moral degeneration refers to “the decline of morality...of young and elderly people”. Masase (2016) refers to the same phenomenon as “moral decay”. The former and latter scholars both affirm that moral degeneration is a social issue affecting South African children and requires

immediate intervention. They further recommend that future research be conducted on moral degeneration and morality.

Ellemers et al. (2019) identified five moral guiding principles that are important to socio-psychological research in understanding human morality, namely moral reasoning, moral behaviour, moral judgement, moral self-views and moral emotions. The present inquiry is not entirely psychological, but an African literature study investigating a social issue using a psycho-social theoretical approach. The study is, therefore, concerned only with moral behaviour as a guiding principle to morality. It seeks to determine to what extent Setswana hare folktales might potentially affect the notion of morality by evaluating the behaviour of the hare character against moral behaviour and investigating possible implications of the folktales for the current crisis of moral degeneration affecting children as perpetrators, victims and observers of this crisis as it manifests in modern South Africa.

### **3.3 Behaviourist Theory**

In this study, the behaviour of hare characters across Setswana folktales is analysed against moral behaviour, as described in the concept of morality section above. As discussed in Chapter 1, South Africa is currently experiencing a decline in general morality, which is repeatedly observed in the behaviour of children and adults in contemporary society. A comparison is made between the behaviour of hare characters in folktales and the behaviour of children in society to determine the extent to which hare folktales could possibly influence the way children behave, which generally contravenes the notion of morality, as described earlier.

The study is more concerned with the behaviour of hare characters in folktales and children in South Africa. According to Walinga (2019), behaviour is psychological. Kwon and Silva (2020) attest to this by indicating that the majority of behavioural studies are conducted under the discipline of psychology. As the present study is a literature study concerned with behaviour, the Behaviourist Theory borrowed from the psychology discipline has been employed in the analysis of the hare characters' behaviour across Setswana folktales.

Although the Behaviourist Theory has been applied, only two aspects of the theory are believed to assist better in the analysis, namely the ‘stimuli–response’ and operant conditioning aspects. However, the study is not focused on the behavioural sciences that occur in the mind of an individual, but on the observable behaviour and conduct of the hare characters in folktales and children in contemporary South Africa, as reported in popular newspapers and digital media. Walinga (2019) validates the choice of applying this theory in this study by arguing that the Behaviourist Theory “concern[s] itself with the observable behaviour of people and animals, not with unobservable events that take place in their minds”. Similarly, Zhou and Brown (2017:6) opine that “behaviourism is primarily concerned with observable and measurable aspects of human behaviour...”. The researcher observed the behaviour of hare characters in Setswana folktales as well as the behaviour displayed by children and adults in society. An individual who displays a form of behaviour in a social setting is observed by other people who then measure the extent to which it maintains or contravenes the social construct of morality, and determine whether it is good or bad and right or wrong. Thereafter, society addresses the behaviour accordingly by applauding, disciplining, reprimanding or encouraging the behaviour displayed.

### **3.3.1 Stimulus–response association**

In defining behaviour, the Behaviourist Theory emphasises changes in actions that result from stimulus–response associations made by individuals. It is of the idea that stimuli direct and determine behaviour that an individual will display. Behavioural changes occur as a result of the relationship between the stimulus and response aspects of behaviour which determines the type of behaviour an individual will display in response to a particular stimulus from the external environment. The stimulus–response relationship concerns the cause and effect of behaviour. In summary, a stimulus is a variable that causes an individual to react while a response is the effect of the stimulus. The response is the actual action of behaviour which an individual chooses to display in reaction to a particular situation.

Zhou and Brown (2017:6) posit that “behaviour is directed by stimuli”. In this study, it is assumed that the condition of stimuli influences an individual to display either good or bad behaviour in response to that stimuli. In other words, a positive stimulus is more likely to prompt a positive behaviour than a negative stimulus. As the Behaviourist

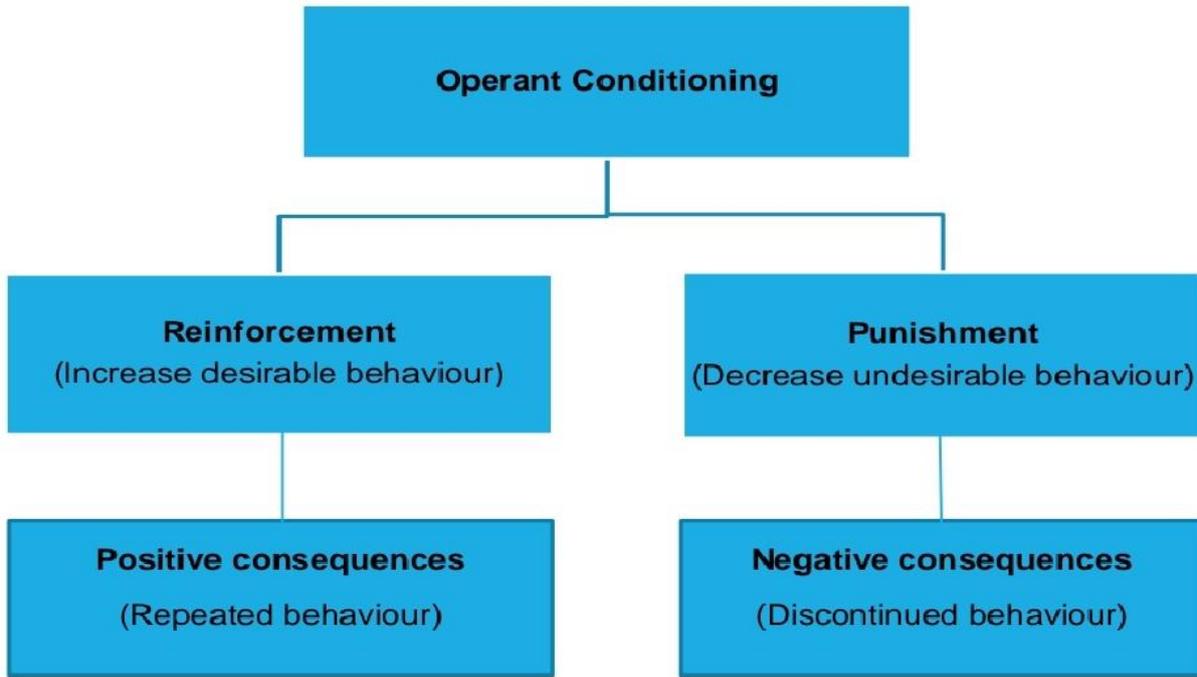
Theory is concerned with measurable behaviour, society will then measure whether the response behaviour is moral or immoral according to set social codes and standards.

In this study, the manner in which hare characters behave is in the response to an external stimuli. The hare character is observed to adopt immoral behaviour in response to factors such as hunger, thirst, greed, jealousy, impatience, power hunger and the strong desire for amusement. The hare adopts violence whenever he wants to laugh at his victims. He steals food whenever he feels hungry. He even kills other animals in response to jealousy and greed as stimuli.

Children can also be stimulated to adopt immoral behaviour by similar factors. As an example, some children who live under extreme poverty or have strong desires to own luxury items may be stimulated by these factors to adopt immoral behaviour such as robbing people, breaking into households and stealing items in response to poverty. They would assume these behaviours to satisfy their unmet needs. Behaviours such as stealing and robbing may be viewed as behavioural responses to the unsatisfied needs of the children. Some people in society choose to respond to external stimuli with violence. These behaviours are associated with immorality in that violent behaviour often results in undesirable consequences such as injury and death.

### **3.3.2 Operant conditioning**

An individual reacts to a stimulus due to conditioning urges present during the activity (Parkay & Hass, 2000). This process is known as the operant conditioning. According to Walinga (2019), operant conditioning refers to “how an organism operates on the environment or how it responds to what is presented to it in the environment”. The aspect of operant conditioning and the variables of reinforcement and punishment are illustrated in the following diagram.



**Figure 3.1: Operant conditioning (adapted from Walinga, 2019)**

As depicted in Figure 3.1, in operant conditioning, stimuli can occur either as reinforcement or punishment. The two variables of operant conditioning, namely reinforcement and punishment, are applied with the objectives of increasing desirable and decreasing undesirable behaviour, respectively. Operant conditioning was initially applied in studying animal behaviour; however, recent studies indicate that this method can be applied to human behaviour without significant modifications (Jakobovits & Miron, 1967). This justifies the application of operant conditioning to the present study as it evaluates both animal (hare) behaviour in folktales and human (children) behaviour in contemporary society; however, in an abstract approach compared to practically observing the behaviour.

McLeod (2018) describes the two variables of operant conditioning as illustrated in Figure 3.1 above:

**Reinforcement:** Responses from the environment that increase the probability of a behaviour being repeated.

**Punishment:** Responses from the environment that decrease the likelihood of a behaviour being repeated. Punishment weakens behaviour.

According to Kosinski and Zaczek-Chrzanowska (2007:139), the famous behaviourist Burrhus Frederic Skinner, who is regarded as the father of behaviourism, expanded on the law of effect in conditioning, which stated that “behaviours...followed by positive consequences are strengthened, while behaviours followed by negative consequences are weakened”. McLeod (2018) simplified this to mean that “behaviour that is followed by pleasant consequences is likely to be repeated, and behaviour followed by unpleasant consequences is less likely to be repeated”. In this study, the hare characters across Setswana folktales commonly display immoral behaviours such as lying, conning, stealing, cheating, violence and getting away with murder, and is seldom caught to account for his behaviour (Ngapo, 1995; Kganyago, 2000; Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al., 2007). This implies that there is lack of negative consequence to the hare’s behaviour regardless of how immoral it is. Instead, his immoral behaviour is often followed by positive consequences. As mentioned above, positive consequences of behaviour strengthens and increases the behaviour. The hare character in folktales, when viewed in reality scales, will continue and repeat his immoral behaviour as he always gets what he desires, succeeds in all his missions and is never caught. This reiterates the reinforcement variable where ‘success’ as a stimulus induces repetition of the same behaviour, regardless of it being moral or immoral, and is added to increase hare’s desirable consequences. Immoral behaviour becomes desirable to the hare as it yields him positive consequences such as accomplishing missions, getting what he wants and getting away with murder.

The punishment variable will manifest if the hare’s immoral behaviour across Setswana folktales is punishable, in other words, the hare getting caught to account for his undesirable behaviour. Punishment would definitely become a negative consequence to the hare’s behaviour, thereby decreasing the undesirable and immoral behaviour that he often adopts to accomplish missions.

The two variables, as contextualised above, may also be applied to human behaviour. The hare’s usual success in folktales might influence children to adopt and reinforce immoral behaviour similar to the hare as it is commonly followed by positive consequences – getting what they want and not getting caught for all their immoral manoeuvres. Across the folktales, the hare behaves in unseemly manners, always successfully accomplishes his missions and is never caught or punished for his

inappropriate behaviour. Children might desire that for themselves and, in turn, try to mimic and adopt similar behaviour with the impression of receiving positive results similar to the hare in the folktales.

Operant conditioning also concerns displaying a form of behaviour and learning from its direct consequences. As an example, if children adopt behaviour associated with moral degeneration, such as stealing something, and the main consequence is that the child manages to run away with the stolen goods and successfully avoids getting caught, he/she would have been positively rewarded (reinforced) and would likely repeat the behaviour, thereby perpetuating morally degenerated behaviour. The hare character is seen stealing, killing characters, manipulating them and instigating violence against them; however, he often succeeds in all those missions and is hardly caught. This implies that his behaviour, which may be perceived as being associated to moral degeneration, is reinforced, thereby increasing the likelihood of such behaviours being repeated.

However, if the consequences to a child stealing were that the child is caught, condemned, reprimanded, arrested or fails to run away with stolen goods, he/she would be punished and, as a result, would most unlikely steal again. This means that the behaviour is now decreased and discouraged.

While this still stands, the researcher does not encourage harmful punishment contrary to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act No. 108 of 1996) such as corporal punishment, including hard hidings, assault, kicking and slapping. However, effective disciplinary measures must be applied to children who deviate from socio-moral behavioural standards as one of the ways to decrease undesirable and immoral behaviour in children.

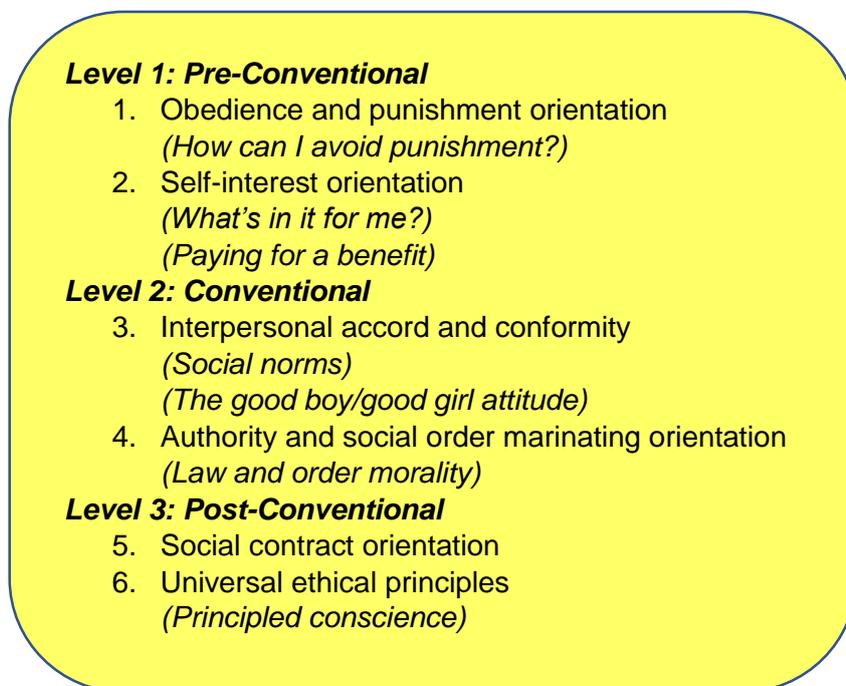
As mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2, some behavioural traits observed in hare folktales are similar to behaviours commonly displayed by children and adults in contemporary society. Therefore, in this study, it is assumed that hare folktales as potential stimuli might perpetuate children to respond to the situations portrayed in hare folktales with behaviours associated with moral degeneration. Behaviour often adopted by children, such as lying, theft, bullying and violence in schools, are some issues modern society

faces. It has been observed that these are themes and behaviours often featured in Setswana hare folktales. Often, the hare character succeeds in all his missions and is rarely caught to account for his ill behaviour. The study assumes that children might respond to the hare folktales by mimicking the hare's behaviour and conduct with the impression that they will succeed like the hare usually does in folktales.

### 3.4 Theory of Moral Development

The Theory of Moral Development was developed by Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987). Kohlberg was a psychologist known for his interest in moral psychology and development. His Theory of Moral Development explores young people's moral and ethical development as they grow from childhood to adulthood (Zhou & Brown, 2017).

The Theory of Moral Development is widely used to justify behaviours and determine how moral someone's behaviour is. Kohlberg holds that moral justification is the basis for ethical behaviour and has six identifiable developmental stages. This means that the way an individual behaves depends on their developmental stage. Therefore, the justification of certain behaviours lies in the respective stage of development. The stages are clustered into three levels, as depicted in Figure 3.2 below.



**Figure 3.2: Kohlberg's levels and stages of moral development (Zhou & Brown, 2017:40)**

Level 1 of moral development is applicable to this study as it is concerned with the moral behaviour of children. According to Zhou and Brown (2017), the pre-conventional level is especially common in children. Children at Stages 1 and 2, obedience and punishment orientation and self-interest orientation, respectively, judge whether a particular behaviour is morally correct or incorrect by its direct consequences. In simpler terms, behaviour is perceived as morally wrong when the perpetrator is punished and morally right if it is not punishable.

This study in pursuit of investigating the degree to which Setswana hare folktales could perpetuate morally degenerated behaviour of children in contemporary South Africa. The argument is that children might perceive folktale characters' behaviour as morally correct if the behaviour is not punishable in the folktales. Children might then adopt similar behaviour with the perception that it is acceptable to society as it is not punishable in folktales, which are narrated primarily to teach children moral lessons. Children, being vulnerable individuals, tend to copy the behaviour exposed to them from a young age, whether the behaviour is appropriate or inappropriate according to moral standards set by modern society.

While some of the common forms of punishment in modern society are forced onto children and some adults who participate in immoral activities are effective in some cases, they seem to not be effective in other cases. Forms of punishment for immoral behaviour include reprimanding, giving warnings, imprisonment and denial to participate in social activities. Children who assume immoral conduct such as theft, violence and assault are often sent to juvenile prisons as a form of punishment and rehabilitation of children's delinquencies. However, children continue to witness the immoral behaviour displayed by adults in their households, communities, in films, as well as in the media, with adult perpetrators of immorality hardly being caught and punished to account for their actions. This develops the impression in children that such behaviour is appropriate as adults who display this behaviour are not punished or reprimanded for it. This poses a potential risk in that children might adopt behaviour similar to the behaviour they have been exposed to as they have observed that the behaviour is not punishable.

### **3.5 Functionalist Theory**

In this study, the Functionalist Theory has been applied to assist in studying moral degeneration as a social phenomenon. Functionalism recognises society as a system made of coherent and interrelated parts that work together toward creating and maintaining an orderly, stable and well-functioning society (Creative Commons Attribution, 2010). In modern society, social structures such as family, religion and education are important in stabilising and maintaining social order (ibid, 2010). This implies that it is imperative to describe and understand the function that each social structure serves in developing a stable society. Society is reality and needs to be studied in real contexts. It is, therefore, paramount to study social phenomena from the perspective of the causes, manifestations, effects on society and, ultimately, ways to address the phenomena in broad trends to create laws of human organisation, as well as the changes that emanate from societal interactions (Turner & Maryanski, 1979). Society is continuously changing and the social changes, whether positive or negative, affect existing social structures and human interactions. In this regard, adopting the functionalism approach suggests adapting to social changes to maintain social stability through the change.

The interminable change in social settings emanates from societal evolution and social turmoil that may arise from human interaction over time. Turner and Maryanski (1979) aver that “any sudden change in society thus threatens its stability and future”. To limit and control the effects of social change, in functionalism, social problems are viewed as part of systems of society, which potentially threatens social order, and seeking solutions toward the problems is emphasised.

In this study, as discussed earlier, South Africa is currently experiencing a decline in general morality. In other words, there is a major social change through which society deviates from common moral standards. In this study, moral degeneration is viewed as a social problem that poses a potential to destabilise society. This implies that it requires immediate and meaningful intervention to counteract its effects. One effective way to study and understand the phenomenon is by adopting the functionalist approach where the possible causes, manifestations, effects and mitigation strategies to the problem are considered in an attempt to stabilise society.

From the functionalist perspective, it is paramount to understand the function that a social phenomenon serves in society. In this study, Setswana hare folktales are analysed and form part of social constructs in the Batswana communities. However, in this study, the Batswana are viewed as belonging to the larger African society, which implies that the approach in this study is not strictly limited to the Batswana people, but African societies as a whole. African folktales, which feature hare characters, portray this character similar to specific Setswana folktales. Similar to Setswana folktales, the hare character in other African folktales, such as Shona, Sepedi and Nigerian folktales, is generally portrayed as clever, a liar, thief, murderer, conner and deceiver, among other personalities (Ngapo, 1995; Chinyowa, 2001; Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al., 2007). In applying the functionalism approach, the one paramount function of folktales, as discussed earlier, is to teach moral lessons. However, in this regard, Setswana hare folktales as part of the social system, become part of the 'problem' instead of the 'solution' to social ills for the reason that folktales have an assumed potential of perpetuating and justifying the degeneration of morality, as discussed earlier. Moral degeneration, as social change, implicates the notion of morality, which is commonly regarded as a guideline to social order and societal stability.

In employing the functionalist approach in this study, the following questions need to be asked about folktales as social constructs and moral degeneration as social change, which is a potential threat to societal stability:

- What is the social change in question?
- What might be the cause of this change?
- What are the symptoms and manifestations of the change in society?
- What is the potential impact of the change in society?
- What function does the change serve in society?
- How can the change be adapted to or solved?

The following subsection answers the above proposed questions of adopting the Functionalist Theory in this study.

### ***3.5.1 What is the social change at stake?***

South Africa is currently experiencing moral degeneration where people deviate from set moral standards in society.

### ***3.5.2 What might be the cause of this change?***

Moral degeneration may be triggered by various stimuli; however, the researcher of this study is interested in the possibility of Setswana hare folktales perpetuating and justifying immoral behaviour in children exposed to the folktales rather than challenging behaviour and practices of decaying morality in society. In this study, it is argued that children exposed to hare folktales are likely to mimic the behaviour and conduct of characters they admire in the folktales despite the behaviour being for or against morality.

### ***3.5.3 What are the symptoms and manifestations of the change in society?***

As discussed in the literature review, scholars such as Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011), Masase (2016) and Tinyani (2018) identified some of the manifestations of moral degeneration observed in South Africa, including, among others, crime, dishonesty, disrespect, a lack of discipline, violence, and xenophobia. These are practices against the notion of morality, as described in this study, acceptable social codes which, when adopted, do not infringe on other people's human rights.

### ***3.5.4 What is the potential harm of the change to society?***

According to Turner and Maryanski (1979), sudden social changes threaten the stability of society. This implies that the most obvious harm of a social change, which is moral degeneration in this study, is to deteriorate social stability in society. Social destabilisation may manifest through society normalising immoral practices, loss of the Ubuntu/botho culture and peaceful social relationships. Children also fall victims of behaviours associated with moral degeneration. They are killed, abused, raped and exploited by adults who adopt immoral behaviour toward children. This develops communities that are unsafe and not conducive for children to grow in and for people to live in.

### **3.5.5 *What function does the change serve in society?***

A social change may serve a positive or negative function in society. In other words, the change may be beneficial or detrimental to the social order and stability in society. In this study, the crisis of degeneration of morality is perceived as a social change, which implicates social stability and the future of society. This implies that moral degeneration does not serve any positive function in society, instead it perpetuates destabilisation, loss of humanity and social order.

### **3.5.6 *How can the change be adapted to or remedied?***

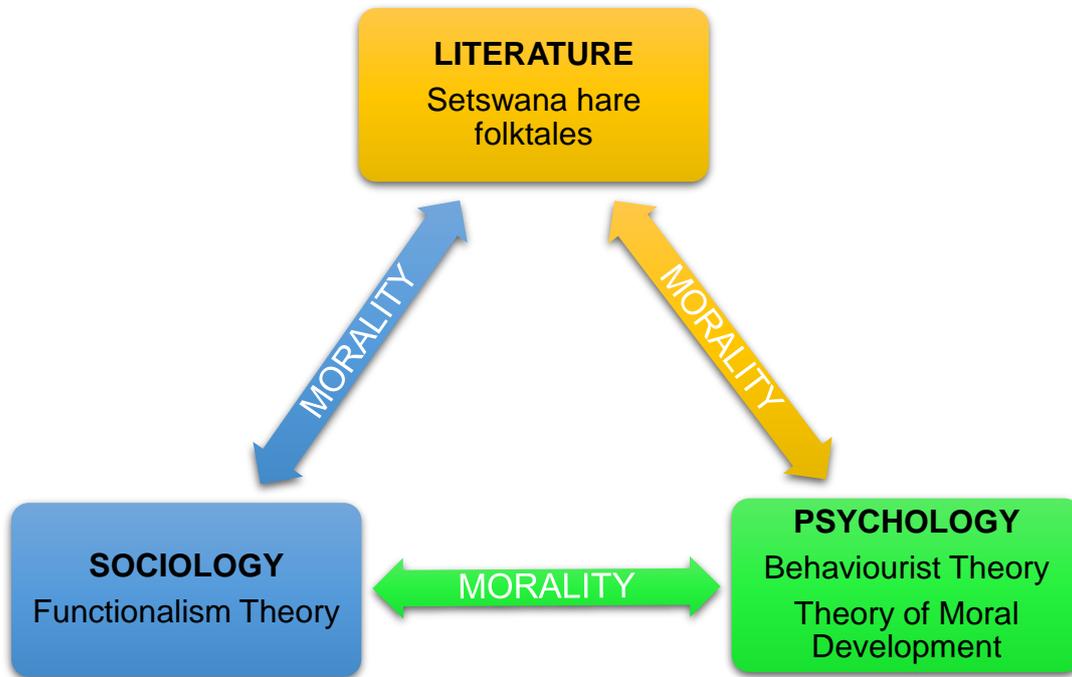
The functionalism approach emphasises seeking solutions toward social problems and changes. Society can either adapt to the problem and learn to live through it or implement strategies to counteract the effects of the problem in society. As the social problem investigated in this paper is moral degeneration, contemporary society may adapt to the problem; however, that could further implicate social order and the philosophy of Ubuntu/botho in that more children will remain victimised in behaviour associated with moral degeneration.

Alternatively, society could develop strategies in mediating the crisis of moral degeneration affecting children. This study is interested in using folktales to serve their sole function of promoting morality, as recommended in previous research. Nevertheless, the study is focused on using Setswana hare folktales which, observably, do not uphold moral values based on the themes and behaviour of the hare character commonly portrayed in folktales. This study, therefore, recommends some of the strategies that folktale tellers and language educators could employ to scaffold children to learn from folktales only what is desirable to the notion of morality and learn to discard undesirable lessons. The recommendations are briefly discussed in the last chapter of this dissertation.

## **3.6 Emerging Conceptual Framework**

After applying the above discussed theories and concepts, the following conceptual framework emerged from this study. This framework attempts to realise the possible relationship between the theories and concepts adopted in this study from different disciplines. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, this study is not aimed at interdisciplinary research, but the relationship among the variables identified,

prompting the featuring of theories from disciplines other than literature, namely the psychology and sociology disciplines. The figure below illustrates the emerging framework informing this study.

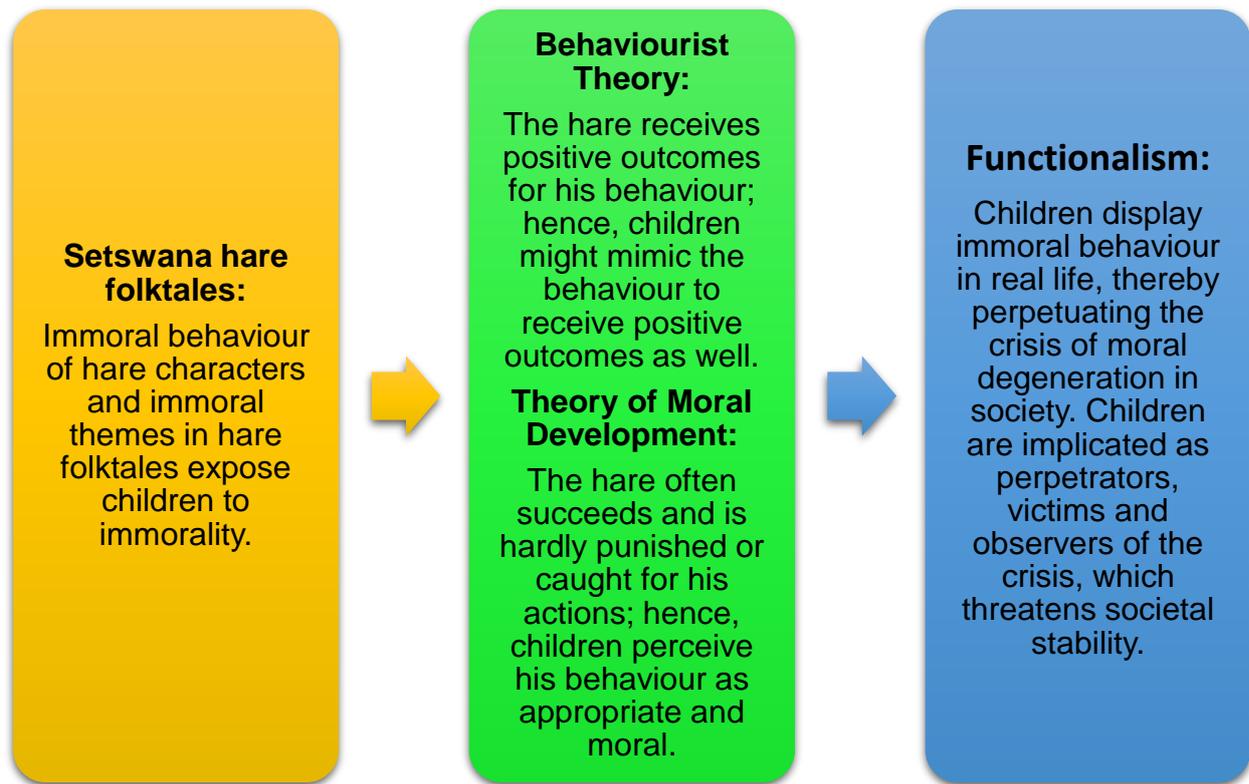


**Figure 3.3(a): Emerging conceptual framework informing this study**

As discussed earlier, this study is not intended at interdisciplinary research; however, some aspects of theories from the psychology and sociology disciplines were adopted. Figure 3.3(a) illustrates the relationship between the disciplines and frameworks informing this study. The diagram is a summary of the relationship between the adopted theories and how they relate to the concept of morality, as described earlier, to depict the assumed possible influence of hare folktales in the moral degeneration affecting children in modern society.

This study holds that literature (hare folktales) might negatively influence the psychological being (behaviour and moral sense) of children, through which the sociological crisis of moral degeneration in children persists.

The following figure is a summary of the theoretical assumption of this study and the relationship thereof.



**Figure 3.3(b): Summary of the conceptual framework assumption**

Figure 3.3(b) above illustrates the conceptual assumption informing this study. The present study assumes that the Setswana hare folktales, which observably portray behaviours that deviate from the concept of morality, may potentially influence children exposed to the folktales to mimic the hare's behaviour. This occurs according to the stimulus–response association of the Behaviourist Theory, as discussed earlier. Hare folktales stimulate children to respond to situations with behaviour and conduct similar to that of the hare character in folktales.

The Theory of Moral Development holds that children adopt certain behaviours if they were initially not punishable. This study assumes that since the hare is seldom punished in folktales for his immoral practices, children might then adopt similar behaviours seeing that they can never be punished or be called to account for their actions.

Children who adopt and display behaviours similar to that of the hare behave immorally. This implies that immoral behaviour might be normalised and adopted as a newly developed social culture of behaving, thereby further implicating moral stability

and perpetuating the crisis of moral degeneration in contemporary society. As discussed in Chapter 2, in this study, moral degeneration is perceived as a societal crisis that is affecting South Africa and requires intervention, as recommended in previous research (Masase, 2016; Tinyani, 2018). In attempting to study moral degeneration as a societal crisis, the functional approach has been adopted in this study and moral degeneration has been viewed as a social phenomenon that threatens the stability of society and implicates children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the phenomenon.

### **3.7 Limitations of theories for the study**

#### **3.7.1 Behaviourist Theory**

This literature-based study features psychological theories. It is concerned with the behaviour of hare characters in folktales and the behaviour displayed by children in contemporary South Africa. Nevertheless, the study was limited to observable behaviour and not the science of behaviour happening in the minds of people. The theory has not been entirely applied and discussed, but was limited only to two aspects of stimulus–response association and operant conditioning, respectively.

#### **3.7.2 Theory of Moral Development**

In this theory, three levels of moral development are used. However, the scope of this study was limited to Level 1 (pre-conventional) only, with a focus on Stages 1 and 2, namely obedience and punishment orientation, and self-interest orientation, respectively. The Theory of Moral Development was originally developed and tested using a sample population of human beings, whereas in this study, it was applied abstractly and based on reasonable assumptions without a physical population sample. The researcher assumed that Level 1 of this theory is applicable to the study as the level is more common in children.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

The theoretical–conceptual framework informing the study was presented in this chapter. The study assumed a theory-borrowing method to present the framework; however, as an African literature study, it did not intend to adopt interdisciplinary research. Theories from the psychology and sociology disciplines were employed to assist in realising the scope of the study. It was focused on the stimulus–response

association and operant conditioning aspects of the Behaviourist Theory, as well as the pre-conventional stage of the Theory of Moral Development and the Functionalist theory. The three theories were linked by the concept of morality, which concerns discerning between appropriate and inappropriate social behaviour and conduct. The Behaviourist Theory dwelled on the behaviour of hare characters in folktales and the behaviour of children in modern society. The Theory of Moral Development was focused more on the notion of morality as it develops in children, while the Functionalist Theory assisted in studying the phenomenon of moral degeneration as a social change and societal crisis. In Chapter 3, the applicability and relation between the aspects of the theories and the hare folktales were effectively demonstrated through diagrams, with the emerging conceptual framework and summary of assumptions informing the study appearing in Figures 3.3(a) and (b). The application and limitations of the theories to this study were also discussed.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 1, 19 Setswana hare folktales were collected for this study. In this chapter 4, the folktales are analysed thematically. First, the 19 folktales are presented in the form of English summaries. Secondly, the behaviour and conduct of hare characters depicted in the folktales are analysed. The data are presented thematically, with behavior presented as common themes depicted in folktales. It further evaluates the themes and behaviours against the concept of morality, as described in Chapter 2, to determine the extent to which hare folktales maintain or contravene the notion.

### 4.2 Summaries of the 19 collected Setswana hare folktales

As presented in Chapter 1, the following 19 Setswana hare folktales were collected for this study:

1. *Tau le Mmutla* – The lion and the hare (Rantao, 1988)
2. *Noko le Mmutle* – The porcupine and the hare (Rantao, 1988)
3. *Mmutla le Khudu* – The hare and the tortoise (Leeuw et al., 2016)
4. *Mmutla le Tholo* – The hare and the kudu (Leeuw et al., 2016)
5. *Mmutle le Phiri* – The hare and the hyena (Mohulatsi et al., 2015)
6. *Mmutle le Phokojwe* – The hare and the jackal (Mohulatsi et al., 2015)
7. *Phiri, Mmutla le dijana* – The hyena, the hare and the dishes (Trok, 2015)
8. *Mmutla o tsietsa tlou gape* – The hare deceives the elephant (Trok, 2015)
9. *Mohatla wa Haruki* – Haruki's tail (Nal'ibali Organisation, n.d)
10. *Mmutle le Lekgowa* – The hare and the white man (Mogapi, 1993)
11. *Mmutle le tlou* – The hare and the elephant (Mogapi, 1993)
12. *Mmutle le diphologolo* – The hare and the animals (Mogapi, 1993)
13. *Tlholwe le mmutle* – Tlholwe and the hare (Mogapi, 1993)
14. *Mmutle le sediba sa diphologolo* – The hare and the animal's well (Mogapi, 1993)
15. *Mmutle le phokojwe le senonnori* – The hare, the jackal and the bear (Mogapi, 1993)
16. *Mmutle le Tau* – The hare and the lion (Mogapi, 1993)
17. *Mmutle le diphologolo tse dingwe* – The hare and the animals (Mogapi, 1993)

18. *Tau le Ntšhwe* – The lion and the ostrich (Mogapi, 1993)

19. *Mmutla le Tau* – The hare and the lion (Mogapi, 1993)

The following section provides summaries of the 19 folktales mentioned above, which have been translated into English.

**Folktale 1: *Tau le Mmutla* (Rantao, 1988)**

In this folktale, Mmutla (hare) told Tau (lion) to build a kraal for the animal community. Tau agreed to Mmutla's proposal, and Mmutla mysteriously and magically built the kraal by instructing it to build itself. Mmutla once again proposed that Tau act as if he is dead, so that all the animals can come closer, with Tau then eating them all. Tau agreed to this and all the animals gathered in mourning near his body in the kraal. He woke up and ate them all. Tau also magically instructed a shack to build itself as it had started raining, which it did. Mmutla then proposed that they put a roof over the shack, but this time Mmutla asked Tau to climb on top of the shack to put on thatch. Mmutla then tied Tau's tale to the roof for him to struggle to get off while Mmutla eats all the meat in the pot. Mmutla fastened the rope used to tie Tau's tale until he died on the roof. Mmutla then ate all the food that had been prepared, used Tau's skin to disguise himself as a lion and conned Phiri (hyena) and his family. Mmutla gained access to Phiri's household masqueraded as the lion. Phiri's children saw Mmutla celebrating his victory over Phiri; however, he managed to run away. Mmutla then visited another hyena. He offered to do her garden and babysit her children while she was doing farm chores. Mmutla killed one baby hyena, cooked him and offered the meat to Phiri in the evening. While Phiri asked to breastfeed her children, Mmutla brought one baby hyena twice to make them count to the original 10. Mmutla killed all 10 baby hyenas and used the same strategy to share the meat with Phiri to eat. After Mmutla had killed all the baby hyenas, he acted surprised when he was asked about them and ultimately told Phiri that she had eaten them all. Mmutla ran away and managed to escape once more. He transformed himself into a stone and Phiri unknowingly threw the stone over to the other side of the river. Mmutla then turned into the real hare and bragged that he had again concurred Phiri.

**Folktale 2: *Noko le Mmutle* (Rantao, 1988)**

Noko (porcupine) had many children and owned a very large farm. She could not cope with her many children and for this reason, she asked Mmutla (hare) to assist in taking care of her children, while she did farm chores. The hare agreed to assist. On the first day of the hare helping with the children, he cooked and ate one baby porcupine. In the evening, the hare served Noko meat. When asked where he had found the meat, Mmutla lied and said he went to prey for meat during the day. The following day, Mmutla killed another child and served Noko meat in the evening. Mmutla continued with this until only one baby porcupine was left. When it was time for Noko to breastfeed her children, Mmutla returned the one remaining child over and over again so that Noko did not realise that her children were missing. Noko was shocked and asked why the baby did not want to be breastfed. The one remaining baby porcupine became so full that he could no longer lactate. Mmutla lied and said that the baby was probably full from the meat he had served during the day. Mmutla eventually killed and cooked the one remaining baby. When Noko returned from the fields, she asked Mmutla to bring the children for breastfeeding. Mmutla started crying and, when asked, he said some unknown passerby had eaten all the porcupines. Noko sent Mmutla to consult a traditional seer to find out who had killed the porcupines. The seer threw bones and confirmed that the porcupines had been killed by their caretaker. Mmutla then manipulated the seer into believing that it had been a passerby who had killed the porcupines. Noko once again sent Mmutla to Tshwene (monkey), another seer, to confirm the murder. Mmutla tried to manipulate Tshwene as well, but because Tshwene was smarter, he did not succeed. Tshwene threw the bones and confirmed that Mmutla was the murder. Mmutla fled to the cave that had two openings and when Tshwene and Noko nearly caught him, he ran and escaped using the second opening. Mmutla then transformed himself into a stone near the river bank. Tshwene suspected that the stone might be Mmutla and suggested that Noko throw the stone into the river. Instead, Noko threw the stone further to the other side of the river. That was when the stone turned into Mmutla and he laughed while jumping out of excitement, singing a celebratory song – “my beloved has helped me cross the overflowing river”.

**Folktale 3: *Mmutla le Khudu* (Leeuw et al., 2016)**

In this folktale, Mmutla brags about being able to run faster than all the animals in the community. He constantly teased Khudu (tortoise) about being the slowest of them all

and that he was burdened by the heavy shell on his back. One day, Mmutla proposed to participate in a track race with Khudu to prove that he could run faster than everyone. Khudu agreed to this and believed that despite him being the slowest, he was capable of winning the race out of determination. Mmutla laughed at Khudu for his unrealistic self-trust and determination. The race between Mmutla and Khudu began. Mmutla ran as fast as he could and left Khudu far behind him. Mmutla was tired after a distance and decided to stop and rest under a tree since Khudu was far behind him. He overslept and Khudu passed him sleeping under the tree. Khudu slowly approached the finish line and won the race. Mmutla realised late that Khudu had reached the finish line first and was overcome by shame.

**Folktale 4: *Mmutla le Tholo* (Leeuw et al., 2016)**

In this folktale, Mmutla tricks Tholo (kudu), his friend, into agreeing to stab Dimo (mythical creature) with his horns. They found Dimo sleeping under a tree near the river. Mmutla went into the forest and collected a swarm of bees in a sack. He placed the sack next to Dimo who was sleeping beside a tree. His plan was to provoke the bees so that they stung Dimo. Mmutla started singing a song about Dimo to wake him up. Mmutla fueled Tholo with a fighting urge to provoke the feared Dimo and stab him with the horns. Tholo missed Dimo and stabbed the horns deep into a tree trunk. As Dimo was ready to attack, Tholo's horns magically elongated and became longer and longer. The horns continued to grow and wrapped Dimo to the point that he became scared and was unable to move. Tholo extended his horns to wrap them around Mmutla as well, because he was angry that Mmutla had nearly caused him to be killed by Dimo. Dimo nearly swallowed Mmutla, but he apologised and pleaded with him not to. Mmutla pleaded with Tholo as well to set him free from the horns and promised to give him sweet honey from the beehive. Mmutla also offered to take care of Tholo's children should he set him free. Tholo agreed and set Mmutla free from being wrapped by the horns. Unfortunately, Tholo was tripped by his long horns and fell to the ground hard to the extent that he bled severely. Mmutla then heard a sound similar to that of young girls singing in the wilderness and told Dimo to go and eat the young girls. Dimo fell for Mmutla's trick and set off toward the singing sounds, only to find that it was not girls' voices, but the sound of a swarm of bees. The bees stung Dimo very badly. On the other side, Tholo, who had fallen to the ground, asked Mmutla for help, but Mmutla merely broke into laughter and did not help any of the two. Mmutla told Tholo that he

should see to it that he helps himself. Tholo was later helped by Ditshwene (monkeys) that were near the area.

### **Folktale 5: *Mmutle le Phiri* (Mohulatsi et al., 2015)**

This folktale begins with Mmutla (hare) and Phiri (hyena) walking in the forest hunting for food, but they could not find any food as the area was experiencing extreme famine. Phiri suggested that they part ways so that he hunts on one side of the forest and Mmutla on the other side. Phiri came across a road where many trucks carrying food used to pass by. Phiri lay in the middle of the road and acted dead. The drivers of one of the trucks saw Phiri and went to check on him. They whipped him, thinking he would wake up, but he endured the whip and did not wake up. They believed that he was indeed dead, carried him to the back of the truck and set off. Phiri then quietly unloaded six tanks of jam, syrup and butter from the moving truck. He then disembarked the moving truck and collected the tanks on the road. On the other side of the forest, Mmutla did not manage to gather any food. The following day, Phiri took Mmutla along to the road and both acted dead in the middle of the road. Mmutla ran away when he heard the drivers taking out a gun to test whether he was alive or really dead. Phiri went on to steal four more tanks of food. Mmutla then lied to Phiri that he is a teacher and will contribute with food once he receives his teaching wages. They both agreed that Phiri would go to the road to gather food while Mmutla goes to work as a teacher. While Phiri went to the road, Mmutla stayed behind and ate all the food in the 10 tanks that had been stolen. When Phiri realised that Mmutla had finished all the food, Mmutla ran away. In his escape, Mmutla met with Segokgo (spider) and asked him to carry him to Tladi (the lightning) in the sky with his spider web. He lied that he was going to Tladi to confess his sins. After Segokgo helped Mmutla to ascend to Tladi, Mmutla offered to herd cattle in the sky. In the evening, Tladi thanked Mmutla for herding his cattle and cooked a bull for him. Mmutla ate alone and did not share his food with Segokgo who had helped him reach the sky to Tladi. Segokgo then left with his web so that Mmutla could no longer descend from the sky. Mmutla then used tripe to lure Segokgo to help him descend to the land. Mmutla hid inside leftover cow tripe and asked Segokgo to descend the tripe to the land. Unknowingly, Segokgo descended the bowl of tripe with Mmutla inside. When it was time for Segokgo and his family to prepare to cook the tripe, Mmutla jumped out of the bowl and ran away.

**Folktale 6: *Mmutle le Phokojwe* (Mohulatsi et al., 2015)**

Phokojwe (jackal) had three children and she needed a caretaker to help babysit while she was at the hunting field. Phokojwe approached Mmutla and requested him to babysit her three children. On the first day of Mmutla babysitting, he killed and cooked one baby jackal. When Phokojwe returned from the field, she asked Mmutla to bring the children for breastfeeding. Mmutla brought the children one after the other, but returned the second baby twice to make them count to three. On the second day, Mmutla killed the second baby, cooking and eating him as well. Mmutla did the same with the third child and ran away before Phokojwe returned from the hunting field. Phokojwe did not find anyone at home as Mmutla had killed all her children and absconded. Phokojwe began talking to herself out of stress and went to search for her children and Mmutla. She spotted Mmutla from a distance running away, but Mmutla turned himself into a beautiful grinding stone. Phokojwe picked the stone up and threw it to the other side of the river. The stone transformed back into Mmutla. Mmutla boasted that Phokojwe had helped him cross the river. He absconded while Phokojwe returned home, mourning for her children.

**Folktale 7: *Phiri, Mmutla le dijana* (Trok, 2015)**

In this folktale, Mmutla and Phiri (hyena) are friends. Mmutla did not own a large washbasin, so he visited Phiri to borrow a larger washbasin. After a few days, Phiri went to Mmutla to request his washbasin back as he needed to do laundry. Mmutla told Phiri that his large washbasin had given birth to a smaller basin. He gave Phiri two basins; his large basin and a smaller one. The next day, Mmutla went back to Phiri to once again borrow the large basin. After a few days, Phiri visited Mmutla to fetch his basin; however, this time, Mmutla told Phiri that his large basin had unfortunately passed away. Phiri could not believe that a basin could pass away; however, Mmutla tricked him by persuading him into believing that if the basin had given birth before, it surely could die as well. Phiri called a meeting with all the other animals to attempt to solve the problem; nevertheless, Mmutla managed to convince the animals that the basin had indeed died. Phiri lost the case and his large basin to Mmutla.

**Folktale 8: *Mmutla o tsietsa tlou gape* (Trok, 2015)**

In this folktale, Mmutla and Tlou (elephant) were best friends who owned a herd of cattle, camels and a flock of sheep together. They usually herded livestock toward a

local pond to drink and graze. One day when the livestock was grazing, Mmutla and Tlou started playing football to pass the time. Every time when they played football, Tlou always scored many more goals than Mmutla. Mmutla then asked Tlou what made him score so many goals whenever they played. Tlou said that his big legs made him score many goals. Mmutla became jealous of Tlou's wins and big legs. The following day, Mmutla proposed that they play a track racing game. This time, Mmutla won all the rounds and when Tlou asked what made him run faster, he held that it was because of his small and slim legs. Tlou then wished to have small and slim legs so that he could run faster as Mmutla had done. Mmutla told Tlou that for him to have small and slim legs, he needed to place his big legs in a blazing flame of fire. Tlou desperately agreed to this, then Mmutla set fire to wood and told Tlou to place all his legs in the fire. When he cried to Mmutla that he was burning, Mmutla said that it was the only way to have slim legs. Mmutla became very happy when Tlou's legs burnt. Tlou burnt severely and spent many days unable to walk home. Mmutla and Tlou's friendship ended because of this.

### **Folktale 9: *Mohatla wa Haruki* (Nal'ibali Organisation, n.d)**

A drove of hares living together on an island had very fluffy, beautiful white long tails. The parent hares used to warn their children to never play near the big river separating the island and the countryside as there were many crocodiles (Dikwena) that were salivating for their flesh. One smarter Mmutla, named Haruki, decided to disobey his parents and invited his siblings to watch him cross over to the other side of the river where crocodiles resided. Haruki went toward the river and summoned the king of the crocodiles to come out of the water. He suggested that they count both the crocodile and hare families to see which group was the biggest in number. The king of the crocodiles agreed with the intention to eat all the hares while counting them. Haruki requested the crocodiles to lie next to each other in a straight line across the river toward the other side for him to count them one by one. He climbed on the back of the first crocodile and jumped from one to the other, counting them until the hundredth crocodile. After the hundredth one, he jumped to the river bank on the other side, but then boastfully shouted out of excitement that he had outsmarted the crocodiles, which had become his bridge to help him cross over to the other side of the river. When the hundredth crocodile heard Haruki saying all these things, it quickly turned around and bit Haruki's fluffy white tail off. Haruki became frightened by this; however, he was

grateful to be alive and that he had eventually crossed to the other side of the river, which he had been longing to do.

**Folktale 10: *Mmutle le Lekgowa* (Mogapi, 1993)**

In this folktale, Mmutle was cooking soft porridge at his home. He suddenly saw a white man approaching his house and quickly extinguished the fire that he had used to cook the porridge. The white man was astounded when he saw a pot boiling without any sign of fire nearby. When asked how it was possible, Mmutle lied that it was a unique pot that could boil and cook food with no fire. He said that he was the only one who owned such a pot in the entire world. The white man offered Mmutle a huge amount of money in exchange for the alleged 'miracle' pot. When the white man reached his home, he instructed the pot to cook porridge with no luck. He then realised that Mmutle had conned him and reported him to the Community Council. Mmutle gathered all his friends in order for the white man to struggle to identify him among all the identical hares. When the man failed to identify the hare that had allegedly cheated him, the Council sentenced the white man for lying that Mmutle had defrauded him.

**Folktale 11: *Mmutle le tlou* (Mogapi, 1993)**

This folktale is about Mmutle and Tlou (elephant) who one day met in the wilderness. Mmutle mocked Tlou about his physique, saying that he was fat as if he did not have any bone structure in his body. Mmutle approached Leruarua (whale) and teased him about his huge body as well. Mmutle told both Tlou and Leruarua that he was stronger than them despite him being the smallest. They agreed to play a game of pulling each other using a rope to test their strength. Mmutle gave Tlou one end of the rope and Leruarua the other end. They pulled with no luck and eventually gave up as the one was unable to pull the other. Tlou did not know that he was pulling Leruarua and Leruarua did not know that he was pulling Tlou. Two large and heavy animals were pulling each other. As a result, there was no winner. They both respected and honoured Mmutla for his alleged strength without knowing that he had tricked them into believing that he was pulling on the one end of the rope. Leruarua thought he had failed to overpower Mmutla in terms of strength, and Tlou also thought he had failed to pull the small Mmutla.

**Folktale 12: *Mmutle le diphologolo* (Mogapi, 1993)**

In this folktale, Mmutle is seen sleeping under a marula tree. He ran away when he felt a marula fruit fall next to him. On the way, he met Phuti (duiker) who asked him why he was running. Mmutla told Phuti that he was running away from the spears of their enemies who were out to kill them. Phuti believed Mmutla and also ran along. On their way, Mmutla kept telling other animals the same false story and they also followed them to the cave. In the morning, the animals left to collect food while Phuti remained to guard a pile of cow dung. While Phuti was sleeping under a tree, he saw a mysterious being called Mmadibotoboto stealing the cow dung. Mmadibotoboto threatened to injure Phuti who ran away out of fear. Mmutle then offered to remain behind to guard the dung. Mmadibotoboto arrived again and found the vigilant Mmutla guarding the dung. Mmutla requested that they first play together before Mmadibotoboto could take the cow dung. While playing, Mmutla killed Mmadibotoboto and cooked his tail. Khudu (tortoise) found out that Mmutla had murdered Mmadibotoboto and told the animal community. The animals planned to kill Mmutla as part of his punishment; however, because of his clever character, he found out early and escaped before they burned down his house. He ran away forever and was never caught.

**Folktale 13: *Tiholwe le mmutle* (Mogapi, 1993)**

In this folktale, Mmutle envied Tiholwe's beautiful horns, which were able to make a very sweet melody. He asked for the horns, but Tiholwe denied him. Mmutle then planned to steal the horns from Tiholwe. He proposed that they dig a pit and prepare a huge fire inside the pit. He said that they should then lie next to the fire and when one started burning, the other should quickly rescue them. Tiholwe agreed to play this game with Mmutle. Mmutle went into the pit of fire first and when he started feeling the heat, he called upon Tiholwe to take him out, which he did. Then it was Tiholwe's turn to get inside the pit of fire. He went into the pit and called upon Mmutle to take him out, which he did. In the second round of the game, Tiholwe went inside the pit and called Mmutle to take him out; however, this time, Mmutle intentionally delayed rescue until Tiholwe burnt to death inside the pit. Mmutle then stole Tiholwe's horns and started singing a celebratory song about how he had defeated Tiholwe as he was a young boy and was dead, while the smart Mmutle remained alive.

**Folktale 14: *Mmutle le sediba sa diphologolo* (Mogapi, 1993)**

In this folktale, the animals were struck by famine and drought in their community. The king summoned all the animals to discuss how to construct a well from which they could draw water. All the animals were expected to assist with digging the well, but Mmutle did not agree to help and said that he would never drink from the well. After the well had been built, the animals had to look for food. Mmutle stayed behind and stole water from the well which he had not assisted to dig. The animals then asked Phiri (hyena) to remain and guard the well while they looked for food. Mmutle approached Phiri with bee honey and told him that should he allow him to drink from the well, he would give him the sweet honey. Phiri allowed Mmutle to drink from the well in exchange for honey. The animal community decided to change Phiri as the guard; however, Mmutle still managed to trick all the other animals into allowing him to drink from the well. They decided to trap Mmutle with a sticky statue they had constructed. Mmutle got stuck to the statue near the well and they caught him. They agreed that Tlou (elephant) would be the one to kill Mmutle for his actions, but Mmutle tricked Tlou by asking to be thrown in the sky before he killed him. When he landed, he quickly ran away and escaped punishment.

**Folktale 15: *Mmutle le phokojwe le senonnori* (Mogapi, 1993)**

In this folktale, Mmutle is hungry, invades Phokojwe's (jackal) farm and steals beans. Phokojwe realised that his beans had been stolen and set a trap for Mmutle. Phokojwe prepared thorns from the *mookana* tree and constructed an animal trap. When Mmutle entered the farm to steal crops again, he got stuck in the thorns in the trap and was unable to move. Senonnori (bear) came and Mmutle started acting as if he were picking up some *mmankadile* fruit. Senonnori asked for a share of the fruit, but Mmutle manipulated him and said that he had to help him out of the trap first before he could have a share of the fruit. Senonnori helped Mmutle out of the thorns in the trap. Mmutle then tricked Senonnori in that, before he could have the fruit, he had to also fall into the trap first. Senonnori agreed to be tied to the trap and Mmutle left him there. When Phokojwe found Senonnori in the trap, he assaulted him, believing that he was the thief. Senonnori managed to escape and went to Mmutle to scold him for tricking him. Mmutle offered Senonnori some meat, but had to tie his tail to the tail of a horse before he could have the meat. Senonnori fell for Mmutle's tricks again. The horse kicked Senonnori until he died.

**Folktale 16: *Mmutle le tau* (Mogapi, 1993)**

In this folktale, Tau (lion) is very old and can no longer prey on animals for food. He then told Mmutle that he wants to eat him as he is hungry and cannot hunt food for himself. With his trickster personality, Mmutle suggested that they build a kraal and that Tau should act as if he is dead inside the kraal. The aim was to gather all the animals to mourn Tau inside the kraal. He quickly killed all the animals. Indeed, Mmutle's proposal came to pass. All the animals that had entered the kraal were killed by Tau. Mmutle then cooked a lot of meat for supper. During this time, Mmutle magically instructed a shelter to build itself, which it did, but Tau was asked to climb on top to fix the roof of the shelter. While Tau was on top of the roof, Mmutle nailed Tau's tail to the roof timber and when asked, he lied that he was removing ticks from Tau's tail. Mmutle dished out a large piece of meat and asked Tau if he would like to eat it. Tau said that he should not as it was for the old men. Instead, he should eat a smaller piece for youngsters. Mmutle ate the large piece of meat which he was not supposed to eat, according to Tau, and he continued to eat all the meat inside the pot. Heavy thunderstorm rain came and killed Tau because he could not descend down to catch Mmutle. Tau eventually died on top of the roof.

**Folktale 17: *Mmutle le diphologolo tse dingwe* (1993)**

In this folktale, the animal community is experiencing extreme famine. The king instructed that they collect the fruit of the *motsotsojane* tree in some area far from theirs. They arrived there after three days and started gathering the fruit in rucksacks. During the night when everyone was sleeping, Mmutle sneaked out to eat all the fruit that had been collected. He then took a leaf from the *motsotsojane* tree and put it in Tlholwe's buttocks as false evidence that Tlholwe had eaten the fruit. The next morning, Mmutla was the first to alert everyone that the fruit was missing. He suggested that they search all their buttocks and see who had eaten the fruit. The leaf was found in Tlholwe's buttocks and he was burnt to death for that. Mmutle was very amused when Tlholwe was killed and he started singing: "They killed Tlholwe, my uncle's child...I am the one who ate *motsotsojane* fruits". Some animals heard the song and chased him; however, he managed to escape and was never caught.

**Folktale 18: *Tau le Ntšhwe* (Mogapi, 1993)**

In this folktale, Mmutla found Tau (lion) sleeping. He hid behind a tree and said aloud that he was missing his brother Tau. Tau heard this and summoned him. Mmutla lied that he was with Ntšhwe (ostrich) and Ntšhwe said that he was not afraid of Tau and could fight him off. Tau became angry and asked to be taken to Ntšhwe to kill him. Mmutla hid behind a tree while Tau asked Ntšhwe to wake up and fight him. Tau ran toward Ntšhwe to fight him, but Ntšhwe kicked Tau in his chest and he immediately felt light-headed. Mmutla was witnessing the fight from a distance while laughing. The fight continued until Tau was killed.

**Folktale 19: *Mmutla le Tau* (Mogapi, 1993)**

In this folktale, Mmutla approached Tau (lion) who had four young cubs. Mmutla offered to babysit the lion cubs while Tau hunted for food. Tau agreed and set off to the hunting field. She returned with meat and instructed Mmutla to eat only the bony portions and give the cubs the meaty and fatty portions. After Tau set off to the field again, Mmutla tricked the cubs and gave them the bones while he ate the meaty portions. After having eaten, Mmutla dug a deep pit and made a fire in it. He called the cubs to a game of jumping over the fire. Mmutla jumped first, then the first born cub, second, third and the fourth cub fell into the fire. Mmutla reached for a rod, cooked the cub and ate it, together with the other remaining cubs. When Tau returned from the hunting field, she asked to breastfeed her children. Mmutla presented the cubs one after the other, but returned the third cub twice. When Tau set off to the field on another day, Mmutla extended the pit and set fire in it for the remaining cubs to jump over. This time, the third cub fell into the fire and was also cooked. Mmutla repeated this tactic until all the cubs had fallen into the fire and were eaten. When Tau returned, she found Mmutla hanging on the thorn tree sobbing. When asked, Mmutla said that diTshwene (monkeys) had killed all the cubs and had hung him on the tree. Tau became very angry and sent Mmutla to search for the monkeys. Mmutla found diTshwene playing the *morabaraba* game and tricked them into uttering these words when throwing the dice: "I am the one who killed Tau's cubs, you all cannot do me any harm". He promised sweet potatoes to each monkey that uttered those words. He quickly returned to Tau and told her to climb into a sack filled with sweet potatoes, so that she could catch the monkeys and kill them all. Mmutla carried the sack to where diTshwene were playing a game. They were throwing a dice and Tau heard one of them saying

that they killed the cubs. Tau became very angry and quickly jumped out of the sack to kill all the monkeys in revenge for killing her children.

### **4.3 Data analysis**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, previous research illustrates that African folktales teach moral lessons; however, in this study, it is argued that Setswana hare folktales do not teach moral lessons. This assumption is based on the themes featured and the behaviour of the hare character across the folktales, which seem to contravene the notion of morality described in Chapter 3.

A total of 16 themes emerged from analysing the themes portrayed in the collected folktales, as well as the behaviour and conduct of the hare characters across the folktales. These themes expose behaviours against morality displayed by characters, particularly the hare in the collected folktales. The behaviour of hare characters in folktales was thematically analysed against the notion of morality described in Chapter 3 and it was found that the themes mirror behaviours associated with moral degeneration. The 16 emerged themes are as follows:

1. Trickster behaviour;
2. Frequent murders;
3. Excessive telling of lies;
4. Theft for self-gain;
5. A lack of sympathy and compassion;
6. Greed and ego-centricity;
7. Blame-shifting and scapegoating;
8. Risky behaviour;
9. The manipulation of victims;
10. Violence;
11. Mockery as a form of abuse;
12. Jealousy;
13. Betrayal and disloyalty to friends;
14. Masquerading and running away from accountability;
15. Disobedience to parents; and
16. Magic for self-interest.

The themes were identified and analysed against the concept of morality to determine the extent to which they contravene the concept. The behaviours are discussed in the following sections using the thematic analysis technique. The Behaviourist Theory and Theory of Moral Development, as discussed in Chapter 3, have been applied to the analysis of the identified themes.

#### **4.3.1 Theme 1: Trickster behaviour**

Trickster behaviour is prevalent in the collected folktales and is observed through the hare character who constantly tricks the commonly strong, powerful and larger animals in the story. This kind of behaviour is against moral standards and contravenes the notion of morality as it typically results in Mmutla's victims being emotionally hurt, physically injured or even losing their lives.

In Folktale 1, Mmutla tricks animals to enter the kraal he had built to mourn the staged death of Tau (lion). His intention was to lock all the animals inside the kraal so that Tau quickly wakes up and kills them all for food. Mmutla's trickster behaviour enables him to succeed in his morally wrong missions in that he not only tricks smaller animals, but larger and stronger animals as well. In this folktale, after Tau killed all the animals, Mmutla plans to trick Tau despite him being commonly portrayed as the king of the jungle. He requested Tau to climb on the roof to lay thatch. Unknowingly, Tau climbed on the roof and Mmutla tied his tail to one of the timbers on the roof. His sole aim in pursuing this trick was to trap Tau on top of the roof while he ate all the meat of the animals that Tau had killed inside the kraal. Tau ultimately died on the roof and Mmutla removed his skin and wore it to masquerade as Tau to trick Phiri (hyena) and his family.

Mmutla employed his trickster personality in Folktale 2 to gain access to Noko's (porcupine) household and eat all her children. Mmutla offered to babysit Noko's children while she laboured at the farm. On the first day of Mmutla babysitting, he killed, cooked and ate one baby porcupine. He continued to kill and eat the children each day until only one porcupine remained. In the evening when Noko asked to breastfeed her children, Mmutla, being the trickster he is, returned the one remaining child many times so that Noko did not realise that her children were missing. Mmutla eventually cooked and ate the remaining child. When Noko returned from the farming

field, she requested to breastfeed her children; however, Mmutla lied that a passerby had killed and ate all the children. His tactic was to play the victim and avoid accountability for killing the children. He visited a fortune teller, who is believed to have the ability to see and tell hidden truths; nevertheless, despite the seer's ability, Mmutla managed to trick him into believing that the porcupines had been eaten by an unknown passerby. Noko requested that Mmutla consult another seer, whom Mmutla was unable to trick as he was smarter than him. The second seer confirmed to Noko that her children had been killed and eaten by their sitter. Nevertheless, Mmutla was never caught for his behaviour.

Similar to Folktale 1, in Folktale 4, Mmutla managed to trick a big and the most feared mythical creature called Dimo (mythical creature) despite him being smaller. In Folktale 4, the famous trickster animal in Setswana folktales tricked Dimo into believing that the sweet sounds they had heard from the wilderness were voices of young girls whom Dimo could feast on. Little did the powerful Dimo know that Mmutla had tricked him to a sack filled with a swarm of bees that stung him very badly.

Mmutla is often portrayed as the most powerful trickster figure among other trickster characters in folktales. This is evident in Folktale 5 where Phiri tricks truck drivers to satisfy his hunger. Phiri lay on the road and acted dead in order for the truck drivers to carry him into the truck. Inside the truck, there were tanks full of jam, syrup and butter, which he unloaded quickly when the truck was moving. He then disembarked a moving truck and collected the tanks to his and Mmutla's household. While Phiri may be regarded as a trickster in this folktale, Mmutla is displayed as the most powerful one who tricked Phiri as well. Mmutla remained behind when Phiri went to search for food and he ate all the jam, syrup and butter which Phiri had unloaded from the truck. Mmutla then fled and met Segokgo (spider) whom he requested to assist him in ascending to the sky using the spider's web. In the sky, Tladi (lightning) offered him meat which he ate alone and never shared with Segokgo who had helped him ascend to the sky. Segokgo was hurt by Mmutla's conduct and swore that he would not help Mmutla descend from the sky ever again. Nevertheless, Mmutla tricked Segokgo into lowering him to the land. He hid himself inside a bowl full of leftover tripe and asked Segokgo to lower the bowl to the land. Segokgo helped lower the bowl not aware that

Mmutla was inside the tripe. When Segokgo was about to cook the tripe, Mmutla jumped out of the bowl and escaped.

In Folktale 7, Mmutla cheated Phiri with a washbasin. He used a similar strategy to the one used in Folktales 1, 2 and 5, of telling lies in order for his victims to give in to his tricks. In this folktale, he lied to Phiri, who is supposedly a perilous character, that his large washbasin had birthed a smaller basin. In the second instance, Mmutla told Phiri that the washbasin had died. Phiri became doubtful and presented the matter to the Animal Council. Nevertheless, Mmutla still managed to persuade all the animals that Phiri's washbasin had indeed died. This folktale emphasises the immoral trickster personality of Mmutla who is capable of cheating characters that are commonly portrayed as strong, powerful and dangerous in many African folktales. Despite the unfairness and immorality of this kind of behaviour, Mmutla always succeeds in accomplishing his missions across all the trickster tales. Mmutla uses lies as a tool to accomplish his tricks. This remains a concern in that when one listens to a lie for too long, one tends to end up believing the lie. The trickster then stands a good chance of tricking the victims without a hurdle as the victims will by then be believing that the lies told are true.

Despite the fact that Mmutla tricks his victims on trivial matters, he also manages to trick characters into risky circumstances. In Folktale 9, the young hare known as Haruki tricks a family of crocodiles into assisting him to cross to the other side of the river. Haruki's parents had instructed him and his siblings not to play near the river as Dikwena are dangerous and hungry for their meat. However, Haruki decided to disobey his parents and set off to the river. He tricked the leader of Dikwena into allowing him to count them to determine which group between hares and crocodiles is the greatest in terms of population. Kwena was completely unaware that the tiny Haruki intended to trick him into assisting him to cross to the other side of the river. Haruki suggested that he start counting the crocodiles by climbing on their backs and jumping from one to the other up to the river bank on the other side. On the hundredth crocodile, Haruki jumped off to the river bank and said, while laughing, that he had tricked Dikwena into making a bridge for him to cross to the other side of the river, which he had been longing to do for a long time.

The general assumption about characters is that human characters are smarter than animal characters; however, Mmutla is displayed smarter than man in Folktale 10. In this folktale, Mmutla tricks the white man who visited him. He lied that he is in possession of a unique pot which can mysteriously cook porridge without placing it on fire. Mmutla with his slick tongue convinced the white man to exchange the alleged magical pot with a large sum of money. When the white man reached home, he instructed the pot to cook porridge, but the pot could not. That was when he realised that Mmutla had tricked him into believing that such a pot exists and in exchanging money for the pot. Mmutla outsmarted the man, which implies that his level of trickster behaviour is heightened in Setswana folktales and remains unsurpassed.

In Folktale 11, Mmutla again succeeds in tricking bigger animals to spare himself praise and respect from his peers. He told Tlou (elephant) and Leruarua (whale) that he might be smaller, but has more strength than the two larger animals. He proposed that they pull a rope from both ends, and that the one who manages to overpower the other, will carry the status of the “strongest being” in the entire animal community. The plan was for Mmutla to pull on one end while Tlou pulled from the other end. However, the trickster Mmutla approached Leruarua as well and requested that he pulls from the other end of the rope. Mmutla lied that he would be pulling from the other hand, instead the two ends were occupied by Tlou and Leruarua who were not aware that Mmutla had deceived them. Tlou and Leruarua, being two huge and strong animals, either of them was able to overpower the other until they quit the pull-a-rope game. Tlou and Leruarua did not know that they were pulling against each other, and not with Mmutla. The small, but cheating Mmutla was then respected and honoured for his alleged strengths, which were not genuine. This conduct is morally inappropriate as Mmutla misled his victims and enjoyed the benefits of other characters’ strengths and work.

In Folktale 14, Mmutla succeeds in tricking a number of animals alone. In this folktale, the animals experienced excessive famine and drought. They agreed that all the animals should assist in digging a well from which they could draw water; however, Mmutla dissented to assist in the construction of the well and asserted that he would never consume water from the well. Nevertheless, with his cunning personality, Mmutla stole water from the well and consumed it. When the animals realised that water was missing, Phiri was requested to guard the well. The trickster Mmutla

approached Phiri and offered him bee honey in exchange for water from the well. Phiri fell for Mmutla's trick and allowed him to drink the water. The animals then decided to remove Phiri as the guard; however, Mmutla still managed to trick all the other animals into allowing him to drink from the well. They eventually trapped Mmutla by erecting a statue covered with a sticky substance. On another attempt of Mmutla to steal water, he got stuck to the statue and was trapped near the well. The community administered that Mmutla be killed by Tlou. Prior to Tlou completing the task, Mmutla requested that Tlou throw him into the sky and that he would be killed when he lands on the ground. Little did Tlou know that Mmutla was tricking him to escape. By the time he landed on the ground, he quickly ran and absconded on the animals' watch.

While Mmutla tricks characters for his interests, he also tricks bigger and powerful characters to protect himself whenever he comes across potential harm. Similar to Folktale 14, as discussed above, Mmutla used his tricks to escape death in Folktale 16. In this folktale, Mmutla is seen tricking yet another bigger and powerful character, Tau, who wanted to eat Mmutla, because he was hungry. However, with the intention to survive death, Mmutla suggested that they fake Tau's death to bring other animals closer in mourning for Tau to attack and kill them for meat. Indeed, the mission was accomplished and Mmutla survived being killed and feasted on by Tau. Mmutla cheated Tau to feed his appetite. He tricked Tau into climbing on top of the roof and nailed his tail to the roof timber. While Tau was stuck on the roof, Mmutla ate all the meat that had been prepared. Tau remained on the roof until he died.

Even though Mmutla assumes his tricks mainly to protect himself and escape from potential harm, he usually escapes at the expense of other characters' lives and emotions. Concurrently, he cheats by running away from accountability for his faults and to satisfy his selfish desires that are driven by self-centeredness and greed.

#### **4.3.2 Theme 2: Frequent murders**

While Mmutla is regarded as the famous trickster in Setswana folktales, his trickster attempts often conclude with the intentional murdering of vulnerable characters. Frequent and intentional murders prevail in the collected folktales. Mmutla is often the perpetrator who kills acquitted victims and is seldom caught for such immoral behaviour.

In Folktale 1, Mmutla proposed that Tau fake his own death to gather all the animals to mourn for Tau's alleged death. The plan was for Tau to wake up quickly and kill all the animals inside the kraal where his alleged dead body laid. Mmutla's plan manifested and Tau killed all the animals that came to mourn his staged death. In this folktale, Mmutla is not the direct murderer, but rather an accomplice to murder as he proposed and assisted in the implementation of the plan.

While he caused the killing of animals, Mmutla continues to plot a trap for Tau to feast on the meat alone. Mmutla proposed that Tau climb on top of the roof to lay thatch. Mmutla tied his tail to the roof so that he remained there until heavy thunderstorm came and killed Tau while Mmutla ate all the meat. Folktale 1 is similar to Folktale 16 where Mmutla nailed Tau's tail to the roof timber to eat all the cooked meat, while Tau remained trapped on top of the roof. Tau remained trapped until he ultimately died on the roof as a result of Mmutla's immorality and fearlessness to kill.

It has been observed that murder in folktales is frequent and normalised such that Mmutla does not display any sign of fear or doubt when killing, and that he is able to kill a number of characters in one folktale. For instance, in Folktale 1, Mmutla offered to babysit Phiri's 10 children. However, he did not intend well for them. He planned on killing and feasting on the children one after the other, day after day. He eventually killed all 10 children and even served Phiri their flesh to eat as well. Similar to Folktale 2, Mmutla offered to assist with babysitting the children of Noko (porcupine). While Noko was at the farm, Mmutla killed, cooked and ate one child. He continued to kill one child every day until all the children had been eaten. Yet again, Mmutla did not show any sign of doubt or remorse when committing murder after having killed the children. Instead, he established a plan to escape and avoid accountability. Mmutla assumed a similar strategy with Phokojwe's (jackal) three children in Folktale 6. He requested to babysit, but intentionally killed all the children in three days, cooking and eating them as well. In yet another folktale, namely Folktale 19, Mmutla adopts a similar strategy of requesting to babysit while his intention was to feast on the children. In Folktale 19, Mmutla takes care of Tau's four children and he proposed that they excavate a pit and set fire in it so that they could play a game of jumping the fire. Mmutla kept extending the pit for the cubs to struggle while jumping and eventually fall

into the fire. All four children were killed by the fire and Mmutla cooked and ate all of them.

As clarified above, Mmutla seems to adopt the same strategies when committing murder. Similar to Folktale 19, in Folktale 13, Mmutla tricked Tlholwe and eventually caused his death using fire. Mmutla envied Tlholwe's beautiful horns and proposed that they play a game of lying on fire. Whenever one burnt, the other should rescue them. However, Mmutla intentionally delayed rescue when Tlholwe was burning. Tlholwe burnt to death and Mmutla stole his beautiful horns. In this folktale, Mmutla killed as he wanted to satisfy his desire of owning beautiful horns.

While Mmutla is the primary murderer in many folktales, in some, he influences other characters to kill. In Folktales 15, 17 and 18, Mmutla is observed implicating other characters into circumstances where they are likely to die. In Folktale 15, Mmutla steals beans from Phokojwe's farm and Phokojwe sets an animal trap for the thief. With his cunning personality, Mmutla managed to persuade Senonnori (bear) to fall into the trap that was meant for the one who was stealing the beans. When Phokojwe realised that Senonnori was trapped, he assumed that he was the all-time thief and beat him up. Senonnori managed to escape and went to Mmutla to reprimand him for cheating him; however, Mmutla involved him in yet another risky situation. He offered him meat on condition that he tied his tail to the tail of a horse before he could eat the meat. The horse kicked Senonnori very hard until he died.

In Folktale 17, Mmutla ate all the *motsotsojane* fruit at night while everyone was sleeping. He then placed a *motsotsojane* leaf in Tlholwe's buttocks as false evidence that he had eaten the fruit. This was a very risky situation in which Mmutla had implicated Tlholwe. When the animals found the leaf in Tlholwe's buttocks, they ruled that he be killed. Mmutla found pleasure from Tlholwe's death and even sang a happy song about it.

In Folktale 18, Mmutla causes a fight between Ntšhwe (ostrich) and Tau (lion). He puts Ntšhwe in a risky situation of having to fight the one powerful character in folktales, namely the lion. On one side, Mmutla influences Tau to fight Ntšhwe while, on the other end, he perpetuates Ntšhwe to also fight Tau. In the midst of Ntšhwe faced with

a powerful and angry lion, he continues to fight Tau until he kills him. In this folktale, Mmutla is portrayed as the troublemaker who influences characters to fight one another, thereby resulting in the death of weaker characters.

In all folktales where Mmutla is not a direct murderer, he often tells lies to drive vulnerable victims into risky circumstances, which ultimately results in one killing another and usually finds pleasure in the death of characters. In such folktales where Mmutla is not the direct murderer, he often acts as the brainman who influences and organises murder. This theme prevails in folktales and Mmutla seems to have normalised murder in that he always accomplishes his missions and is never caught to account for this immoral behaviour, which contravenes moral standards and morality.

### **4.3.3 Theme 3: Excessive telling of lies**

It was observed that Mmutla succeeds in tricking his victims and achieves his mischievous and cunning missions through lying. Mmutla constantly lies to persuade even bigger and powerful animals that eventually give in to his tactics. He also tells lies to get out of trouble and, in an attempt to protect himself, he often accomplishes his immoral manoeuvres. The act of telling lies contravenes the notion of morality and is often perceived as wrong according to moral standards. Nevertheless, hare folktales feature the behaviour of telling lies in a manner that assists in accomplishing immoral missions, protecting oneself and escaping from the responsibility of one's actions.

In some folktales, Mmutla tells lies to cover his mischievous tracks. In Folktale 2, he killed and cooked Noko's children one after the other each day until only one child remained. In the evening when Noko requested to breastfeed her children, Mmutla returned the one remaining child many times to make them add up to the original number. When Noko asked why her children seemed to be full, Mmutla lied that they were probably full from the meat he had served them during the day.

Another reason for Mmutla lying is to shift the blame and to avoid accountability for his immoral actions. After having killed Noko's children, he killed and cooked the remaining child. On another day when Noko requested to breastfeed, Mmutla began weeping and told a big lie which could have incriminated another character. He lied

that some unknown passerby had killed and eaten all the children during the day. This was to shift the blame to a non-existing being. Noko requested that Mmutla consult a traditional seer to confirm who the killer was. However, Mmutla persuaded the seer to lie regarding what the bones were showing him. The seer then lied to Noko that the bones showed that an unknown passerby had killed the children.

In some instances, Mmutla tells lies to derail other characters from his way of performing his mischievous manoeuvres. In Folktale 5, Mmutla lied to Phiri that he was working as a teacher and shall donate his wages, which will be used to purchase food while Phiri is hunting. The reality was that Mmutla did not work as a teacher and was not willing to donate any wages to buy food. His sole intention was to send Phiri to the hunting field to remain behind alone to steal and eat all the jam, syrup and butter collected by Phiri. Mmutla told lies as he wanted to divert his obstacle away from his sight so that he could have a chance to steal. As Mmutla often runs away from accounting for his wrongdoings and faults, on his escape mission, he told yet more lies to Segokgo (spider), that he had to go to Tladi (lightning) in the sky quickly to confess his immoralities. The authentic truth was that he was running away from Phiri who by this time was aware that Mmutla had finished all the food for which he never laboured. In this incidence, Mmutla lied as he wanted to run away from accounting for his greed.

In Folktale 7, Mmutla lied to Phiri to rob him of his large washbasin. Here, envy influenced Mmutla to lie. He owned a smaller washbasin, yet envied Phiri's larger basin and cunningly told lies to take it away from Phiri. Mmutla lied to Phiri that his larger basin had given birth to a smaller basin. In the second incident, when Phiri had lent Mmutla a larger basin, Mmutla lied yet again that the basin had passed away. Phiri was disbelieving and consequently presented the matter to the Animal Council. Nevertheless, Mmutla managed to persuade all the animals that the basin had indeed died. The reality was that Mmutla had retained the washbasin as his own and Phiri definitively lost it. This folktale portrays lies as an assisting tool for getting what one wants in life. It, in turn, perpetuates children to tell lies to access what they want.

In Folktale 10, Mmutla lied to the white man to trick him into exchanging an alleged magical pot for a huge amount of money. Mmutla lied to the white man that he owned a pot that can magically cook porridge without being put on a fire. In this folktale,

Mmutla lied to defraud the white man. The man gave Mmutla a large sum of money for the alleged magical pot which could not perform the task when instructed to do so by the white man.

Mmutla also has the tendency of triggering unnecessary turmoil within the animal community through lies. In Folktale 12, Mmutla seemed to have created an uproar without a definite intention of gain or benefit. His intention for causing turmoil was not clear, except for the sake of creating one. In this folktale, Mmutla felt a marula fruit fall near him while sleeping under a tree. However, instead of narrating the event as it absolutely had occurred to his friends, he lied and created a false story to cause unnecessary turmoil. He lied that his enemies were out to attack and kill all animals by shooting spears at them. He first narrated this false story to Phuti (duiker), then to the other animals which all believed Mmutla and began running to seek refuge on false alarm. Mmutla led the search for refuge and eventually led them to the cave. This incident implies that Mmutla becomes unsettled when peace reigns and that he, therefore, tells lies to disturb peace. This is similar to Folktale 18 where Mmutla lied to cause a fierce fight between Ntšhwe and Tau. He approached Tau and lied to him that Ntšhwe said that he was not afraid of Tau, who, in many folktales, is regarded as the most powerful and feared animal. He lied that Ntšhwe had requested to fight and kill Tau. In this folktale, Mmutla lied to cause an uproar and disturb the peace between Ntšhwe and Tau through which he finds amusement in that he laughs during the fight. Consequently, the social relationship between these characters deteriorated as a result of Mmutla's lies and ability to cause unnecessary chaos.

#### **4.3.4 Theme 4: Theft for self-gain**

Across different folktales, the hare is a thief who steals other characters' belongings to satisfy his desires, to acquire whatever he wants, and to meet his needs. In some folktales, he steals items he never laboured for because of envy and greed.

In Folktale 5, Mmutla stole food items, namely jam, syrup and butter, which were stored inside the 10 tanks collected by Phiri. Phiri managed to acquire the tanks through theft. He played dead nearby a road used by truck drivers to transport various food products. His intention was to con the drivers into carrying him to the back of their truck, following which he slyly unloaded all the food items in the truck. The plan

manifested and Phiri managed to steal six tanks in the first attempt and four in the second attempt, assuming the same strategy of playing dead near the road. Out of greed, Mmutla used his thief personality to steal all the jam, syrup and butter collected by Phiri. He ate and finished all the items alone while Phiri went hunting for more food. In this folktale, the theft theme prevails such that the two main characters, namely Phiri and Mmutla, engaged in theft activities to feed their hunger and greed, respectively. Phiri stole to satisfy his hunger, while Mmutla stole the food to feed his greed. The fact that the hare did not want to gather food with the hyena exposes the lazy trait of the hare, who would rather steal than work for what he needs.

To gain what he desired, Mmutla used his tricks to steal Phiri's larger basin in Folktale 7. Mmutla lied to Phiri that the basin he had lent him had died. This was to make Phiri believe that the reason for losing his basin was that it had died and no longer existed while Mmutla had actually retained it. In this folktale, Mmutla told lies in an attempt to trick Phiri and steal his basin. His tactics granted him the opportunity to possess what he had always desired to possess. This folktale could encourage theft in that when one needs something, one could steal it as long as one does not get caught. It could teach one to remain calculative before attempting to steal everything. The hare's plans appear to have been thought out and well organised before executing the theft.

In Folktale 13, Mmutla was influenced by envy to engage in theft. He was envious of Tlholwe's beautiful horns and planned to take them. Mmutla proposed that they make a fire in which they will lie and when one of them were burning, the other would rescue them. However, Mmutla intended to trap Tlholwe inside the fire so that he burnt to death while Mmutla survives to steal the beautiful horns. Mmutla dispossessed Tlholwe of his horns and began singing about how he had defeated Tlholwe and how he had stolen his beautiful horns. In this folktale, Mmutla stole the horns due to envy and the strong desire to own Tlholwe's horns. This demonstrates Mmutla's self-centeredness to possess beautiful items, while others remain not good enough to own such items. He failed to accept the uniqueness among characters and, therefore, engaged in theft to possess what he naturally did not have.

In some instances, Mmutla steals to access essentials, namely water and food, to satisfy thirst and hunger, respectively. In Folktale 14, when the community experienced extreme drought, it was proposed that all animals should assist in digging a well from which they would draw water. Mmutla did not agree to assist with the digging and swore that he would never consume water from the well. However, he trusted in his cunning abilities that he would steal water from the well which he never laboured for to satisfy his thirst. Yet again, he substituted his laziness with stealing. During the day when all the animals went hunting for food, Mmutla would remain behind to steal water from the well. While Mmutla stole water from the well in Folktale 14 to satisfy his thirst, in Folktale 15, he stole beans from Phokojwe's farmstead to satisfy his hunger. Instead of helping with the digging of the well, Mmutla would rather steal water. Instead of asking for beans, he resorted to stealing. This implies that Mmutla in folktales has an exaggerated sense of self-worth, which drives him to immorality in stealing whatever he desires.

#### **4.3.5 Theme 5: Lack of sympathy and compassion**

Mmutla's behaviour and conduct reflect that he lacks sympathy for his victims. The fact that Mmutla across Setswana folktales often repeats his immoral behaviour, usually leaving victims flocked with sorrow, injury and even death, implies that Mmutla finds pleasure in the suffering of his victims and lacks feeling of compassion. If he had compassion and upheld morality standards, he would take responsibility to account for his actions instead of running away or scapegoating characters, and would not organise the murder of his victims or even find them suffering hilarious.

In some folktales, Mmutla is portrayed as a troublemaker who causes fights between characters and often does not show compassion when one of his victims is hurt or dies. In Folktale 4, Mmutla encourages Tholo to stab the most feared and dangerous mythical creature Dimo with his horns. Similar to Folktale 18, Mmutla influences Tau and Ntšhwe to fight each other. He found it hilarious seeing Tau getting kicked by Ntšhwe and did not care about Tau dying from the fight. In Folktale 4, Mmutla did not care that Dimo was powerful and dangerous, yet he still influenced Tholo to incite him. His lack of compassion perpetuated him to lure Dimo toward a sack filled with a swarm of bees. Dimo thought that the sound made by the bees were young girls whom he could kill and feast on. Unfortunately, the bees stung Dimo severely while Mmutla

laughed out of amusement. Yet again, Mmutla showed a lack of sympathy when Tholo was tripped by his long horns which mysterically elongated. Tholo fell and bled severely because of his long horns. He pleaded with Mmutla to rescue him from the horns; however, Mmutla did not sympathise with Tholo's cry for help. Instead, he laughed hysterically and did not help either of the two victims, namely Dimo and Tholo.

Mmutla displays a similar behaviour in Folktale 8 where he intentionally lured Tlou to put his legs into blazing flames of fire to make his legs small and slim. Tlou wished to have slim legs such as those of Mmutla, which allegedly assisted him in running faster. On the other hand, Mmutla was jealous that he did not have big legs similar to Tlou which helped him score many goals when playing football. During the time when Tlou placed his feet in the fire, he howled to Mmutla that he was burning; however, Mmutla convinced him to endure pain as it was the only way to have slim legs. Despite Tlou's cry and agony, Mmutla did not show any compassion. Instead, he was satisfied that Tlou could no longer play football and score many goals.

Similarly, in Folktale 13, Mmutla's envy and jealousy influenced him to cause pain to his victims whom he never sympathises with whenever they howl in agony. In this folktale, Mmutla was jealous of Tiholwe's beautiful horns and envious that he could own such horns. He then proposed that they play a game next to the fire; however, Mmutla's aim was to intentionally delay rescuing Tiholwe when he burns so that he dies in the fire and he can steal his beautiful horns. When Tiholwe was starting to burn, he called out to Mmutla to rescue him; however, he did not rescue him until he died. Mmutla did not care about Tiholwe's pain. Instead, he was satisfied that Tiholwe was dead and that he would get to take the beautiful horns he had been longing for. Yet again, Mmutla is amused by his victim's death and even sang a happy song about how he had defeated the young boy Tiholwe.

In Folktale 17, Mmutla's lack of compassion led to his victim's death yet again. As a result of his greed, Mmutla sneaked out at night to eat all the fruit of the *motsotsojane* tree which had been stored for food. To avoid accountability, he turned Tiholwe into a scapegoat by placing a leaf of the *motsotsojane* tree in his buttocks as false evidence that he had eaten all the fruit. In the morning, the definite perpetrator suggested that they check each other's buttocks and said that the one who had the *motsotsojane* leaf

was the culprit. He did not care about what the animals might do to Tlholwe when they found the leaf in his buttocks. During the inspection, the leaf was found in Tlholwe's buttocks and the animals ruled that he should be burnt to death. In this instance, Mmutla did not sympathise with Tlholwe who was killed for a crime he did not commit. He did not display any feeling of guilt for causing his victim's death. Instead, he was happy singing about how Tlholwe was killed while he was the real culprit who had eaten the *motsotsojane* fruit.

#### **4.3.6 Theme 6: Greed and ego-centricity**

Mmutla's egocentric behaviour indicates that he rarely takes into consideration the rights, needs and desires of other characters in folktales. This is contrary to the description of the notion of morality and Ubuntu/botho philosophy discussed in Chapter 3. Mmutla is often controlled by a sense of greed and ego-centricity in that he acts in an unseemly manner to accumulate desirable items alone without sharing with other characters.

In Folktale 1, Mmutla persuaded Tau to kill as many animals he could to feast on them. When Mmutla was busy cooking the meat, he tricked Tau in climbing on top of the roof of their house to lay thatch. However, his sole intention was to tie Tau's tail to the roof so that he was trapped there while Mmutla ate all the meat that had been cooked alone. Mmutla's greediness encouraged him to trap Tau, so that he got to eat all the meat of the animals that Tau had killed. Despite Tau's labour in killing the animals, Mmutla did not care to share meat with him. Folktale 1 is much similar to Folktale 16 where Mmutla tricked Tau in climbing on top of the roof as well. While on the roof, Mmutla nailed Tau's tail to the timber and asked him which piece of meat he may eat. Tau instructed Mmutla to eat only the smallest and bony meat portions, but Mmutla disregarded Tau's instructions and ate all the meat out of greed, leaving none for Tau who ultimately died on the roof.

Mmutla adopts a similar immoral behaviour characterised by greed and selfishness in Folktale 5 where Mmutla tricked Phiri to satisfy his greed. In this folktale, Phiri managed to steal 10 tanks containing jam, syrup and butter from food trucks. Mmutla who often employs immoral behaviour, sneaked in, ate all the food inside the tanks and ran away. On his escape mission, he requested Segokgo to assist him in

ascending to Tladi in the sky with his spider web. At Tladi's dwelling, Mmutla offered to help with herding cattle and was remunerated with the meat of an entire bull. However, Mmutla was selfish enough to not share the meat with Segokgo who assisted him in reaching Tladi.

It has been observed that, across folktales, Mmutla is greedy and more selfish with food than any other item. He wants to have all the food to himself alone and not share with other characters, despite them having helped him gather the food. This kind of behaviour contravenes the social moral standards that encourage sharing among societal members in upholding the spirit of Ubuntu/botho. In Folktale 19, Mmutla became adequately greedy to deprive young cubs the meaty portions brought by the lion. In this folktale, Mmutla was a caregiver taking care of Tau's four children. One day, Tau brought home portions of meat and instructed Mmutla to eat only the bony portions and spare the meaty portions for the cubs. However, Mmutla disregarded the instruction and ate the meaty portions while he gave the cubs the bones as a result of greed. Furthermore, in this folktale, Mmutla does not consider the emotional well-being of others. He killed all four cubs he was babysitting to feast on them. He was self-centered in that the lives of the cubs did not matter, as long as he had eaten their fatty meat. Mmutla does everything on his own terms and is centered around only caring about himself and satisfying his own needs.

#### **4.3.7 Theme 7: Blame-shifting and running away to avoid accountability**

The trend across the collected folktales is that Mmutla always escapes and is never caught to account for his mischievous and immoral behaviour. He often runs away from accounting for his immoral behaviour. In Folktale 2, he killed Noko's children and ran away before he could get caught to answer for the deaths of the porcupines. He went to the cave with two entry points and when Noko and the fortune teller saw him, he managed to escape using the second entry point. As shown in Folktale 6, Mmutla killed Phokojwe's three children and ran away before Phokojwe returned from the hunting field, and was never caught. In Folktale 12, Mmutla also ran away after having killed Mmadibotoboto and was never caught to account for his immorality. In some instances, when he is about to be punished for his behaviour, he often manages to trick and manipulate characters into escaping from their captive. Similar to Folktale 14, Mmutla was caught for stealing water from the well and it was ruled that Tlou be

assigned to kill Mmutla for the theft. However, Mmutla tricked Tlou into throwing him in the sky before he could kill him. The intention was to derail Tlou from his assigned duty in order for Mmutla to run away quickly and escape the death penalty. Similar to Folktale 17, Mmutla was heard singing a song, confessing that he had implicated Tlholwe into getting killed for a crime he had not committed. Mmutla ate all the *motsotsojane* fruit at night and placed a leaf inside Tlholwe's buttocks as false evidence that he had stolen the fruit. The animals killed Tlholwe for this. Mmutla was then heard singing "ba bolaile Tlholwe, Tlholwe ngwana-a-malome..., Motsotsojane, o jelwe ke nna Mmutle" – "they killed Tlholwe, the child of my uncle, I am the one who ate *motsotsojane*" (Mogapi, 1993:19). Before they could take any action against Mmutla, he had run away and escaped accountability.

In some folktales, instead of facing the consequences of his doings, Mmutla often shifts the blame to other characters in an attempt to avoid accountability, while in other folktales, he turns characters into scapegoats for his immorality. This kind of conduct often results in Mmutla's victims being punished, injured or killed for immorality they did not do. Victims are turned into scapegoats who suffer the unpleasant consequences of Mmutla's immoral behaviour.

In Folktale 2, Mmutla killed Noko's children when he was supposed to assume the role of caregiver, as agreed. One day when Noko returned from the farming field, she found Mmutla crying. When asked, he lied that some unknown passerby had killed all the children. Mmutla performed this stunt to shift the blame to a non-existing passerby so that he could remain protected and escape accounting for the deaths of the children. Noko then proposed that Mmutla consult a traditional seer to confirm the murderer. However, Mmutla manipulated the seer into believing that the children had been killed by an unknown passerby. Both Mmutla and the seer blamed the non-existent passerby while Mmutla was the real culprit. Similar to Folktale 19, Mmutla killed Tau's four children and feasted on them. Still in this folktale, Mmutla managed to escape and was never caught.

Running away is also another strategy that Mmutla assumes to avoid accountability. In Folktale 1, Mmutla killed Tau's children, but before he could be caught, he ran away. In Folktale 2, he killed Noko's children and ran away to avoid facing the consequences.

In Folktale 12, he killed the mythical creature known as *Mmadibotoboto* and ran away shortly after the animals found out. In Folktale 14, he was about to be killed for stealing water from the well; however, he tricked Tlou to escape from death and suffering the consequences of stealing. Similar to Folktale 18, after having used Tlholwe as a scapegoat and causing his death, he yet again escaped to avoid responsibility for his immoral behaviour.

#### **4.3.8 Theme 8: Risky behaviour**

Across the folktales that were collected, Mmutla often adopts behaviours that put him and his victims in situations that pose potential risks. In many instances Mmutla's victims are at risk more than he is, which leads to potential death or the injury of victims, while the real perpetrator always escapes and remains safe.

In Folktale 4, Mmutla engaged in a risky behaviour of threatening Dimo, a very dangerous and powerful mythical being that would not hesitate to cause harm to anyone who provokes him. Mmutla manipulated his friend Tholo into agreeing to prick Dimo with his horns. He engaged Tholo in a risky situation through which one would expect the worst as Dimo is one of the most feared beings in folktales. Mmutla influenced Tholo to stab Dimo. Instead, Tholo missed him and stuck horns deep into the trunk of a tree. Dimo became enraged and aimed at attacking Tholo whose horns were buried deep into the trunk; however, Tholo's horns magically lengthened and wrapped around Dimo so that he was unable to move. Mmutla's risky behaviour of provoking Dimo nearly cost Tholo his life.

In Folktale 9, the young Mmutla named Haruki decided to participate in a risky adventure of going near the river which his parents had warned him to never play close to. The river was home to crocodiles that were a potential danger as they were salivating for the hares' delicious flesh. Haruki decided to go to the river and attempt to trick the dangerous crocodiles, which could have caused more harm than the mere biting off his tail.

Across the folktales collected, Mmutla uses a lot of fire when executing his trickeries to kill his victims. Fire on its own is potentially dangerous, which could burn and harm anyone who uses it carelessly in the way that Mmutla does. Nevertheless, Mmutla still

plays with fire and lures his victims into trivial games of jumping over the fire and sitting on it without considering the potential risks it might pose to them. This kind of risky behaviour enabled Mmutla to achieve his aims of harming and killing his victims, as seen in Folktales 8, 13 and 19.

#### **4.3.9 Theme 9: Manipulation of vulnerable victims**

Manipulation of victims in the folktales collected is a prevailing theme and Mmutla is always the manipulator. He often accomplishes his missions in manipulating even bigger and more powerful animals using different manipulative strategies.

In Folktale 14, Mmutla manipulated Phiri to satisfy his thirst. Mmutla refused to assist in digging the well from which all the animals would draw water. Moreover, he swore that he would never consume water from the well. Phiri was then requested to guard the well against anyone who had not assisted with the construction of the well from drinking water. However, Mmutla manipulated Phiri into allowing him to drink water from the well. He offered Phiri sweet honey in exchange for access to the well. In this folktale, Mmutla assumed that his manipulative behaviour would satisfy his thirst and allow him to gain access to the well he had never laboured for.

In Folktale 15, Mmutla used a similar manipulative strategy of offering his victims something likeable to control them for his benefit. After getting caught into an animal trap set by Phokojwe for the thief who was stealing his beans, Mmutla pleaded with Senonnori to rescue him. Senonnori asked Mmutla to share the *mankadile* fruit with him. However, Mmutla put forward a manipulative condition that Senonnori could only have the fruit after having willingly fallen into the trap himself. Senonnori surrendered to Mmutla's manipulative tactics and was badly assaulted after having been found caught in the trap. Phokojwe assumed that Senonnori was the all-time thief, while the real culprit was Mmutla. In this folktale, Mmutla manipulated Senonnori and turned him into a scapegoat for his thief propensities.

In Folktale 19, Mmutla manipulated the monkeys into falsely confessing that they had killed Tau's children. He promised them a sack full of sweet potatoes on condition that, when throwing the dice, they yell that they had killed Tau's children. His aim was to let Tau hear the monkeys confessing that they had killed his children and no harm could

be done to them. Mmutla requested Tau to sneak into the sack full of sweet potatoes so that the monkeys were caught off guard when confessing about the murder. When Tau heard the monkeys saying that they had killed his children, he became enraged and jumped out of the sack, sinking his teeth deep into their flesh. He killed all of them while Mmutla was satisfied that his manipulative plans had been accomplished.

#### **4.3.10 Theme 10: Violence**

This theme, which contravenes the notion of morality and is against moral standards, is prevalent in the folktales that were collected. Mmutla often portrays violent behaviour and engages in violent activities. In some folktales, he instigates violence among two or more other characters while he looks from a distance with amusement. This implies that Mmutla finds pleasure from different forms of violence and does not find any wrong in that. The fact that he instigates violence in a number of folktales demonstrates that he possesses a violent personality, thereby portraying himself as an immoral character in folktales. This also means very little to none can be learned from the hare character across folktales.

Mmutla often lures vulnerable characters into violent circumstances which have more than minimal risks of hurt, injury or even death. In Folktale 4, Mmutla influences his friend Tholo to stab Dimo, the mythical giant, using his horns. Dimo, being a powerful creature, was obviously not going to allow Tholo to cause him injury. Instead, he would defend himself against Tholo. Mmutla fueled Tholo with a strong fighting urge, which ultimately led to a looming violent fight between Tholo and Dimo. Tholo quickly ran and aimed his horns at stabbing Dimo, but he missed and buried his horns deep into the trunk of a tree. Dimo became extremely angry and prepared to attack Tholo; nevertheless, he became adequately fortunate that his horns magically elongated and wrapped around Dimo to the extent that he could no longer move.

Mmutla assumed a similar role of instigating violent fights and anger among characters in Folktales 15 and 18. While he does not definitely cause fights in Folktale 15, he implicated Senonnori into an animal trap, where, when found by Phokojwe, he was assaulted for allegedly stealing beans from the farm while Mmutla was the real culprit in the theft. Moreover, Mmutla caused Tonki (horse) to kick Senonnori violently until he died after tying Senonnori's tail to that of the horse. In Folktale 18, Mmutla instigated

yet another violent fight between Ntšhwe and Tau. He lied to Tau that Ntšhwe had said that he was not afraid of him and wanted to fight him. Tau was powered with anger and insisted that Mmutla take him to Ntšhwe urgently to kill him. While Mmutla watched from a distance laughing, Ntšhwe attacked Tau and violently kicked him on his chest. The fight continued ultimately resulting in Tau's death. In this folktale, Mmutla's immoral behaviour of instigating violent fights and attacks between his victims led to Tau losing his life. His laughter during the violent fights he caused, implies that he holds a sufficiently immoral personality such that he finds no wrong in causing other characters' suffering and death.

#### **4.3.11 Theme 11: Mockery as a form of abuse**

The mocking of others about their abilities, physique and intellect is a form of abuse which has the potential of destabilising and implicating the emotional well-being of victims. Victims of mockery may suffer from a low self-esteem, deteriorating confidence, self-hate or isolation from others. The mocker always finds it amusing while his victims are hurt. In some folktales, Mmutla adopts this immoral behaviour of making fun of other characters in a derisive manner.

In Folktale 3, Mmutla makes fun of Khudu about being the slowest animal in the whole community. He often boasted that he is the fastest and that none of the animals could run as fast as he could. Mmutla proposed that he compete in a race with Khudu to prove that he was the fastest. The race commenced and Mmutla ran as fast as he could, leaving Khudu far behind. Mmutla came to a decision to rest for some time under a tree as he believed that Khudu was very slow such that he would not catch him even if he attempted moving faster. Instead, Mmutla overslept under the tree and Khudu slowly and patiently approached the tree and passed Mmutla still sleeping. When Mmutla woke up, Khudu had long reached the finish line before him. When Mmutla realised that the slow Khudu had outrun him, he became swamped with shame as Khudu had won the race. This folktale is the only one out of all 19 collected for this study in which Mmutla fails to accomplish his immoral missions and suffered the consequences of conducting himself in an unseemly behaviour toward his folks.

In Folktale 11, Mmutla made fun about Tlou and Leruarua's physique. He mocked Tlou, saying that he was fat as if he did not have any bone structure in his body, and

that Leruarua had the biggest and most unattractive body ever. This reflects the immoral behaviour of body-shaming other individuals who do not have a similar physique to others. Mmutla mocks other characters based on the uniqueness of their abilities and physique, and seems to strongly believe that he is the only individual who possesses the correct and acceptable distinguishing characteristics.

In Folktales 1 and 2, Mmutla mocks the weakness of his victims, whom he was able to trick and run away from. In Folktales 1 and 2, Mmutla transformed himself into a small stone, which his victims threw to the other side of the river not knowing that they had assisted Mmutla in escaping accounting for his immoral behaviour. In both folktales, he brags about how he has defeated them as they are weak, young boys and unwise, while he is strong and smart. Similarly, in Folktales 13 and 17, he caused the murder of his victims and mocked their weakness and dumbness. He bragged about how he was able to steal and avoid accountability while his foolish victims failed to realise that he was tricking them to death, with fellow animals not being aware that Mmutla was the culprit. He mocks other characters as he is able to outsmart them regardless of their assumed strengths and intellect. In Folktale 13, he mocked poor Tlholwe that he was a weak young boy and for that reason, he outsmarted him, caused his death and stole his horns.

#### **4.3.12 Theme 12: Jealousy**

Mmutla displays the emotion of jealousy in folktales. He becomes jealous of characters who possess what he does not have and who can perform certain tasks that he cannot do. His jealousy often leads to him stealing items, injuring his victims or even killing them to satisfy his immorality and envy.

In Folktale 8, Mmutla was jealous of Tlou's skills to play football. Tlou always scored many more goals than Mmutla and Mmutla could not help, but envy that. Owing to his immoral personality, Mmutla planned on destroying Tlou's big legs, which allegedly assisted him in scoring as many goals as he could. As Mmutla was the fastest being, he manipulated Tlou into believing that slim legs enabled one to run faster such as Mmutla himself and influenced Tlou into wishing to have slim legs such as those of Mmutla. According to Mmutla, the only method to make one's legs small and slim was to burn them in fire. As Tlou was influenced into wanting to have slim legs to run faster,

as done by Mmutla, Mmutla further manipulated him into placing his legs into fire in an attempt to make them slim. Tlou agreed to this as Mmutla had lied to him that slim legs allowed one to run faster. Nevertheless, Mmutla's aim was to burn Tlou's legs to hinder him from scoring many goals in football out of jealousy and envy. Tlou's legs became severely burnt by the fire and he was unable to walk for a long time, while Mmutla was satisfied that Tlou could no longer play football and score many goals due to the injury from the burns.

In Folktale 13, Mmutla was jealous of Tlholwe's beautiful horns. He envied them and eventually requested Tlholwe to give him the horns; however, Tlholwe did not agree to the request. Mmutla then planned on forcefully taking the horns from Tlholwe. He proposed that they play a game of alternatively laying next to blazing flames of fire and when one burnt, the other should quickly rescue them. Nevertheless, when it was Mmutla's turn to rescue Tlholwe from the fire, he intentionally delayed rescue until Tlholwe burnt to death. Mmutla finally had access to Tlholwe's beautiful horns as the latter was dead. As a result of his immoral personality, Mmutla did not sympathise with Tlholwe. Instead, he was delighted that he had outsmarted Tlholwe whom he also referred to as a young boy.

#### **4.3.13 Theme 13: Betrayal and disloyalty to friends**

Mmutla constantly destroys his relationship with friends and other characters by adopting immoral behaviours of betrayal and disloyalty. He is commonly unfaithful whenever he attempts to interact with other characters. In Folktale 4, he displays behaviours that expose false friendship between himself and Tholo whom he influenced to stab the powerful mythical creature Dimo with his horns. While attempting to attack Dimo, Tholo's horns mysteriously lengthened until he stumbled on them and fell down so hard that he bled severely. Instead of helping and rescuing his friend, Mmutla ignored Tholo's agony and plea for help, and left him to die. Instead, he laughed and told Tholo to see that he helps himself. Mmutla was disloyal to his friendship with Tholo, who, when conforming to moral standards, was supposed to help as a loyal friend. However, Mmutla did not help a friend in danger and betrayed him by influencing him to provoke Dimo whom he knew was a dangerous creature that would not hesitate to kill anyone who incited it.

Similar to Folktale 6, Mmutla failed to uphold loyalty toward Phokojwe and his children. Mmutla was employed to take care of Phokojwe's children while she went to the hunting field. In the place of assuming the agreed-upon role of babysitting, Mmutla became the children's killer instead. He killed all the children and absconded before Phokojwe returned from the hunting field. Similarly, Mmutla killed all Tau's children who he was expected to babysit in Folktale 19. Moreover, he betrayed the monkeys into suffering the consequences of killing Tau's children by falsely informing the father that monkeys had killed his children, while he was the perpetrator. He promised the monkeys a sack full of sweet potatoes on condition that they confess to having killed Tau's children. They fell for Mmutla's trick and did not know that they were being betrayed. When Tau heard them confessing that they had killed his children, he became angry and killed all of them.

In Folktale 17, Mmutla betrayed the innocent Tlholwe. He stole the fruit gathered by all the animals and placed a leaf in Tlholwe's buttocks as false evidence that he had stolen the fruit. Tlholwe was then killed for stealing fruit, while the real culprit was Mmutla. As a result of Mmutla's betrayal and disloyal behaviour, Tlholwe suffered for a crime he did not commit. Mmutla is not loyal to his friends. He lies to them and steals from them.

#### **4.3.14 Theme 14: Masquerading and running away to avoid accountability**

Mmutla continuously instigates trouble and causes harm to vulnerable victims; however, instead of admitting to his faults and facing the consequences of his immoral behaviour, he would rather run away in attempting to avoid accountability.

In Folktales 1 and 2, Mmutla ran away after Phiri and Noko, the mothers of the children he had murdered, realised that Mmutla was the culprit and had to account for his immoral behaviour of a murderer. He ran away and escaped accounting for his behaviour. In all his immoral maneuvers, Mmutla is seldom caught to account and always accomplishes his missions which, according to moral standards, are inappropriate and punishable by law. However, Mmutla always escapes from facing the consequences of his behaviour. He kills, steals, lies, tricks and injures victims in folktales, and in all instances he manages to run away forever.

Another strategy that Mmutla often adopts in his escape missions is mysteriously transforming himself into a different form. His intention is to confuse his victims into misidentifying him when they are searching for him to account for his immoral behaviour.

In Folktales 1 and 2, Mmutla killed Tau's and Noko's children whom he was supposed to take care of. When the mothers realised that he was the killer, Mmutla ran away and transformed himself into a small stone that was merely lying on land close to the river. In both folktales, the mothers unknowingly picked up the stone and threw it over to the other side of the river. At the other side, the stones turned back into Mmutla whom his victims had indirectly assisted to escape to the other side of the river. Mmutla transformed himself into a stone to confuse the mothers who wanted him to account for the deaths of their many children. They perceived the small stones as real stones, while they were actually the most wanted Mmutla. This trick aided Mmutla in clouding Tau and Noko who could not identify that the stones were Mmutla.

In another scene in Folktale 1, after having caused Tau's death, Mmutla wore his skin to masquerade as the lion to gain access to Phiri's household and deceive his family. He impersonated Tau and eventually accomplished his mission. It was only at a later stage that Phiri's children saw Mmutla celebrating his victory over their family that they realised he was not the authentic lion. While masquerading and transforming into other forms assisted Mmutla, his missions remain immoral and aimed at victimising vulnerable characters. This behaviour is typically the pattern that is adopted by common murderers and criminals who run away to other countries to hide from the police and to avoid answering for their immoral actions.

#### **4.3.15 Theme 15: Disobedience to parents**

In Folktale 9, the hare character is seen participating in a risky experience, which his parents cautioned him not to ever engage in. The little Haruki, who was the smartest and naughtiest of all the hare family children, chose not to obey his parents' caution that they should not play near the river. The children of the hare family were cautioned not to go to the river as potentially dangerous crocodiles in the river salivate for their apparent delicious flesh.

Despite all the forewarnings, Haruki chose to disobey his parents and go to the river. He tricked the crocodiles into assisting him to cross to the other side of the river. Although he lost a portion of his tail along the journey, he still accomplished his mission of crossing over to the other side of the river and visit the land. It has always been regarded as wrong to disobey and disrespect parents' authority, thereby exposing Mmutla's immoral behaviour in folktales.

#### **4.3.16 Theme 16: Magic for self-interest**

It was observed that some hare folktales feature the use of magic in order for characters to accomplish their immoral missions. Mmutla has the tendency of using magic as an assisting tool in deceiving and manipulating his victims. In Folktales 1, Mmutla used magic to instruct an informal house structure to construct itself. Instantly, the shack erected itself following a verbal order from Mmutla. The primary aim was to trick Tau into climbing on top of the roof of the shack so that Mmutla could nail his tail to the roof to keep him trapped while he ate all the meat in the pot. The use of magic echoes the discussion of Theme 14, which is physical masquerading for misidentification, as discussed earlier, where Mmutla, in some instances, mysteriously transforms into a stone in order for his victims to fail in identifying him. His ability to transform into another form reiterates magical powers, as discussed in this theme. While this kind of behaviour might be beneficial to protect oneself from harm, Mmutla seems to abuse this power as he adopts the behaviour in an attempt to deceive his victims and run away from accounting for his immoral behaviours.

#### **4.4 Summary of data analysis**

The following table is a summary of the above data analysis of 19 Setswana hare folktales against the notion of morality. The table below illustrates the folktales that display the emerged themes which observably contravenes the concept of morality described in Chapter 3, thereby making hare folktales likely to expose children to behaviours associated with the current crisis of moral degeneration. The table shows folktales that display the identified themes. The aim of the table is to provide a summarised overview of the trend of the hare's behaviour and the themes displayed across the folktales that were collected. The 19 folktales are represented in a numerical format in the columns of the table. The rows represent the 16 emerged themes described in the preceding section. The shaded parts illustrate the themes

evident in the respective folktales. All the folktales portraying a respective theme are shaded with the same colour horizontally across the rows.

FOLKTALE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
<b>THEME</b>																			
<b>Trickster</b>	Blue	Blue		Blue	Blue		Blue		Blue		Blue			Blue	Blue	Blue			
<b>Murder</b>	Red	Red				Red							Red		Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
<b>Lies</b>		Green			Green		Green			Green		Green							Green
<b>Theft</b>					Purple		Purple						Purple	Purple	Purple				
<b>Lack of sympathy</b>				Black				Black					Black				Black		Black
<b>Greediness</b>	Orange				Orange											Orange			Orange
<b>Blame-shifting</b>	Blue	Blue										Blue		Blue				Blue	Blue
<b>Risky behaviour</b>				Yellow				Yellow	Yellow				Yellow						Yellow
<b>Manipulation</b>														Light Green	Light Green				Light Green
<b>Violence</b>				Grey												Grey			Grey
<b>Mockery</b>	Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green								Dark Green		Dark Green					Dark Green	
<b>Jealousy</b>								Yellow					Yellow						
<b>Betrayal</b>				Light Blue		Light Blue												Light Blue	Light Blue
<b>Masquerade and run away</b>	Light Blue	Light Blue																	
<b>Dishonour for parents</b>									Red										
<b>Use of magic</b>	Light Orange																		

**Figure 4.1: A summary of immoral themes emerged from the analysis of hare folktales**

The figure above illustrates that trickster behaviour is the most prevailing theme across the folktales that were collected and analysed. The trickery theme has the most shaded folktales, which means that it recurs the most across folktales. This implies that the hare often adopts trickster behaviour to accomplish his missions, which, according to the context of the study, deviates from the concept of morality described in Chapter 3. According to this study, morality concerns discerning between right or

wrong and good or bad social behaviour. The hare's trickster behaviour displays the 'inappropriateness' of character, which contravenes the common moral social standards as it often leaves victims emotionally hurt, physically injured or even dead. Moreover, the data show recurring patterns of immoral behaviour, thereby contravening previous research such as that of Ngapo (1995), in which it is stated that African folktales teach moral lessons. Although some folktales do embody moral elements, the analysis of data in this study shows that Setswana hare folktales are in exception to the idea of moral teaching element. The data strengthens the argument in this study, as described in Chapter 1, that hare folktales do not seem to teach moral lessons. Instead, they feature behaviour and conduct associated with declining morality, which reiterates the current moral degeneration crisis in contemporary South Africa and continues to implicate children as perpetrators, victims and observers of such behavior, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this study. Although Ngapo (1995) embraces that Setswana folktales teach moral lessons, she still gives credit that the hare character is often the most common trickster character who is witty and cunning in Setswana folktales. Chinyowa (2001) and Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) reiterate this fact about the hare, that he is a popular trickster who knows how to get away with murder, steal and lie in folktales. The study associates these behaviours and conducts with the loss of morality which deviates from the moral standards of society. The point of departure in this study was that some folktales may expose children to morally degenerated behaviours and conducts, thereby posing the potential risk for perpetuating and justifying moral degeneration in society. If children are able to learn about morals from the content of folktales, they can still learn behaviours of immorality from some folktales such as the Setswana hare folktales.

The following section applies the theoretical approaches to the data analysed above in an attempt to describe the applicability of the theories to the data, the assumption informing the study, as well as laying the foundation for conclusions about the potential implications of hare folktales for moral degeneration using the theories.

#### **4.5 Theory application to the analysis**

As presented in Chapter 3, the Behaviourist Theory, Theory of Moral Development and Functionalist Theory were used in this study. Therefore, in this section, the theories are applied to the thematic data presented in the preceding section.

### **4.5.1 Behaviourist Theory**

The Behaviourist Theory concerns observable and measurable aspects of behaviour (Zhou & Brown, 2017). In this regard, the present study observed the behaviour of hare characters across the collected folktales and measured through thematic analysis the extent to which the behaviour of hare characters contravene the notion of morality described in Chapter 2. It was observed that the general behaviour and themes featured in hare folktales contravene the notion of morality and feature more of behaviours associated with moral degeneration.

In applying the stimulus–response association of behaviourism described in Chapter 3, children are likely to be stimulated by the hare folktales to adopt similar immoral behaviours in response to situations they may face, which might be similar to that of the hare in the folktales. It was observed that the context in which the hare displays his immoral behaviour reflects real situations, probably to teach society about the reality of life. As mentioned in Chapter 1, characters in folktales are personified, such that they assume humanly roles, thereby making it easier for the audience to relate to the content of the folktales and ultimately learn a thing or two from the behaviour and conduct of the character they admire and identify with most. Hoeken (2017) claims that narratives may influence people’s ideas as they adopt similar attitudes, behaviour, opinions and beliefs of a character with whom they identify and admire. The more the audience connects with a particular character, the more likely they are to embrace the attitudes, behaviour and opinions stated by the character. In simpler terms, the audience to folktales, in this case children, might learn and mimic the immoral attitudes and behaviour of the hare character in response to situations they might come across in life, which are much similar to that of the hare in folktales as it is what the audience identifies with and admires.

As an example, in Folktale 13, the hare envied Tlholwe’s beautiful horns and planned to kill him to steal the horns. The hare’s mission was accomplished when he managed to kill Tlholwe and steal his horns, but was never caught to account for his actions. The stimulus will occur when a child, who was taught the folktale, faces a similar situation where he/she envies a beautiful item belonging to a friend. From the folktale, children might learn that whenever they envy their friend’s item and the friend is not willing to share it with them, they may possess the item by stealing it. Therefore,

children might respond to the situation (stimulus) with behaviour and conduct similar to that of the hare – stealing (response) – as the hare in the folktale succeeded in stealing the horns and was never caught to account for or be punished for the theft. According to Kosinski and Zackzek-Chrzanowska (2007:136), “learning is the most important factor in the development of human behaviour and the formation of personality”. In the context of the study, this implies that children are likely to learn the immorality in hare folktales and ultimately develop immoral personalities that might, in turn, perpetuate and justify behaviour associated with moral degeneration in society.

The second aspect of the Behaviourist Theory applied in this study is operant conditioning, which holds that behaviours “followed by positive consequences are strengthened, while behaviours followed by negative consequences are weakened” (Kosinski & Zackzek-Chrzanowska, 2007:139). This means that behaviour that brings negative consequences to the doer will likely be discontinued, but that those that bring positive consequences are likely to be continued. According to the context of the present study, the immoral behaviour of the hare in folktales brings him positive consequences in that he always accomplishes his missions and is rarely caught to account for his immoral actions or punished, and always gets what he wants. This implies that the hare’s immoral behaviour will be strengthened and continued as they yield him positive results. As discussed earlier, children are more likely to mimic characters they admire and identify with in the story. This suggests that children are likely to adopt the hare’s immoral behaviour as he receives positive results, with the objective that they will also not get caught or punished for immoral activities. As a result, this creates the impression that immorality is good and the easiest way to get what one wants.

#### **4.5.2 Theory of Moral Development**

As discussed in Chapter 2, the present study is focused on the first level of the Theory of Moral Development, pre-conventional Stages 1 and 2, namely punishment orientation and self-interest orientation, respectively, as illustrated in Figure 3.2 of this study, which depicts Kohlberg’s levels and stages of moral development (Zhou & Brown, 2017:40).

Kohlberg holds that a child who is in the punishment orientation stage typically asks the question: “How can I avoid punishment?” This means that, at this stage, children adopt a certain kind of behaviour primarily to avoid punishment. In this study, as well as the thematic data analysed, the common pattern in which the hare adopts immoral behaviour and always runs away to avoid accountability and ultimately avoiding punishment for his immoral conduct are portrayed. In an attempt to avoid punishment, children might adopt similar techniques that the hare often displays throughout folktales, in other words, running away after having committed immoral actions, shifting blame (see Theme 7), and transforming into other forms (see Theme 14). The assumption informing this study is that children at Level 1 of moral development, according to Kohlberg’s theory, might mimic Mmutla’s tactics, which, based on the analysed data, contravene the notion of morality to avoid punishment for their wrongdoings.

Both the Theory of Moral Development and operant conditioning assume that humans judge whether a behaviour is morally right or wrong based on its direct consequences. In operant conditioning, if a behaviour is followed by a positive consequence, then it is right to adopt, whether it conforms to moral standards or not. In the Theory of Moral Development, a behaviour is right if it is not followed by a form of punishment despite the conformity of the behaviour to moral standards. Since the hare in folktales hardly receives negative consequences, children who are exposed to the folktales might perceive his behaviour and conduct as right, and they adopt such immoral behaviours with the intention of receiving positive consequences and avoiding punishment, thereby perpetuating and justifying moral degeneration in society.

While the study is concerned with the hare who remains unpunished for his immoral actions, the researcher does not promote harsh and harmful punishment, but holds that all faults, wrongdoings and immoral behaviour should be followed by a form of caution, reprimand or discipline to show doers that it is wrong and should be discontinued.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, 19 Setswana hare folktales were thematically analysed against the notion of morality described in Chapter 3 with a specific focus on the behaviour of the

hare and themes featured in the folktales. This was done to determine the extent to which hare folktales maintain or contravene the notion of morality. It can be concluded that the behaviour of the hare character and the themes featured in Setswana hare folktales contravene the notion of morality and are against common socio-moral standards.

In the first instance, translated summaries of the folktales were provided in the chapter with a particular focus on the major events that had occurred. Secondly, data analyses were presented thematically where common themes of behaviour and conduct across the folktales were discussed under a theme that describes the behaviour and conduct of the hare character. A total of 16 themes emerged from the analysis and were identified to contravene the notion of morality, thereby portraying behaviour associated with moral degeneration. Lastly, the theories informing this study were applied to the analysed data to assist in maintaining the credibility of the data and the assumption to this study, which states that Setswana hare folktales have the possibility of perpetuating and justifying moral degeneration in society, which continues to implicate children.

In the next chapter, the findings of the study are presented and the themes emerged earlier contextualised to real occurrences of the decline of morality in children of contemporary South Africa. Some events that have occurred in South Africa, which display behaviour and conduct associated with the crisis of moral degeneration affecting children as perpetrators and victims, which are observed to be much similar to the immorality displayed in Setswana hare folktales, are discussed.

## **CHAPTER 5: INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In the preceding chapter, 19 Setswana hare folktales, which this study is based on, were presented with a particular focus on the behaviour displayed by hare characters across folktales. The behaviours were clustered into various emergent themes, which observably contravene the concept of morality described in the context of discerning between good or bad social behaviour. It is concluded that the emergent themes indicate behaviour commonly associated with the phenomenon of moral degeneration. In this chapter, therefore, an in-depth interpretation is provided of the findings from the data analysed in Chapter 4 in comparison to real occurrences of morally degenerated behaviours depicted in society. The themes presented in Chapter 4, referred to as manifestations of moral degeneration crisis in this chapter, are evaluated as they observably affect children in contemporary South Africa. The perpetration, victimisation and observation of children in incidents displaying behaviour associated with moral degeneration are reflected on in this chapter. In addition to incidents of children portraying immoral behaviour, this chapter also reflects on cases where adults were perpetrators in administering such behaviours, to demonstrate the potential impact the ill-behaviour depicted in hare folktales may potentially affect children as victims and observers of moral degeneration. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that themes that emerged from Setswana hare folktales mirror the recent manifestations of moral degeneration in real life contexts, as reported on various recent media platforms, such as popular newspapers and in digital media.

### **5.2 Manifestation of the moral degeneration affecting children in contemporary South Africa**

As discussed earlier, South Africa is currently experiencing a significant decline in morality, according to studies conducted by Louw (2009), Masase (2016) and Tinyani (2018), who concur that moral degeneration in South Africa manifests through, among other patterns, sexual violence, substance abuse, human trafficking and corruption, which affect children in different ways. This kind of behaviour reiterates the themes identified in Chapter 4 of behaviours contravening the notion of morality, as emerged in the analysis of the folktales. The emerged themes in Chapter 4 are contextualised

in contemporary society and are referred to as manifestations of moral degeneration in this chapter. While such behaviour and conduct may occur across the entire society, this chapter is more interested in such behaviour employed by children (perpetration), as they are affected by the behaviour (victimisation) and as they grow witnessing such behaviours displayed by society (observation). It has been observed that such behaviour implicate children as perpetrators, victims and observers of moral degeneration. Not only do children display behaviour associated with moral degeneration, but adults also conduct themselves similar to the way the hare does in the folktales. Setswana hare folktales expose children to immoral behaviour and they are also exposed to the moral degeneration of adults in society. This implies that children grow up exposed to immorality, which they are likely to imitate from their childhood into adulthood. They grow up in surroundings that are governed by immorality, thereby potentially adopting immoral behaviour as the new normal way of living and conducting themselves in social settings.

The influence of children by their surroundings is summed up by the Setswana proverb, *pinyana fa e re ping, e a bo e utlwile tse dikgolo* – a child imitates adults. Children imitate the immoral behaviour that their parents and the public at large display in social settings, which remains a concern in that children will grow old with such behaviours in their mindsets and ultimately adopt inappropriate behaviour later in life. This suggests immediate and meaningful intervention in the crisis of moral degeneration currently occurring in society.

The immoral themes in Setswana hare folktales reflect in society, in that many people increasingly behave exactly the same as the hare character in the folktales. In this chapter, behaviour associated with moral degeneration manifesting in South Africa, as reported in popular newspapers and in digital media, implicating children as perpetrators, victims and observers of the crisis, is reflected.

### **5.3 Trickster behaviour**

The data analysis has indicated that trickster behaviour is one theme, which is referred to as the manifestation of moral degeneration in this chapter and is the most prevalent in Setswana hare folktales. The hare often employs trickster behaviour to accomplish his missions and is literarily regarded as the most popular and smartest trickster figure

in folktales (Ngapo, 1995; Chinyowa, 2001). In this study, trickster behaviour is perceived as morally inappropriate as it observably leaves all the victims in folktales sad, injured and even dead. The main concern regarding the manifestation of moral degeneration in Setswana hare folktales is that such behaviours have been witnessed to implicate children who at some point in their lives may have been exposed to the folktales.

### **5.3.1 Fraudulent and scam syndicates**

According to the Collins English Dictionary (2023), a trickster is “a person who deceives or cheats people, often to get [something] from them” (<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/trickster#>). The hare cheats many characters in folktales to get something from them. His tricks yield him positive outcomes in that all his trickster missions are accomplished and he is seldom caught to account for his behaviour. Trickster behaviour has been observed to be widely adopted by young people in South Africa, who attempt to deceive and cheat other people to obtain something from them. In this study, such behaviour is viewed as being associated with moral degeneration and has been witnessed to often manifest through children who engage in scam and fraudulent syndicates to cheat and deceive vulnerable victims of their hard-earned money and valuable possessions. It can be argued that in such cases where children are perpetrated in fraud and scam syndicates, adults are often the brainmen behind the perpetration of children in these immoral acts. Children are lured into becoming fraudsters who act innocent at the vicinity of potential victims who develop a feeling of trust in the children owing to their displayed innocence. The growing trend of using children as begging tools on urban streets is a form of child exploitive labour, through which adults behind the syndicates hope that the sight of a begging child might strike the hearts of the public who usually donate money to the children who are presented as poor in the streets. This is similar to the hare in Folktale 16 when he used the lion to present as dead so that they strike the hearts of the animal community. This was done to lure the animals into the kraal for the lion to kill and feast on them. In the article in *News24* (2018), dated 18 September 2018, it is argued that adults who use children as begging tools on the streets are in violation of the rights of these children. This is what possibly presents this trend as a manifestation of moral degeneration, that it violates the rights of

children. Some adults steal money from the public by using children as a way to trick people of their money.

While children are being forced into begging syndicates, they are still committing fraudulent and scam activities in that they know how to present themselves as poor to the public, and how to lie and deceive the public in the streets. Soobramoney (2020) in *IOL News*, dated 10 December 2020, reported of the extensive child-begging network that happened in Durban where children are exploited into deceiving the public of their money by disguising as street beggars to generate an income for the network leader. It is alleged that more than 700 children were part of this network, which made about R2 million. This network, which appears to be extensive, implies that children involved in the syndicates have been trained to deceive the public and trick them out of their money. According to the article in *IOL News*, dated 10 December 2020 (Soobramoney, 2020), these children do not willingly take part in these syndicates; however, are victims of human trafficking, which exploits vulnerable victims in fraudulent activities to generate income for this well-organised syndicate.

Most fraudulent syndicates specifically target the victimisation of vulnerable children who end up suffering terrible consequences of trickster behaviour. Robin-Lee (2021) in *IOL News*, dated 24 March 2021, reported about South Africa's most common scams, one in which children and young adults are victimised is the bogus colleges' syndicate. It is reported that numerous students claimed that they had paid tuition fees to 'fake' colleges which had no valid accreditation with the Department of Higher Education and Training. The students ended up with unrecognised and invalid qualifications from the bogus colleges. In these scandals, children do not appear as perpetrators, but fall victim to deception similar to when the hare's victims were cheated on and ended up losing their important possessions in the folktales. The young people victimised in bogus colleges' scandals lost their money due to the misleading advertisements and marketing tricks that the colleges used to lure students into enrolling in their illegitimate colleges.

Some people become victims of money-for-job scams, in which vulnerable job-seekers are lured into non-existing job interviews and vacancies in exchange of money. The Checkpoint episode on *eNCA* (2020), dated 26 May 2020, exposed a money-for-job

scam that operated in Johannesburg. Victims of this scam detailed that post applying for the advertised job vacancies online, the recruiter would send emails inviting them for interviews. They were then asked to pay money ranging from R300,00 to R500,00 as a type of registration fee, with some victims being told that the money was for a certificate which is required prior to employment as cleaners, waiters, drivers or security personnel depending on what the victim had applied for. They were then told that they should expect a communicate regarding their appointment letters in a period of 7 to 14 days; however, all the victims informed Checkpoint that they never received any form of communication after that and when they enquired at the office, they were given endless excuses. Similar to hare folktales, perpetrators use lies to convince their victims to give in to their tricks. Victims of the money-for-job scam, for example, were lied to that they would get jobs and certificates legitimising their employment. In Folktale 7, the hare lied to hyena that his washbasin had given birth and later that it had passed away as an assisting tool to accomplish his tricks of stealing the basin. It also appears that the hare assumes different roles and masquerades in different forms to implement his tricks and eventually escape from being caught. Checkpoint also reported that the scammers often changed their recruiting company names after administering their scams to a group of victims. They also changed the locations of their offices, which victims initially visited for interviews and enquiries. This is obviously to eliminate any form of identification by victims after they realise that they were tricked by the bogus recruitment agencies. The scammers pretend to be operating under a legitimate recruitment agency, while they are actually tricksters who are after unemployed peoples' money. The hare also assumed similar conduct in Folktale 1 when he wore the lion's skin and presented as the lion at hyena's household to administer more of his immoral tricks. He was able to easily change himself into a stone when he was in trouble with the victims of his trickster behaviour. After killing the lion's and porcupine's children, in Folktales 1 and 2, respectively, the hare transformed himself into a stone to confuse the two mothers who wanted him to account for their missing children. They could not identify that the stone was actually the hare they were looking for.

Money-for-job scams usually target the desperate and vulnerable unemployed youth looking for jobs in South Africa. This indirectly affects children whose guardians are victimised in such scams and continue to grow up in households affected by

unemployment, thereby perpetuating high poverty rates. The argument informing this study is that children in contemporary South Africa grow up exposed to immorality in the form of observable behaviour displayed in society, which, according to this study, contravenes the notion of morality. Children who observe such trickster behaviours at a young age, both from hare folktales and in reality, are likely to portray similar behaviour in their adulthood, in that such behaviours were previously followed by positive consequences, such as accomplishing missions and not being caught.

### **5.3.2 Phishing scams**

Another fraudster syndicate that continues to implicate children is phishing scams. Kritzinger (2015:1 243) highlights that “school children are spending more time online than ever before”. This implies that children who have access to the Internet and computer devices are vulnerable to cyber risks such as phishing scams. According to the SAPS (2014), a phishing scam is when a fraudulent email –

...requests the user to click on a link in the email which directs them to a ‘spoofed’ website, designed to fool users into thinking that it is a legitimate attempt to obtain, verify or update contact details or other sensitive financial information...

Since children in modern society spend a lot of time online, they become vulnerable and victimised by phishing scammers who also assume trickster behaviour similar to the hare in folktales. Children are tricked into following the content of such emails and other fraudulent online content through which, after the fraud has been accomplished, victims suffer from consequences such as losing their money in bank accounts, identity fraud and cellphone hacking.

### **5.3.3 Con artist lovers**

The hare assumes his tricks on animals that have a close relationship with him. He has been observed to trick mostly his friends in folktales for their belongings after convincing them to trust him. In Folktale 7, the hare tricked the hyena his big washbasin. He convinced him that the basin had passed away and, therefore, he could not have it back. The hare ensured that he maintained a close relationship with his victims, thereby intensifying a sense of trust from his victims. Victims often realise that they have been tricked of their belongings after perpetrators have completed their missions. This mirrors the common scams targeting older women who are scammed

of their hard-earned money by con artists who initially display as dear lovers to single women. Perpetrators persuade women with the false intention of establishing a romantic relationship with them. These con artists know how to maintain a strong sense of trust and romantic relationships with their victims during the early days of administering their tricks. They manipulate victims into believing that they love them and are willing to assist in bettering their finances.

Sekudu (2022) on *News24*, dated 29 June 2022, reported of a woman who had been tricked into lending a man money which he did not return as agreed. The man used lies and deceit to attempt to manipulate the woman in selling her car and handing over the money from the car sale to him. The con artist assumed a similar tactic which the hare used to trick hyena into his washbasin. They both used lies to convince their victims to give in to their tricks, simultaneously destroying the trust they had in each other and the relationship they were initially in. The article further details that the perpetrator had faked his own hijacking in an attempt to escape, echoing the hare in Folktale 19, when he hung himself in a tree, pretending that he was under attack to escape from suffering the consequences of killing the lion's children. He lied that the monkeys had killed the cubs and hung him in the tree. The pretence factor also features in Folktale 5, when the hare and hyena set off to the road to pretend as if they were dead in order for the truck drivers to load them into their trucks. Their main aim was to unload all the food products contained at the back of the trucks and steal them. Con artists also adopt false pretence in that they pretend to love their victims and promise them an instant accumulation of wealth.

This kind of behaviour adopted by members of society expose children to immoral behaviour and gives the impression that conning people of their hard-earned money and belongings is the simplest way to accumulate money and the items they desire. Children who grow up in a society in which con artists accomplish their missions observe this type of trickster behaviour and are likely to adopt such behaviour in their adulthood.

#### **5.2.4 Trickster pastors and traditional healers**

South African religious followers have been experiencing escalating trickery and manipulation from many religious leaders who many have referred to as fake pastors,

fake evangelists and fake traditional healers. There have been countless cases of victims who have reported that they were manipulated by pastors and tricked of thousands of rands by traditional healers. The trickster and manipulative behaviour adopted by the hare in folktales is also evident in pastors and traditional healers of modern society, who lie to the masses in an attempt to milk them of their money for their own personal financial enrichment in the name of giving back to the church and praying for prosperity. These modern pastors and self-proclaimed prophets seem to be preaching a gospel deviating away from Christianity in that prosperity gospel is promoted more than the gospel of salvation. Dube (2019:25) refers to these kinds of religious leaders as “shrewd business people masquerading as Christian Prophets”. They present as true men of God with good and godly intentions; nevertheless, they aim to trick and manipulate their followers in donating a lot of money to the church. Masquerading as a good character is also witnessed in the hare who masquerades as a friend, child minder and transforming into rocks to hide his true trickster identity and manipulative intentions through presenting as an innocent character in the folktales. Prophets have been witnessed to prey on vulnerable believers who are desperate for miracles in solving their economic, health and social problems.

These pastors teach instant miracles, tithing and prosperity gospel in an attempt to convince their followers to always give money to the church to receive success miracles. Tithing is biblical, as read in Malachi 3 verse 8-12; however, fake pastors use the notion of tithing to manipulate and trick people. Followers are manipulated to believe that the more money they give to the church, the more they will receive money. This suggests that members of society who fall under poverty, unemployment and ill-health fall victims of such trickster behaviour and manipulative preaching as they are aiming at improving their circumstances, receiving miraculous employment and instant healing of bodily and spiritual ailments. Dube (2019) further affirms that no matter how wrong and immoral these pastors’ trickster behaviour and manipulative preachings are, their followers always rush to their defence regardless of what they are accused of.

Many pastors in South Africa have been accused of extorting money from congregants, corruption and fraud for their self-enrichment. As an example, Maromo (2020) of *IOL News*, 20 October 2020, reported that the Malawian born self-proclaimed

prophet Shepherd Bushiri of the Enlightened Christian Gathering was arrested along with his wife on allegations of fraud and money laundering involving an investment scheme of an estimated R100 million. People were tricked into believing that their money is safe in the prophet's investment scheme; however, the fraud case exposed a different character of the prophet, portraying him as a liar, schemer and trickster. He lied to investors and probably promised them large interests from the investments. Nevertheless, the investments did not materialise. Similarly, the hare in Folktale 15 trickily lied to the bear to trap himself in an animal trap and promised him *mmankadile* fruit after that. However, the bear did not receive any fruit from the trickster hare.

Makhoba (2019) in *City Press*, dated 11 February 2019, claims that while some followers believe in Bushiri as a true prophet of God, some followers saw through his fake miracles and described him as a con man who loves money and fame. Additionally, in the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL Rights Commission) hearing of 16 November 2020, Apostle Makhado Ramabulana exposed and described the likes of prophet Bushiri as cult leaders who trick congregants with fake and staged miracles and prophecies of healing and financial solutions (*SABC News*, 2020). Makhado confirmed that he was once a fake prophet who has now turned away from such practices and wrote a book exposing pastors titled "Church Mafia". The hearing detailed that these prophets strategise with fake and staged miracles to convince and manipulate followers to donate more money and for them to gain fame in society as major prophets who perform the greatest miracles. The love for fame is also witnessed in Folktale 11, where the hare set the whale and elephant to pull against each other unknowingly using a rope. The two animals thought the hare was pulling on either ends of the rope and when they could not conquer the pull, they perceived the hare as the strongest animal since the two biggest animals could not pull him over using the rope. The animal community respected and honoured the hare for his fake strengths and was given an undeserved fame because of his trickster behaviour. Similar to modern prophets who stage miracles and prophecies to become known as great prophets in society, Makhobo (2019) further alludes that the followers do not question the prophets because of their presumed power and influence over the entire congregation. This is similar to how the hare in folktales is never questioned for his

immoral behaviour as he is portrayed as smarter than all characters and can trick and outsmart even bigger and powerful animals.

The discussion above mirrors the growing trend of traditional healers who allegedly trick people out of their money by giving false diagnoses, ineffective traditional medicine and charging ridiculously high prices for consultations. In a study about community discourses on *sangomas*, Nyundu (2018) explored how community members perceive traditional healers. In the study, it was indicated that some participants shared negative contentions about traditional healers, that they are fake and are merely after people's money. During consultations, they would apparently tell the client made-up stories and that their family members were bewitching them, whereas some people believe this is mostly not the case. This implies that some traditional healers do give false diagnoses and lie during consultations in an attempt to manipulate clients into paying a lot of money after having been promised to receive healing and protection against family witchcraft. This kind of immoral behaviour of traditional healers mirrors that of the hare and the seer in Folktale 2. The hare killed porcupine's children and manipulated the seer into lying and saying that the children had been killed by an unknown passer-by. During consultation, the seer lied to the porcupine and said that the bones revealed that a passer-by had killed her children. He intentionally gave a false diagnosis.

False family witchcraft accusations result in the destruction of family relationships and trust among people. In an article in *News24* (2003), dated 8 June 2003, it was reported that a Sowetan bride had been accused of bewitching her mother-in-law. The family consulted a *sangoma* who told them that their bride was behind the death of their mother. While the allegations could not be proven, the family maintained that the bride was a witch and wanted to necklace her so that she joined their mother in the grave. It can be argued that the relationship that the bride had with the family and her husband was destroyed by the diagnosis provided by the *sangoma*, of which its accuracy cannot be proven. It might have been a lie or it might have been true. The fact is that lying as a manifestation of moral degeneration resurfaces in whether the *sangoma* had lied about the accusation or the bride was lying when she maintained that she did not practise witchcraft. This incident reiterates the argument of Nyundu (2018) that there is no evidence to the claims of witchcraft and *sangoma* diagnoses. Therefore,

this idea remains a myth believed by a group of people. Children who grow up exposed to such incidents from both Setswana folktales and their communities, could potentially adopt and depict similar morally degenerated behaviours in their adulthood.

Regardless of witchcraft and fake pastors and traditional healers perceived as subjects of myths, it still remains a major concern in that these subjects display behaviour and conduct that lack elements of morality, thereby implicating the lives of their victims. Behaviour such as lying, manipulation, deceiving and tricking vulnerable people of their hard-earned money prevails in cases involving fake pastors and traditional healers in modern South Africa. It is a concern in that children grow up being exposed to such a level of immorality in the Setswana hare folktales and their elders in society, thereby observing such behaviour and likely adopting it as a way of conducting oneself in the future. It is a common norm that children attend churches and observe the traditional practices that their parents and guardians believe in. This means that whatever that is practiced in the churches, such as staged miracles and prophecies, the manipulation of followers, believing lies, false diagnoses and extortion of money from followers, are instilled in children as religious values that they are expected to uphold into adulthood.

The main argument is that children are exposed to behaviour contravening the notion of morality in folktales and observe similar behaviour in society, thereby instilling such behaviour as the new culture of modern societies, and perpetuating and justifying moral degeneration as it affects children.

### **5.3 Prevalence of murder**

Data analysis shows that murder is a recurring manifestation of moral degeneration in Setswana hare folktales. The hare is often the direct murderer in most folktales, while at times, he is the brainman behind the killings, influencing other characters to kill. This behaviour, which was identified to be associated with moral degeneration in the analysis chapter, is echoed in children who have been involved in recent incidences of committed murders, attempted murders and mass killings in contemporary South Africa as perpetrators and victims of such incidences.

### 5.3.1 Child murder cases

South Africa has recently been experiencing an escalating number of cases of children who inflict attempted murder or have committed murder. Many incidents display the victimisation of children, commonly by adults. The South African Report on Moral Regeneration identified murder as one of the manifestations of moral degeneration in South Africa (South African Government, 2021). It has recently been reported on popular news platforms that children are victimised with kidnapping, rape and murder in South Africa. A *Sowetan* newspaper issue of 18 October 2022 featured children's death cases on the front cover, and reported that "at a rate of about 3 a day, 549 children, some not even a year old, were murdered in the first half of this year" [2022] (Sowetan, 2022a:1). This exposes the rise in child murder in South Africa as a manifestation of the crisis of moral degeneration observed to also be escalating in society.

Another *Sowetan* journalist, Masweneng (2022), reported in the 18 October issue, about a four-year old child, Bokgabo Poo, who was kidnapped, killed and mutilated by a 30-year-old male in Benoni. The four-year-old victim was reported missing and her body was found with missing eyes and hands after days of searching. Yet another incident of such brutality against children occurred in Tshwane, as appeared in the *Daily Sun* in the 24 October 2022 issue. Dube (2022:1-2), the *Daily Sun* journalist, reported that a 10-year-old child had been murdered by his father at their home in Tshwane. It is alleged that the young boy was hit with a hammer and slashed with a panga by his biological father. The perpetrator in this incident is the father, who was well known to the victim. A similar incident is featured in Folktales 1 and 2 where the hare, the perpetrator to murder, was well known to hyena's and porcupine's children whom he was childminding. Yet another behaviour of untrustworthiness resurfaces in these incidents, in that victims are murdered by people they know, have close relationships with and trust.

This reiterates Theme 13 of disloyalty and betrayal in folktales where the hare displays behaviour of untrustworthiness to characters in folktales. Many times, he adopted unseemly behaviour which was not expected by his close folks, thereby breaking the trustworthiness and relationships that existed between characters and caused them unbearable pain. Nkgadima and Tsewu (2020:20), in their article featured in *Move!*

magazine issue 716, highlighted that “families share the pain of their young kids being killed – allegedly by people they know”. Similarly, Mathews and Benvenuti (2014:28) also maintain that regarding violence against children, “...the perpetrator is usually someone close to the child, in particular the caregiver”. This echoes the caregiver hare, who was known to the hyena and porcupine family, killing their children whom he was expected to care for in Folktales 1 and 2.

### **5.3.2 Child murderers’ cases**

The hare character in Folktales 1 and 16, as presented in the analysis of this study, murdered lion characters in both folktales. He committed murder to satisfy his greed for food that he did not want to share with the lion. This event in the two folktales echoes the September 2018 incident in the North-West province where a learner allegedly stabbed a teacher to death for not allowing him to jump the queue for food at the school’s kitchen, as reported by Tshehle (2018) in *TimesLive*, dated 18 September 2018. It can be argued that the learner was probably greedy for food in that he wanted to skip the queue. In an attempt to access food, he resorted to a violent act of stabbing a teacher to death, similar to the hare character who resorted to killing the lion to eat food alone. The similarity between hare folktales and reality indicates that hare folktales portray behaviour that contravenes the notion of morality and is associated with the degeneration of morality as it occurs in modern societies.

According to *News24*, dated 21 October 2022, a similar murder incident occurred in the Free State province where a learner allegedly stabbed a teacher to death at her home (Monama, 2022). The Free State case varies from the North-West case in that the motive of murder was unknown or rather not clear at the time of the article being published on *News24*. The incidents echo the hare’s behaviour in Folktales 1, 2 and 6, in which the motives for the hare resorting to killing are clear and well calculated. While the hare is seldom caught for murder, both the Free State and North-West incidences discussed above report that the minors who had allegedly committed the two murders were arrested for committing murder. Nevertheless, the articles do not provide further procedures employed post the arrests.

In this study, it was assumed that the hare employs behaviour associated with moral degeneration primarily due to a lack of punishment. It is further acknowledged that the

two minors who allegedly murdered their teachers were arrested as a form of disciplinary measure or punishment. However, the researcher does not imply that the two minors will cease such behaviour as it was followed by negative consequences, as per the operant conditioning of the Behaviourist Theory described in Chapter 3. Moreover, the study cannot prove that the two minors were exposed to Setswana hare folktales, from which they could have mimicked such conduct. Nevertheless, the researcher acknowledges that the Setswana hare folktales display behaviour that is considered immoral and is detrimental to morality and the stability of society, and that some folktales do not seem to teach morality as opposed to previous studies, such as those conducted by Ngapo (1995) and Chinyowa (2001), who aver that folktales embody a moral element.

The fact that the two murder cases discussed above occurred in schools concurs with the South African Government (2021), which claims that most schools "...are currently faced with the problem of a moral decay...". This also reiterates the observed behaviour associated with moral degeneration affecting children who are most likely to be exposed to hare folktales that seemingly do not teach morality. According to Quintero and Makgabo (2020), folktales form part of the literature curriculum of South African schools. In the current study, it is argued that Setswana hare folktales feature more immoral behaviour than moral behaviour of characters and it implies that some folktales expose school children to behaviour associated with moral degeneration. Moreover, the Setswana hare folktales are seemingly for moral degeneration than against it, thereby perpetuating and justifying such behaviour.

### **5.3.3 Mass killings**

Another exhibition of murder as a manifestation of moral degeneration implicating children as either perpetrators or victims is the recent mass killings. According to Wikipedia, mass killing is "the act of murdering a number of people, typically simultaneously or over a relatively short period of time and in close geographic proximity" ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass\\_murder](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_murder)). It has recently occurred that children are victimised in mass killing tragedies. The hare in Setswana folktales conduct such immorality of killing a number of characters in the same folktale. As discussed in Chapter 4, the hare killed all the children of the lion, porcupine and jackal in a series of consecutive incidences in folktales. Similar occurrences continue to

increase in the form of mass killings and mass shootings, which often implicate children as victims in contemporary South Africa.

In 2020, a father was accused of killing his four children following a quarrel with his wife in the Ga-Phasha village in Limpopo (Nkgadima & Tsewu, 2020). According to *Move!* magazine issue 716, the accused Lucas Phasha went home carrying a knife and a panga demanding his children from the mother. Days following this, the four Phasha siblings, aged between three and nine, were found a few kilometres away from home with nails hammered into their heads and necks. Yet again, as discussed earlier, the perpetrator is someone close and known to the victims. Similar immoral behaviour appears in Folktale 13 when the hare's close friend was killed following the hare's immoral trickster behaviour. The hare's fearlessness to kill enabled him to kill anyone he wanted notwithstanding the relationship they had. Despite the father-child relationship Lucas Phasha had with his four children, it did not matter when he orchestrated their deaths, and adopted the gruesome behaviour associated with moral degeneration. While children are not perpetrators in such incidents, they become victims of such immoral behaviour adopted by adults and people who are primarily expected to protect them.

### **5.3.4 Mass shootings**

The recent mass shootings that occurred in South Africa involved mainly the youth who fall victim to such immorality. According to Duwe (2020:2), a mass shooting is “a gun-related mass murder that takes place at a public location in the absence of other criminal activity” such as robbery or war. The perpetrators who often appear to be adults, victimise the youth, including children who attend night parties and go clubbing as a form of entertainment and leisure. Local ‘kas’ taverns and other small liquor businesses, which often attract young children as clients who party and buy alcohol beverages from these establishments, are mostly targeted by incidents of mass shooting.

The *SowetanLive* (2022) article of 7 September 2022 reported on the tragic mass shooting which occurred at the Mdlalose tavern in Soweto in July 2022. The incident reportedly left 16 killed and seven injured, of which most were young people who were out clubbing at the public space. The article describes this as a “brutal incident” that

shocked the nation. The incident echoes the brutal killing of the children of hyena, porcupine and jackal in Folktales 1, 2 and 6, respectively. The hare brutally murdered the cubs and pups, amounting to 10 hyenas and 3 jackals, which exemplifies mass murder and is a concern in that the same folktales that are primarily narrated to teach moral lessons portray the opposite of the notion of morality. *SowetanLive* (2022) further claims that the Soweto mass shooting suspects' identities were released and that some appeared before the court of law. The hare in the folktales was also identified as the killer; however, in all incidences, he managed to escape and run away from facing the consequences of his immoral behaviour. The media has reported on many cases of unsolved murders where the killers have never been caught. These cases portray the hare who is never caught for killing characters in the folktales. Setswana hare folktales feature the definite behaviour associated with the moral degeneration that occurs in contemporary society, with minor differences in that the perpetrators in the Soweto mass shooting used firearms to administer murder, while the hare typically used a variety of weapons at his disposal, such as knives to stab victims, fire to burn and cook the pups, while in some folktales, the weapon is not revealed.

In a *News24* article of 8 August 2022, Bhengu (2022) emphasises that mass shootings are an old phenomenon that have been occurring in South Africa; however, it is acknowledged that such incidents have been on the rise of late. Bhengu (2022) further quotes Irvin Kinnes from the University of Cape Town's Centre for Criminology, who reported that –

...sometimes, the shooting is indiscriminate. They shoot to kill and you see killers who appear to be comfortable with dead bodies.... It appears these people have done this before and they're used to killing.

This quotation recapitulates the conduct of the hare who kills children in folktales indiscriminately and appears to lack compassion, as described in Theme 5 of the data analysis, in that he gives the impression of remaining comfortable with dead bodies, similar to how Irvin Kinnes describes perpetrators of mass shootings. In addition, the hare also appears to be used to kill in folktales, which accounts for the prevalence of murder as a manifestation of moral degeneration across Setswana hare folktales.

## **5.4 Crime and violent behaviour**

### **5.4.1 Theft and violence**

Society has observably been experiencing escalating crime and violence in which children are perpetrators and sometimes victims of such behaviour associated with the crisis of moral degeneration. Theft and violence are prevalent in Setswana hare folktales and are also a concern to South African society in that more children increasingly engage in such immoral practices. Pelsler (2008:8) ratifies this trend that “...a significant proportion of South Africa’s youth has ‘normalised’ illegitimate means – crime and violence...”. This confirms the current crisis of moral degeneration in children who typically employ violence and engage in criminal activities for various reasons, such as a lack of discipline, peer pressure, substance abuse, the need to demonstrate individual status, and control over the presumed ‘weak’ group, among other reasons (ibid). Pelsler (2008) further states that crime and violence have been normalised and accepted by children mainly through constant experience and exposure in their homes, school and local communities. The hare character also appears to have normalised such behaviour as he has been observed to resort to theft and violence whenever he needs to accomplish his missions, which often contravene the notion of morality. This was also indicated in the data analysis, that theft and violence are themes that prevail in Setswana hare folktales. The prevalence of such themes in folktales suggests that Setswana hare folktales do not seem to teach moral lessons. Instead, they display themes through which moral degeneration as a social crisis manifests.

The data analysis indicates that theft as a type of criminal activity prevails in Setswana hare folktales. The hare character is often the culprit in all the theft activities that occur across the folktales analysed for this study. He steals any item he wants, always succeeds in all his stealing attempts and is not caught.

The same behaviour of constantly having a desire to steal has been witnessed in children. Notwithstanding theft and other forms of crime being regarded as behaviour associated with moral degeneration, children have been observed to engage in such activities as perpetuated by different reasons, including poverty at home, peer pressure and the extreme desire for trending items they cannot afford. Mathews and Benvenuti (2014:33) assert that “poverty increases adolescent involvement in risk-

taking behaviour, delinquency, crime, violent peer-group activities and gangs”. While there is no clear and direct link between the hare in folktales and poverty, the inability to be able to access food on his own and legitimately asking for food might have influenced the hare to steal food from his friends. As discussed earlier, another reason that influenced the hare to steal food was hunger in Folktales 5, 14 and 15, which in extreme measures is a common factor associated with poverty in modern society. This concurs with the preceding quote that most South African children are poverty stricken, which, according to Mathews and Benvenuti (2014), contributes to social ills such as the breakdown of family structures and the formation of street gangs associated with crime and violence.

Children are involved in crime and violence as either perpetrators or vulnerable victims. The hare character in folktales is often the smart perpetrator who knows how to steal and never be caught. In Folktales 4, 14 and 15, the hare stole jam, water and beans, respectively, from his friends and, on all occasions, he managed to run away and escape. Similar theft cases are observed in children in modern society engaging in theft to accumulate items they lack or desire. Raborife (2016) of *Sunday Times Live* reported in a 13 January 2016 article that a nine-year-old boy in Durban was caught trying to steal school stationery at the beginning of the school year. His 14-year-old brother was keeping watch from a distance as the nine-year-old was choosing items inside the shop. While the actual reason why the two brothers engaged in a theft activity was not clear, they admitted to the theft and said they wanted to get stationery ahead of school starting. This could have probably resulted from a lack of affordability to be able to access stationery as a result of poverty. The incident echoes what Mathews and Benvenuti (2014) posited that poverty has the ability to influence children resorting to criminal activities.

Hare folktales are a concern in that they display theft activities, in which the culprit is not caught or punished for the behaviour and always accomplishes his theft missions. While folktales were primarily narrated to teach moral education, an arguable question is what moral lesson hare folktales teach children about the wrongness and inappropriateness of stealing.

The assumption informing this study is that Setswana hare folktales expose the audience (children) to behaviour associated with moral degeneration and, therefore, the folktales are assumed to be more for moral degeneration than against it. This assumption is primarily based on the analysis that was conducted, which reflected the prevalence of immoral behaviour such as violence as manifestations of moral degeneration in folktales and modern society. While children are observed to adopt violent behaviour in society, they are sometimes victimised with violence by adults. Adults who engage in violent activities victimising vulnerable children may have been perpetuated by different factors, including experience and exposure to a form of violence during their childhood. Mathews and Benvenuti (2014) affirm that “violence is intergenerational, as children who are exposed to violence in their early years are at increased risk of victimization or perpetration as they get older”. The concern about folktales that portray manifestations of moral degeneration, without any form of negative outcome, is that they expose children to such behaviours which, according to Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007), may be carried through to adulthood unless meaningful intervention is implemented. Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) further emphasise a concern about folktales, which states that both future perpetrators and victims of violence are exposed to the same folktales that allegedly perpetuate violent behaviour, thereby increasing the prevalence of moral degeneration in present and future societies.

While hare folktales do not display many different forms of violence, except violent fights and assault, children in South Africa continue to engage in and experience many forms of violence (Mathews & Benvenuti, 2014). They are exposed to violence as perpetrators and victims of such behaviour associated with moral degeneration. In the following subsections, the different forms of violence which continues to implicate children in modern societies are discussed.

#### **5.4.2 Physical violence**

According to the Department of Education (n.d), physical violence “occurs when one or more individuals deliberately inflict physical harm or pain on at least one other person”. This implies that any form of violent activity which leaves victims with noticeable physical harm or pain can be referred to as physical violence. The foregoing description of physical violence concurs with what Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al.

(2007:438) have described as physical abuse, which is “manifested in smacking, deprivation of basic needs, beating, injury through various means, lack of protection against injury and the deliberate taking of the life” of others. It can be deduced from the two descriptions that some of the behaviour of characters in folktales manifests deliberate physical violence.

Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) mention the deliberate taking of life of children as another manifestation of physical violence. The data analysis illustrated that murder is a prevailing theme in folktales as a behaviour associated with moral degeneration. The hare killed many characters in folktales, as discussed earlier, and has never, in all instances, failed to accomplish his missions to murder. A similar conduct has been observed in children who are often victims of murder as a form of physical violence, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The above discussion echoes the ever-escalating social issue of gender-based violence (GBV) which concerns violence against women and children. GBV is violence performed against a person as a result of gender power relations and can include acts such as intimate partner violence, sexual assault, child abuse, and stalking (Sinko, James & Hughesdon, 2022). Many children grow up in households where GBV against their mothers and female guardians prevails. They observe women suffering many forms of abuse and are expected to keep discreet about the violence in their households. Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) reveal that victims and witnesses of abuse, including GBV, have developed a propensity to suffer abuse in silence. Similarly, Mathews and Benvenuti (2014) concur that violence is often hidden within households. The main concern in this study is that children who witness and experience GBV observe such behaviour which is associated with moral degeneration, and adopt such behaviour later in life. Mathews and Benvenuti (2014) are germane to this argument that childhood exposure to violence may raise the likelihood of children becoming perpetrators or victims of GBV when they reach adulthood. This is a concern in that children observe violence from folktales and from society at large, and Setswana hare folktales do not seem to caution against perpetrating violence and other behaviours associated with moral degeneration.

#### **5.4.2.1 Violent fights and assault**

The data analysis depicted how the hare often instigates violent fights between vulnerable characters in folktales. Victims would fight against each other while the perpetrator overlooks with amusement. In Folktale 4, the hare encouraged his friend kudu to stab Dimo the mythical creature with his horns. The dangerous creature fought back as a defence mechanism. The fight between the two became very violent until kudu fell and bled severely.

Similar conducts of fights and assault among children have resulted in physical injury and even death of other children in modern society. School-going children sometimes engage in violent fights at the school grounds posing risks to vulnerable learners who end up sustaining fatal injuries or even death as a result of the fights. Moichela (2022) reported on *IOL News*, dated 13 October 2022, about a Gauteng learner who died in hospital following a school fight. It is alleged that learners from one school were in a fight with learners from another school and the deceased sustained serious injuries before being taken to hospital where he died. A similar incident was reported by Rall (2022) on *IOL News*, dated 13 May 2022, that a learner was stabbed to death following a school fight during break. It is alleged that the attacker was defending his brother who became involved in the fight first. This incident is echoed by the event in Folktale 4 where the hare encouraged kudu to stab Dimo with his horns; however, failed and buried the horns deep into a trunk of a tree. While kudu's mission was not successful in Folktale 4, the former incident resulted in death. However, the similarity is that harmful stabbing weapons were used in both incidents, thereby posing high risks for the victims.

#### **5.4.2.2 Violence and gangsterism**

Violent fights are also witnessed in the growing trend of street gangs, which increasingly involve children participating in gangsterism activities around communities. According to Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya (2014), gangsterism includes the establishment of street groups with the intention of committing violence and crime in a community. They further allude that gang leaders, who are often adults, recruit young children, including those who are still in school, to become members of the gangs as children are regarded as easy recruits. The recruitment is echoed by the hare in Folktale 4, who lured kudu into instigating a violent fight against the mythical

creature. The hare invited an additional member when he planned on provoking Dimo. He assumed similar behaviour in Folktale 18 when he lured the ostrich to fight with the lion. This strategy of recruiting an additional member in fights mirrors the recruitment of children in street gangs with the aim of extending power in fighting rival gangster groups. Mncube and Madikizela-Madiya (2014) add that gangsterism is an additional factor that causes violence in South African schools. Vulnerable learners are lured or forced into violent behaviour, crime and substance abuse by joining street gang groups. Substance abuse remains a factor in the reinforcement of violence through gang groups; however, inversely, violence can also enforce the formation of such groups.

Substance abuse is a critical issue that continues to affect children in South African communities. Louw (2009) mentions that substance abuse is a consequence of a society without morals. This means that the escalating number of children taking drugs is a direct consequence of the moral degeneration crisis, not only in children, but in society as a whole, in that some adults give children access to drugs by selling illegal substances to them. Louw (2009) further mentions a shocking story in Johannesburg of an eight-year-old who was targeted by Nigerians, providing him with dagga to sell at his school. Children are lured into the consumption of drugs such as dagga, nyaope and the crystal meth drug, which are deadly to the lives of the youth. Consumers of these drugs are often seen hanging in groups on street corners around communities and urban areas. These groups mirror the street gangs discussed above, where drug-addicted children assemble together to smoke nyaope, crystal meth and dagga as a group. These kind of assemblies are a concern in that drugs have the potential of serving as a catalyst for violence and crime in our communities, further implicating users in immoral activities, which poses more than a minimal risk to members of society.

### **5.4.3 Emotional violence**

Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) studied child abuse in folktales and evidence of emotional abuse in the folktales was reported from the study. Their description of emotional abuse coincides with what the present study explains as emotional violence. According to Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007:438), emotional abuse “occurs when a child is persistently ill-treated emotionally; for example, through verbal abuse,

humiliation, lack of affection, isolation and rejection”. In addition to verbal abuse, humiliation and a lack of affection as the manifestations of emotional abuse, the present study includes mockery, discrimination and body-shaming as emotional violence.

In Chapter 4, mockery was identified as a manifestation of moral degeneration in that adopting such behaviour exposes the lack of moral sense and antisocial behaviour in an individual. As discussed in the analysis, the hare has been observed to mock and make fun of other characters about their unique physique, abilities and intellect. He consistently teases victims who fell for his tricks, manipulation and murder, and constantly refers to them as dumb and weak in that he was able to trick, manipulate and kill them. Moreover, he is seen laughing at Tlholwe who was wrongly accused and killed for stealing *motsotsojane* fruit, of which the real culprit was the hare in Folktale 17. The hare teased the deceased Tlholwe that he was a small boy whom he had outsmarted without any hurdle. This also exposes the lack of sympathy in the hare, that he is able to frame a friend and still laugh at them for being killed.

#### **5.4.3.1 Body-shaming**

In Folktale 3, the hare made fun of tortoise about him being the slowest member of the animal community and that his huge shell on his back was a burden to him. The hare persistently bragged about himself being the fastest of them all. This type of behaviour echoes the constant humiliation of children who do not have the body shape, weight, height and skin complexion perceived to be out of the ideal bracket of ‘normal’ or expected appearance of how a person should look in modern society. Children who appear over or under weight, are darker in complexion or way shorter or taller in height often receive verbal slurs and mockery over their physique from their peers and society at large. This is known as body-shaming and it has been observed to be escalating in the media, rather than traditionally face to face.

Siphalana (2022) in the *Herald*, 31 August 2022, reported about a young girl who went on Facebook to call out on people who usually victimise thin people similar to herself with body-shaming. The girl informed the public that she had been body-shamed for her naturally tall and skinny physique by her peers in school and around the community. The young girl was called names and ridiculed through questions such as

“Are you sick?” and “Is your family feeding you?” on social media and live. These questions have greater potential in deteriorating the confidence of victims of body-shaming and increasing self-doubt, as well as instilling a belief that they are not good enough, consequently implicating their mental health. The effects of body-shaming on victims can be very harmful to their lives. Some effects on the emotional well-being of victims are also reflected in Folktale 3, when the always-mocked tortoise began feeling sad about the mockery and humiliation directed to him by the hare. Some victims of body-shaming suffer from self-inflicted starvation to lose weight to fit in the acceptable group and trends. Those who are thinner end up binge-eating to gain weight to boost their confidence. The hare in Folktale 11 body-shamed the elephant and whale, saying that they are fat as if they do not have any bone structure in the bodies.

Another crucial issue is people who are made to feel uncomfortable with their skin complexion. According to Dlova, Hendricks and Martincgh (2012), darker people are viewed as unattractive and many people prefer a lighter complexion. Verbal slurs and mockery phrases are commonly used in our communities to refer to other people are ‘mantshonyane/darkie’ – the darkest one, ‘koditala’ – the black lizard and ‘blackie’ – the black one. These phrases are often used by children to mock people who are darker in complexion, and are made to feel ugly and less of a human. This makes them feel inferior and ugly as they do not have the preferred complexion in society. This increases the use of creams, especially by females, in an effort to lighten their skin pigmentation to fit in with the widely appreciated so-called ‘yellow-bones’ – Africans who have a fairly lighter skin complexion. However, many people using skin-lightening creams have demonstrated long-term side effects owing to the harmful chemicals present in the cosmetics (Dlova et al., 2012). ‘Yellow bones’ are viewed as more beautiful over the ‘darkies’. This is also accentuated by wedding songs such as ‘*tswang tswang le boneng, ngwana o tshwana le lekhalate!*’ – ‘come come and see the bride looks like a coloured’. Fairly light-skinned brides are likened to coloured people who naturally have a fairly lighter complexion. The song gives the impression that a bride can only be a light-skinned lady whose beauty everyone should witness. Today, girls are bleaching their skin with skin-lightening chemicals, with the whole body becoming very light in complexion (Dlova et al., 2012). In Folktale 8, the hare caused the elephant to burn his legs because he wanted to change and make them

look like those of the hare. The elephant wanted to fit in with the hare who has the preferred small legs to play football and score many goals.

#### **5.4.3.2 Homophobic mockery**

Homophobia is the strong dislike and hatred toward people who belong to the LGBTQIA+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual) community. Homosexuality was viewed as an act of immorality and threat to sexual morality back in the 1960s (Du Pisani, 2012). While some people might regard homosexuality as a decline in morality, it can still be argued that homophobic bullying, mockery and humiliation are behaviours that can be associated with the decline of morality in that homosexual people are discriminated against and laughed at for their sexuality.

Children who belong to the LGBTQIA+ community continue being bullied, mocked and humiliated about their queer sexualities. In a study about homophobic harassment in schools, McCabe, Dragowski and Rubinson (2013) found that many children face verbal harassment that they overhear in school corridors, recreational areas and classrooms from teachers and fellow learners. The most common community verbal slurs aimed at mockery and harassment include '*moffie*', '*setabana*', and 'boys-to-girls', which are used to derogatively refer to people belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community. The hare also used '*mosimanyana*' – a small boy – in a demeaning manner to refer to Tlholwe whom he was able to trick and cause his death in Folktale 13.

While tortoise, who was mocked and laughed at for being the slowest in Folktale 3, became very sad, mockery and bullying can, in extreme cases, result in victims committing suicide. Mbhele (2022) in *Eyewitness News*, 20 August 2022, reported about a Grade 9 pupil who committed suicide after his teacher allegedly mocked him over his sexuality in the classroom. The boy identified as gay and the teacher used this to make fun of him in front of the entire class. The immorality in this incident is that a professional adopted behaviour which is against moral standards, in that a child was harassed over what he cannot change about himself. The hare in Folktale 3 harassed and mocked tortoise over what he could not change about himself.

### 5.4.3.3 Cyberbullying

Mockery reiterates cyberbullying as a form of emotional violence. However, bullying can occur on physical grounds as well, when one or a group physically ill-treat an individual through persistently pushing, kicking or slapping them. Bullying, as a form of emotional violence, occurs when negative remarks, intentional insults and false gossip are persistently made about a victim in their presence and the presence of others. Bullying can also occur in digital technologies where victims are bullied through public communication media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media. As noted earlier, children in contemporary society spend more time actively online than ever before (Kritzinger, 2015). This implies that children are at risk of victimisation or perpetration to bullying in cyberspace. Cyberbullying is a commonly escalating form of violence that reflects moral degeneration and affects children and the youth of modern times.

Unicef (n.d) mentions examples of cyberbullying, including spreading lies about the targeted individual on social media and “impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf or through fake accounts”. This echoes the incident in Folktale 18 when the hare hid behind a tree, impersonated ostrich’s voice and said that he missed the lion, his brother. The hare’s aim was to incite the lion who was sleeping at the time and put the blame on ostrich. When the lion asked who was talking, the hare lied that it was ostrich who had allegedly also said that he was not afraid of lion and could fight him. Even though folktales do not feature any digital technology, the hare character still spread lies about the ostrich and impersonated his voice to say things that could cause him harm should the lion be provoked, similar to perpetrators of cyberbullying who impersonate someone to insult, mock and gossip about someone else on digital technologies.

While children who use social media suffer emotional hurt as a result of cyberbullying, some children continue to become victims of physical bullying, especially in schools and community at large. It may be regarded as a norm for new learners who have just started attending a new school to be bullied by older learners in the name of initiation into the new school. They are often referred to as ‘newbies’ and ‘freshers’ as they are new to the school and often suffer bullying by older learners. Similar to the hare in Folktale 13 referring to Tlholwe as ‘*mosimanyana*’ – a small boy as he was able to

bully him and eventually killed him. New learners are often ill-treated, beaten and have their lunch and pocket money taken by bullies. Most children who are bullied often end up hurt, badly affected and some end up committing suicide in an attempt to stop the bullying. The article in *TimesLive* (2021), dated 28 December 2021, reported of a 15-year-old girl who committed suicide following being beaten by another pupil in a bullying incident in Limpopo. The shocking video of the bullying incident circulated on social media showing the young girl being beaten in front of a group of other school children. While some victims of bullying end up committing suicide, bullying can still be overcome with determination, such as the tortoise in Folktale 3. Tortoise was bullied by the hare for his slow moving pace and shell on his back; however, he was determined to stop the bullying and worked hard to outrun the hare in a race. He managed to beat the hare at his own game.

#### **5.4.4 Sexual violence**

According to a study conducted by Mathews and Benvenuti (2014), the most common forms of violence victimising children in South Africa are physical and sexual violence occurring both at home and in the larger community. This implies that sexual violence against children is a prevailing social-ill associated with moral degeneration, through which both boy and girl children are raped, molested and forced into adult explicit content, commonly by adults and people they know. In some cases reported in popular media, vulnerable children are victimised by other children both in school and households with sexual violence. While the Setswana hare folktales collected for this study do not display any behaviour that depicts particularly sexual violence, Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) demonstrated the prevalence of sexual abuse in some Setswana folktales. Accordingly, the main concern is that some folktales may expose such immoral practice to the audience, mostly children, and perpetuate and justify such behaviour which, according to the context of this study, is associated with the decline of morality.

Parkes (2015:4) mentions that sexual violence involves “overtly sexual acts, like sexual harassment, including touching, groping or verbal abuse, and forced sex or rape...”. Additionally, Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) include the exploitation of children in prostitution and pornographic enactments and materials as sexual violence.

While in most cases, perpetrators of sexual violence against children are typically adults, in some cases, children also victimise other children with such acts.

Medupe (2022) of the *Daily Sun*, dated 3 November 2022, reported on an incident of a nine-year-old girl who was allegedly raped at school by a fellow pupil in Ekurhuleni. The young girl told his father, who then rushed the girl to hospital where it was confirmed that she had been raped. While child sexual violence is mostly prevalent in girls, Mathews and Benvenuti (2014) confirm that sexual violence affects girls and boys. Boy children are also victimised with such immoral acts by other males, whether young or old, and women can also perform sexual advances and harassment toward boy children. Mnisi (2021) in the *Daily Sun*, dated 26 August 2021, reported about a 14-year-old boy who was gang raped by his boy school mates at the school's toilets. The prevalence of sexual abuse as a form of violence among children indicates a social ill which probably results from a sense of degenerating morality among children and adults in society.

In all the incidents discussed above, perpetrators appear to be aware of the wrongness of sexual violence behaviour; hence, they threaten victims not to tell anyone about the incidents. The threats are enforced in an attempt to avoid any form of punishment for their immoral behaviour, in that should a third party find out, the perpetrator will face disciplinary measures and, in most cases, arrest. A similar behavioural pattern has been observed in hare folktales with the hare always running away in an attempt to avoid punishment and being caught post performing his immoral manoeuvres. The hare leaves his victims suffering the effects of his violent behaviour, while he remains safe from any possible form of punishment. This exposes a coward personality displayed by perpetrators in real life and in folktales, in that they assume behaviour against the notion of morality, yet fail to stand for the consequences of such behaviour by running away or silencing the victims.

Adult perpetrators would often offer victims money or sweets as a silencing bribery token, for the child victims to keep quiet about the sexual violation. The folktales depict this kind of bribery to violated victims. In Folktale 15, the hare offered the bear some fruit on condition that the bear entrap himself into an animal trap which was set for the hare, after which the bear was violently assaulted for allegedly stealing beans. In this

folktale, the hare offered a bribe to execute violence against the bear. The hare used a similar strategy in Folktale 19 where he killed lion's children and offered the monkeys a sack full of sweet potatoes on condition that they falsely confess that they killed lion's children. This arrangement between the hare and the monkeys resulted in the lion violently attacking the monkeys and killing them as revenge for killing his children. Yet again, the hare used a form of bribery to lure his victims into situations that are typically followed by violent consequences. This echoes adult perpetrators of sexual violence who give young children money in exchange for sex. The whole activity appears to be a legitimate trade for sex, whereas in some cases, the victims are young children who, legally, have not reached the age of giving consent to engage in sexual activities.

It has been observed from folktales that the telling of lies has assisted the hare in performing violence and instigating violence between two other characters. In this study, lying has been identified as behaviour associated with the manifestation of moral degeneration. As discussed above, the hare in Folktale 19 asked the monkeys to lie in false confession that they had killed lion's children. The whole arrangement resulted in violence. The incident reiterates a recent case of a young girl who falsely accused a boy of sexually violating her. eNCA (2022) on YouTube, dated 21 November 2022, reports that the Mpumalanga Grade 11 pupil allegedly committed suicide following a false rape accusation by a female pupil. The deceased allegedly left behind a note in which he explained that he had not committed the rape allegation. It is alleged that the girl admitted to lying about the allegations; however, the parents of the alleged victim informed the media that their child never retracted her statement and was taken to a place of safety away from the community to protect her from possible victimisation and attack (Sibiya, 2022; *SowetanLive*, 23 November 2022). While investigations were still underway at the time of this interpretation, conclusions to this case cannot be reached effortlessly as to whether or not the allegations are true. Nevertheless, factors of sexual violence and lying as manifestations of moral degeneration are prevalent in the incident, thereby making the entire case a moral dilemma which features a form of violence and lies that are also reflected in hare folktales as behaviour associated with moral degeneration.

False accusation also reflects in hare folktales in the form of blame-shifting and scapegoating innocent victims. The hare implicated several characters in

circumstances that often result in violence enforced on them by employing his tricks which leave his victims falsely accused for crime and immorality they did not commit. In Folktale 17, the hare stole fruit and placed a leaf in Tlholwe's buttocks as false evidence that Tlholwe had stolen the fruit. Tlholwe was falsely accused for stealing fruit and the hare used him as a scapegoat to avoid any form of punishment for his immorality. The animal community ruled that Tlholwe had to be killed for stealing the fruit, of which he was not the real culprit. This indicates that false accusation may result in unforeseen violence against the accused, who could end up losing their lives for crime they did not commit. This further indicates the lack of morality in people who deliberately accuse innocent individuals on false allegations.

### **5.5 Children's ill behaviour, risky behaviour and disobedience to parents**

The recent pattern of children's behaviour has been observed to deviate from societal norms of respect and morals according to the African perspective. African children, Batswana included, are expected to respect the authority of their parents for they remain their children for as long as they are alive. A parent from the African perspective is any adult in the community who is acknowledged to carry a lot of wisdom and experience about life. Therefore, children ought to respect and obey their parents' authority and thoughts about life as they possess necessary and rich knowledge about life. It is a norm for African families to teach children about morals and respect for parents, as well as following parental orders and cautions about life for they know much and children are expected to uphold their teachings to adulthood.

While folktales were primarily narrated to instil morals (Ngapo, 1995), including respect, Setswana hare folktales do not seem to serve this purpose based on the behaviour of the hare character across the folktales. The data analysis indicated that the hare character does not respect the authority of his parents by acting contrary to their orders and caution. In Folktale 9, the young hare named Haruki decided to ignore his mother's order not to play near the river, which was home to dangerous crocodiles that were allegedly salivating for the hares' delicious flesh. The young Haruki set off to the very river he was warned not to visit and interacted with the crocodiles. Haruki tricked the crocodiles until they assisted him in crossing to the other side of the river; a place he and his friends had been longing to see. Although Haruki managed to trick the crocodiles, he lost a part of his tail to one of the crocodiles. The crocodile bit

Haruki's tail; however, he was fortunate to have already jumped onto the river bank on the other side. Haruki's lack of respect for parental authority nearly caused him his life and great injuries.

A similar conduct which, according to the African perspective, may be associated with a lack of moral respect for parental authority is witnessed among children in contemporary society. Bayaga and Jaysveree (2011:208) attest that children in South Africa are "...increasingly failing to live according to positive values like Ubuntu/botho, a positive attitude towards authority, altruism and mutual respect". Children are seen disrespecting parents and elders in the community, disregarding their warnings about various circumstances of life and disobeying their authority as parents. Disetlhe-Mtshayelo (2017) on *SowetanLive*, 5 February 2017, confirms this observation about children that they appear "...unruly, uncooperative and have no respect for [parental] authority". While Disetlhe-Mtshayelo (2017) argues that parents may have lost control of their children because of their actions, in this study, a loss of moral values and flagging moral education in contemporary society is emphasised. Moreover, Lisel Groenewald from the Ethics Institute and Chris Mathebula, an activist for Moral Regeneration on *SABC News* (2018) on YouTube, claim that children today are parented by the media while parents are absent in the moral education of a child. Among other factors, peer pressure is a concern in children spiralling out of the moral compass, in that they are well-behaved in the household; however, when they are out in the community, they display ill behaviour.

Mass media provide children with education and entertainment. Nevertheless, the negative impact media may have on children remains a concern in that children have access to media. Cordero Jr (2013) argues that mass media has an influence on the degradation of morality among children. The exposure to explicit content and violence on television, in movies and magazines, without portraying the possible risks of such behaviour, increases the chances of children engaging in such activities. In this study, as discussed earlier, it is held that the immoral behaviour displayed in hare folktales increases the chances of children who are exposed to the folktales mimicking such behaviour as the folktales do not seem to portray the negative consequences following the behaviour. Behaviour such as ill discipline and disobedience to parental authority, which is displayed in hare folktales, may influence children to adopt similar behaviour

if they are faced with circumstances similar to those of the personified characters in these folktales.

Disobedience to parental authority manifests in children who tend to ignore their parents' warnings against attending night parties, clubbing in places with potential risks, consuming alcohol and drug substances, and engaging in sexual activities at minor ages. The 2022 Enyobeni tavern tragedy that occurred in the Eastern Cape where 21 teenage children died from an alleged stampede and the inhalation of a toxic methanol substance is an example of this moral degeneration crisis. The youngest reported victim of the tragedy was a 13-year-old boy whose last words to his mother was "I'm coming back, mama" on the night of the tragedy, as reported in the *Herald* (2022). The youngest victim and others who were younger than 18 years had accessed a tavern which sells alcoholic beverages despite them being below the alcohol consumption restriction age of 18. They were allegedly provided with free alcohol while under age, which remains a concern as to how they were allowed to enter the tavern and drink alcohol at their age. This indicates that underage alcohol consumption remains a problem in South Africa, in that underage consumers end up hanging on street corners, visiting taverns and accessing dangerous places that pose a potential risk, particularly for children, at which places they experiment with or forced into drug use.

Following another tragic incident involving alcohol consumption by minors which resulted in death in one Eastern Cape liquor trading establishment on Christmas Day 2022, the Eastern Cape Liquor Board Spokesperson Mgwebi Msiya confirmed during an interview on YouTube that this incident "is a manifestation of a bigger societal problem because it seems to us that underage drinking is a culture that is becoming deeply entrenched in our society" (eNCA, 2023). From this incident, three people died of which two were minors. This remains a concern in that children continue to assume such immoral and risky behaviour of alcohol consumption while under age, with tavern owners allowing minors to access their liquor establishments.

As discussed earlier, little Haruki in Folktale 9 set off to go near the river; a place that his parents warned him not to play near as it is a potential risk for the family of hares. However, Haruki felt that he was smarter than all his siblings and decided to assume

this risky behaviour as he had been longing to experience the other side of the river. This event in the folktale mirrors the observed behavioural pattern of children who visit dangerous places in the name of youthful experience, thereby experimenting with toxic substances, which are a potential risk to their health and lives. In some instances, the influence of peers plays a role in children assuming risky behaviour as part of an experiment and experience. This observation concurs with previous research, in which it is stated that peer pressure is the key reason to substance use among the South African youth (Morojele, Brook & Kachieng'a, 2006; Van Zyl, 2013; Hendricks, 2015). The findings of the latter scholars reveal that most adolescents have also engaged in risky sexual behaviour while under the influence of substances following the influence from peers. In the context of the present study, child sexual activities, as well as drug and alcohol consumption, are risky behaviours associated with moral degeneration through which children engage in unprotected sexual activities and binge consume alcohol and drug substances. Unprotected sexual behaviour under the influence of drugs and alcohol runs a risk of unwanted teenage pregnancies, sexually transmitted ailments such as HIV/AIDS, as well as sexual violation, among other risks. Moreover, peer pressure appears as an additional behaviour linked to moral degeneration in that perpetrators' moral values and sense become questionable when they attempt to influence vulnerable victims in adopting behaviour that they know have greater potential risks that could harm and endanger their lives.

Folktale 9 features behaviour associated with peer influence when the little Haruki persuaded his siblings and friends to go with him to the forbidden river, which was potential harm to the hare family. The other hares feared for their lives and it was concluded that they would merely watch from a distance when Haruki, the hero, tricks the crocodiles and crosses to the other side of the river. This event echoes the issue of peer pressure through which Haruki influenced his friends to visit the river, which his parents warned him and all the other hares against. Haruki influenced his peers to engage in risky behaviour by going to an area that was a potential risk in that the crocodiles were salivating for the delicious flesh of the hares. The most obvious risk was that the crocodiles could have attacked the hares and feasted on their meat.

## **5.6 Use of magic and witchcraft to trick and manipulate victims**

Setswana folktales feature the phenomenon of magic and supernatural powers. This is attested by Motshwari (1998) who studied magic and its importance in Setswana folktales. According to the Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2022), magic is “an extraordinary power or influence seemingly from a supernatural source”. Finnegan (1970) states that magic was commonly used to manipulate people or things in traditional societies. The two descriptions above reflect the belief in and thereby the use of supernatural powers in societies. The feature of magic in Setswana folktales and other African folktales, which form part of the indigenous knowledge system, indicates that African societies believe in magic and perhaps still rely on magical powers to manipulate people and influence nature. Motshwari (1998) claims that there are two forms of magic, namely black and white magic. She further argues that black magic is used to manipulate nature for the worst, a result of selfishness and not as protective as white magic. This means that members of society who believe in and use magical powers on other people or things do so driven by a sense of selfishness, which prompts the need to manipulate people and nature for their own benefit.

Data that were analysed illustrate the reliance of magic for self-gain as a behaviour associated with moral degeneration, as featured in some Setswana hare folktales. In this study, the use of magic was identified as behaviour associated with moral degeneration in the sense that, as observed in folktales, it often results in harm to victims, with the intentions, therefore, being negative. The hare characters in Folktales 1 and 16 used powers seemingly emanating from a supernatural force as an assisting factor to accomplish the mission of killing the lion. The hare mysteriously erected a shack following verbal instruction and the shack built itself instantly. The hare nailed the lion’s tail on top of the roof so that he had the benefit of eating the meat that had been cooked alone. It can be argued that the hare used magical powers as a stepping stone to accomplish his mission driven by a sense of selfishness. This magical power was also not protective of the lion’s life who ended up dead as a result of remaining trapped on top of the roof for a long time.

### **5.6.1 Witchcraft**

The description of magic provided above and the use of magic in folktales reflect the issues of witchcraft, instant religious miracles and demonic attacks common in and

believed to be true by contemporary society. While these powers cannot be proven, they still continue to affect society or perhaps because they are believed to be true by the masses.

According to Motshwari (1998:6), people who allegedly practice witchcraft, –  
...seem to possess powers which operate in a manner that cannot be detected, so that the cause can only be recognised when the damage comes to light. Therefore, the concept of witchcraft is inseparable from magic.

The foregoing quotation suggests that the concept of witchcraft forms part of the use of magic and vice versa. It can therefore be argued that witchcraft resurfaces in folktales in the form of performing magic as described in Theme 16. Additionally, the above quotation indicates that witchcraft consists of deliberate harm by performing curses, miracles and manipulation using supernatural powers associated with magic. The hare in Folktale 1 performed magic to verbally instruct a shack to erect itself and it was instantly built for the hare to administer his tricks.

While dark-skinned old women are often suspected of practising witchcraft, Motshwari (1998) claims that a witch can be any female or male of any age. Witches cast spells and curses to cause harm to victims using undetectable evil powers. While anyone can be a witch, victims can also be anyone as well, including children, who are targeted by the witch. This makes children vulnerable victims of this behaviour of witchcraft, which is associated with the degeneration of morality.

Through perusing media, the researcher found that children can be both victims and perpetrators of this immoral conduct of witchcraft. *IOL News* (2022), dated 4 June 2022, was concerned about the victimisation of children with accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks. The article quoted Dr Joan Nyanyuki of the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) who commented that children who are accused of witchcraft face –

...public humiliation, forced confessions, torture, violent beatings, are forced to ingest traditional ‘cleansing’ medicines, are expelled from their homes, ostracised from their communities, maimed and, in extreme cases, murdered.

Actions such as humiliation, violent beatings and murder were identified as conducts associated with a lack of morals in this study. This means that children who are accused of witchcraft as another manifestation of moral degeneration are victims of decaying morality in society. The victimisation of children is not a morally 'good' action that society should adopt in response to allegations of practising magic through witchcraft; nevertheless, during such allegations, sound evidence ought to be provided before conclusions are drawn on whether the accused practises this immoral behaviour or not.

### **5.6.2 Albinism killings**

There are myths about people living with albinism, that their blood has magical powers and that their body parts can be used in rituals to accumulate wealth, grow businesses and for protection (Mbatha, 2021). Yet again, the theme of magical powers for personal gain, as featured in Folktale 1, resurfaces in the form of the immoral social ill of killing people living with albinism. As a result, children living with albinism are murdered for their body parts for witchcraft and alleged magical power purposes. The continuous brutal killings and attacks against children living with albinism in South Africa is yet another evidence for the manifestation of moral degeneration affecting children in contemporary society.

Maromo (2021) in *IOL News*, dated 21 October 2021, reports on the gruesome murder of two children aged 13 years and 15 months old for mutilations. The 15-month-old was found in a shallow grave with missing body parts which were allegedly taken to a traditional healer in eSwatini for rituals. The traditional healer informed the South African Police Service about this incident and the perpetrators were arrested. The traditional healer, who served as a witness in the trial, informed the court that the perpetrators had consulted him to ask for *muti* – traditional medicine, which could make them evade arrest by the police. This action echoes that of the hare in Folktale 2 when he consulted with a traditional seer whom he manipulated into believing that porcupine's children had been killed by an unknown passerby, while the hare was the real murderer. The similarity in these two incidents is that perpetrators consulted traditionalists in an attempt to avoid accountability and escape any form of punishment for their morally degenerated behaviour. The difference is only that the eSwatini healer

informed the police, while the seer in the folktale lied to the mother that her children had been killed by an unknown man.

The fact that Setswana hare folktales mirror behaviours associated with the current crisis of moral degeneration in society indicates that hare folktales lack a moral element. Therefore, the folktales could expose children to immoral practices connected to the abuse of magical and supernatural powers for self-gain. This typically results in the victimisation of children with brutal murders and ritual attacks to meet their mythical beliefs.

### **5.6.3 Spiritual attacks and demonic possessions**

In addition to the brutal victimisation of children who are killed for witchcraft and ritual purposes, some incidents have been witnessed and reported that some children are possessed with evil supernatural powers, which they allegedly use to victimise other people.

It has been observed in the escalating issue, which may be regarded a myth, until it is proven with evidence that children in South African schools are sometimes possessed with evil spirits and demons which are allegedly the manifestations of black magic. The prevalence of magical powers in Setswana folktales, hare folktales included, indicate the belief of society in these perceived myths and the use of magical powers for self-gain which, according to this study, is a selfish act associated with moral degeneration.

Many cases have been reported that children in school display strange behaviours which resemble evil spiritual attacks and demonic possession. Jimta (2022) in the *Daily Sun* on 11 February reported that learners at a school in Johannesburg experienced an alleged demonic possession during a prayer session with a pastor who visited the school. Learners were reported to have been acting strange, believably through a demonic spirit, as the pastor was praying. Learners were screaming, crying and fainting, while some were speaking in an inaudible language, which is allegedly a demonic language. With people witnessing this chaos, the Department of Basic Education dismissed the allegations of demonic possession as without basis. While the present study can also not provide assurance of the existence of demonic attacks

and magical powers, the researcher still perceives this phenomenon as a societal issue which cannot be overlooked as it affects society. Even without basis, the magical powers remain immoral in that people who assume such behaviour end up victimising vulnerable children. This echoes the escalating immorality in our people; hence, the concern for society spiralling out of morality, and through Setswana hare folktales like *Tau le Mmutla* (Rantao, 1988), such behaviour is perpetuated and justified by the fact that the hare is not caught to account for such behaviour, and always accomplishes his immoral missions.

The discussions in this chapter reveal that the current manifestations of moral degeneration mirror the immoral practices of characters in hare folktales, which many children are exposed to at some point in their lives. Therefore, in the following section, the main findings on the potential implications of hare folktales for the moral degeneration crisis of children in modern societies are discussed.

## **5.7 Main findings**

This study did not assume that Setswana hare folktales directly influence moral degeneration; however, it acknowledges that hare folktales do not have a moral element. In fact, the folktales reflect behaviour associated with a lack of morals, thereby contravening the notion of morality described in this study. The main finding is that Setswana hare folktales are, to some degree, for moral degeneration than against it. This is contrary to what previous studies have argued about folktales, that they encompass moral elements. In this study, it is not implied that all folktales do not teach moral lessons; however, it acknowledges that some Setswana hare folktales do not depict moral behaviour and conduct appropriate to socio-moral standards. The behaviour of the main character, the hare, mirrors that of moral degeneration which is prevalent in South Africa implicating children as perpetrators, victims and observers of behaviours associated with moral degeneration.

### **5.7.1 Findings on Setswana hare folktales**

The researcher found that behaviour associated with moral degeneration is prevalent in Setswana hare folktales, observed through the behaviour of hare characters across folktales and themes commonly featured in hare folktales.

Previous research (Ngapo, 1995; Chinyowa, 2001) state that African folktales teach moral lessons, however, the findings in this study, reveal that Setswana hare folktales do not encompass any moral teaching element in that characters often assume behaviour such as killing, lying, manipulation, violence, theft, jealousy, selfishness, blame-shifting and betrayal, which commonly contravenes the notion of morality and is associated with a lack of morals.

The hare character assumes behaviour against the notion of morality which often results in victims' deaths, injury or sadness; however, he still manages to run away and remain unpunished or caught to account for his immoral behaviour.

The hare's immoral behaviour is mostly followed by positive consequences in that he accomplishes his missions which, according to this study, should be punishable and corrected or discontinued as per moral standards. In fact, it is only in one folktale, namely Folktale 3, where the hare did not receive positive outcomes to his immoral behaviour. He used to mock and bully tortoise for being the slowest animal in the community. However, tortoise still managed to outrun him in the competition. Folktale 3 is the only one among the 19 collected for this study in which immoral behaviour was followed by negative consequences to depict that it is wrong and unacceptable to moral standards.

The hare folktales expose the audience, in this study, children, who are expected to carry the teachings of folktales to adulthood, to behaviour and conduct which lack the sense of morality. This means that the only clear lesson evident in the folktales is that immoral behaviour is good and appropriate as long as the perpetrator is able to cover up their tracks, run away and make sure that they are never caught to account for their actions.

Setswana hare folktales observably promote in children the conceptions that –

- when they want a particular item, it is acceptable to steal it as long as they are not caught.
- they can resort to violence, hurt others, injure them and even kill for amusement as long as they are not caught.

- they should always tell lies to evade punishment and cover their tracks.
- greed and selfishness is good and it is always acceptable not to share food with others.
- to get anything they want from others, they should trick and manipulate them.
- bad behaviour and conduct are easy ways of getting whatever they desire.
- they should run away from their mistakes, faults, responsibilities and avoid accountability by all means.
- it is acceptable to be untrustworthy to friends and laugh at them when they are in trouble instead of helping them.
- it is acceptable to behave in unseemly manners as long as they are safe from any form of punishment or disciplinary measure.

### **5.7.2 Possible implications of hare folktales for moral degeneration in society**

Setswana hare folktales do not depict the inappropriateness of morally degenerated behaviour as it is always followed by positive outcomes, success and accomplishment of missions. This is likely to instil in children the idea that immoral behaviour such as lying, manipulation, violence and theft is a good and easy way out of trouble as it is always followed by positive consequences in folktales. They may also try mimic the behaviour in folktales when they are faced with similar circumstances as in the folktales. As long as behaviours associated with moral degeneration is displayed in literature without negative consequences, moral degeneration will potentially continue and become deeply rooted as a form of culture in children who are exposed to the literature.

The persistence of immoral behaviour in children today leads to the normalisation of such behaviour, thereby perpetuating the crisis of moral degeneration. The researcher realised that hare folktales also justify moral degeneration in that the behaviour associated with this phenomenon appears in folktales without any form of negative consequence, punishment, accountability or even regret, giving the idea that the behaviour is right and should be continued.

South African society is rapidly spiralling out of the notion of morality in that children who are regarded as the future are immersed in morally degenerated behaviour.

Children continue to employ bad behaviour and become perpetrators of immorality. While children are in some cases perpetrators of the moral degeneration crisis, they mostly become victims of behaviours of the moral degeneration employed by adults. Some children observe such behaviour in adults, increasing the risks of learning and adopting similar behaviour later in life. The crisis of moral degeneration affects children as perpetrators, victims and witnesses of immoral behaviours. Therefore, meaningful intervention ought to be established to address the crisis of moral degeneration affecting children in contemporary South Africa. Recommendations in addressing the crisis of moral degeneration, particularly using traditional folklore, are discussed in the following chapter.

### **5.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the manifestation of moral degeneration affecting children in contemporary South Africa was presented. It is clear that children can be perpetrators, victims and witnesses of behaviours associated with moral degeneration, of which the consequences of such behaviours are not appealing to victims. The chapter successfully demonstrated that the behaviour of characters in folktales mirror the crisis of moral degeneration in society and that such behaviour in folktales remains unpunishable. The main concern is that Setswana hare folktales depict more inappropriate behaviour, thereby exposing children to the implications of the phenomenon of moral degeneration. In the following chapter, recommendations and meaningful interventions regarding the curb of the crisis of moral degeneration using African folklore such as the folktales are presented.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the findings of the study were interpreted and real occurrences of moral degeneration affecting children as perpetrators, victims and observers of a crisis were reflected on. In this chapter, all five preceding chapters are reviewed, the primary and secondary research questions are addressed, and the main findings are summarised. The limitations to the study, as well as recommendations for using folktale teachings to regenerate morality and reduce the moral degeneration of children in modern society, are discussed. Suggestions for further research are also made in this chapter.

### **6.2 Review of the study**

The objective of this research was to look into moral degeneration depicted in Setswana hare folktales. The behaviour of the hare character in the collected folktales was examined in this study, emphasising how the behaviours contradict the notion of morality, as described in the context of the study, as well as how these behaviours are mirrored in contemporary South Africa.

### **6.3 Summary of the chapters**

The five chapters of this study are summarised in this section.

In Chapter 1, the research was introduced with the background to this study, as well as the problem statement and research questions that informed the study. The rationale for the study was that society has been observed to be spiralling away from morality and children continue to be implicated in the crisis of moral degeneration as perpetrators, victims and observers of this phenomenon. In previous research, it has been claimed that folktales contain a moral component (Ngapo, 1995; Quintero & Makgabo, 2020; Chinyowa, 2001); however, through observation, the researcher discovered that Setswana hare folktales do not seem to teach moral lessons based on the behaviour displayed by characters and the themes often featured in the folktales. The primary research question sought to investigate potential implications of Setswana hare folktales in the current crisis of moral degeneration impacting children in contemporary South Africa.

Chapter 2 was aimed at reviewing the literature on previous research on folktales and moral degeneration, which was critically synthesised in light of the context of the study. Folktales, as a type of folklore, were divided into four categories, namely fables, human tales, myths, and legends. The literary element of characterisation was also presented to aid in studying the behaviour of the hare character in the collected Setswana hare folktales. Previous folktale studies were reviewed individually to expose the pattern of focus across different scholars and it was discovered that many scholars focused more on the influence of folktales in teaching moral lessons and overlooked the potential negative implications of folktales on the moral behaviour of children – that folktales could potentially teach ill-behaviour. The crisis of moral degeneration, as presented in previous studies, was also discussed, with a particular emphasis on the manifestation of the phenomenon affecting South African children. According to the literature, moral degeneration involving children manifests itself in patterns such as violence, crime, substance abuse, and parental disobedience.

The conceptual–theoretical framework was presented in this Chapter 3. The researcher emphasised that the study does not intend to be interdisciplinary. Theories from three distinct, yet interconnected fields were employed to develop the argument of the study.

Two psychology theories, namely the Theory of Moral Development and the Behaviourist Theory, were used to analyse the behaviour of both the hare characters in folktales and the behaviour of children in modern society. The **Theory of Moral Development** contends that children use direct consequences of behaviour to determine whether a particular behaviour is morally correct or incorrect (Zhou & Brown, 2017). Based on the consequences of immoral behaviour in folktales and reality, this theory assisted the researcher in determining how moral or immoral the hare’s behaviour and the behaviour of children in contemporary South Africa is. According to the **Behaviourist Theory**, behaviour that is followed by positive consequences increases, while behaviour that is followed by negative consequences decreases (Kosinski & Zaczek-Chrzanowska, 2007). This theory assisted in determining the risk of hare folktales in teaching children to mimic the hare’s behaviour, in that his behaviour is always followed by positive consequences no matter

how immoral it is according to moral standards. The hare always completes his missions, gets what he desires, is never caught and always evades punishment.

The Sociology Theory of Functionalism was adopted to study the moral degeneration crisis as a social change implicating children. The **Functionalist Theory** argues that any kind of change in society has the potential of either stabilising or destabilising society. According to the study, the crisis of moral degeneration is a social phenomenon that causes a social shift from a morally driven society to a society with a lack of morals.

The **concept of morality** was used as a framework to determine whether Setswana hare folktales support or contradict moral teaching. Hare folktales were discovered to contravene this concept based on the common behaviour of the hare, including killing, stealing, lying, bullying, manipulating, ill-discipline, trickster behaviour and jealousy.

In Chapter 4, the 19 Setswana hare folktales collected for the study were summarised. The hare character's behaviour in relation to the concept of morality was analysed thematically. The themes that emerged from the thematic data analysis were found to be completely contrary to the concept of morality. This reinforces the argument that Setswana hare folktales do not teach moral lessons. The following 16 themes emerged after having analysed the behaviour of hare characters and the themes commonly featured in the folktales:

1. Trickster behaviour
2. Frequent murders
3. Excessive telling of lies
4. Theft for self-gain
5. Lack of sympathy and compassion
6. Greed and ego-centricity
7. Blame-shifting and scapegoating
8. Risky behaviour
9. Manipulation of vulnerable victims
10. Violence
11. Mockery as a form of abuse

12. Jealousy
13. Betrayal and disloyalty to friends
14. Masquerading to run away from accountability
15. Disobedience to parents
16. Magic for self-interests

Following the analysis, it was determined that these behaviours (themes) reflect the manifestations of moral degeneration impacting children in modern South Africa.

In Chapter 5, the emerged themes were evaluated as manifestations of moral degeneration in contemporary society. These manifestations of moral degeneration were discussed as they had been recently reported in popular newspapers and the media. It was realised that moral degeneration affects children as perpetrators, victims and observers of such behaviour. In this chapter, it was demonstrated that hare folktales mirror moral degeneration as it manifests in society and, therefore, in the absence of meaningful intervention, hare folktales do not teach good morals to children.

#### **6.4 Addressing the research questions**

In this section, the research questions investigated in the study are addressed, as stipulated in Chapter 1. Secondary questions are addressed first and the primary question last as it essentially addresses the argument and rationale informing the study.

##### **6.4.1 Secondary-questions**

###### **6.4.1.1 What are the common behaviours and conducts of hare characters, as featured in Setswana folktales?**

The hare character in the 19 collected Setswana folktales was examined using the characterisation element presented in Chapter 2 (see section 2.3.4). The analysis was focused on the hare character's behaviour, which was aided by the Behaviourist Theory that is concerned with the observable behaviour of individuals (Zhou & Brown, 2017; Walinga, 2019) and the concept of morality in the context of generally accepted good behaviour and conduct which humans should adopt in social settings (Bull, 2010;

Ellemers et al., 2019). The behaviour of the hare character was observed and analysed against the notion of morality. The conduct and behaviour of the hare characters throughout the folktales were viewed as emergent themes in Chapter 4. A total of 16 themes emerged from the analysis of the common behaviour and conduct of hare characters in Setswana folktales.

It is arguable that the behaviour contravenes the notion of morality, thereby displaying the hare as an immoral character who assumes inappropriate behaviour that deviates from moral standards.

#### **6.4.1.2 How does the moral behaviour of children in contemporary society compare to the behaviour of hare characters in folktales?**

The manifestations of the moral degeneration crisis in contemporary South Africa was reflected on in Chapter 5 by contrasting the behavior of children and adults in society with the themes identified in Chapter 4. It was discovered that children's behaviour is increasingly resembling that of the hare in folktales. In other words, the behaviour of children and other members of society in modern South Africa is mirrored in folktales.

Recent incidents in South Africa involving children as perpetrators, victims and observers of immoral behavior were presented in Chapter 5. Violent behaviour, stealing money and items, killing people, disobeying parents, defrauding people of their hard-earned money, lying to avoid punishment, and greed are all common manifestations of moral degeneration, which both children and their elders demonstrate in society. Folktales demonstrate similar behaviour, which is evidently not punishable, reprimanded for or cautioned against in the folktales.

#### **6.4.1.3 To what extent do hare folktales affect the function of teaching morality?**

The researcher applied the concept of morality described in Chapter 3 to determine whether the behaviour depicted in hare folktales supports or contradicts the concept of teaching morality. While it has been argued in previous research that folktales teach moral lessons (Ngapo, 1995; Chinyowa, 2001; Quintero & Makgabo, 2020), the

prevalence of immoral behaviour (themes) in Setswana hare folktales indicates that hare folktales do not embody the moral teaching element, thereby failing to serve the function of morality, as described in Chapter 2 (see section 2.4.1).

The fact that the hare is rarely punished or subjected to negative consequences for his immoral behaviour to demonstrate to the audience that the behaviour is inappropriate implies that children are taught that such behaviour is acceptable as long as they are not caught after having stolen, killed, or tricked others. The aspect of operant conditioning in the Behaviourist Theory strengthens this argument. According to the theory of operant conditioning, morally wrong behaviour is only perceived when it is followed by negative consequences. As the hare character always completes his missions, is rarely caught, and always avoids punishment, his immoral behaviour may be perceived as morally correct as it is accompanied by positive consequences. As a result, hare folktales do not serve the purpose of teaching morality. The question remains as to how folktales teach morality by positively rewarding immoral behaviour.

The lack of disciplinary measures and positive rewards for immoral behaviour in folktales implies that hare folktales teach that it is good to kill as long as you are not caught, that it is good to steal, that it is acceptable to use violence in all situations, that it is good to lie to protect oneself, and many other inappropriate lessons that contradict the concept of morality.

## **6.4.2 Primary question**

### **6.4.2.1 What are the potential implications of Setswana hare folktales for the current crisis of moral degeneration affecting children in South Africa?**

It was successfully demonstrated that Setswana hare folktales contain a wide range of behaviour associated with moral degeneration. Reflecting on incidents of moral degeneration recently reported in popular newspapers and on digital media, the researcher discovered that similar behavior is displayed by children and adults in contemporary South Africa. The prevalence of immoral behaviour in folktales suggests that Setswana hare folktales do not serve the function of teaching morality, contrary to previous research that claims that folktales are primarily narrated to institute moral lessons in children (Ngapo, 1995; Chinyowa, 2001; Quintero & Makgabo, 2020).

This means that hare folktales expose children to immoral behaviour, which presents a potential risk as they might mimic the actions of characters in folktales with whom they identify and whom they admire. While it has been argued in previous research that narratives may influence positive attitudes and behaviour, Hoeken (2017) acknowledges that the audience tends to identify with certain characters even if they portray negative attitudes in the story, and eventually accept the attitudes and opinions expressed by these characters. What matters more is the extent to which the audience connects with and admires a particular character. In this study, it is argued that children may admire and mimic the hare character's behaviour and conduct as he is frequently portrayed as the smart hero who knows how to get out of trouble, complete missions and avoid punishment. In folktales, the hare's immoral behaviour is rewarded with positive outcomes, such as getting what he wants, completing missions, and avoiding accountability and punishment.

According to the Theory of Moral Development, people consider a set of behaviours to be immoral only when they are followed by a form of punishment and negative outcome (Zhou & Brown, 2017). As the hare character remains unpunished for all of his immoral behaviour, the behaviour is frequently portrayed as good and appropriate as no form of punishment, reprimand or caution against such behaviour is presented to him. Moreover, the aspect of operant conditioning states that behaviour followed by positive outcomes is strengthened and increased, following the impression that it always yields positive outcomes (Kosinski & Zaczek-Chrzanowska, 2007). As an example, the hare continues to steal throughout the folktales as he is rarely caught and always gets what he wants. He continues to kill as he always finds a way to escape and eliminate threats and competition to accumulate everything for himself. He also persists in lying to his victims as he always succeeds in his missions by telling lies. He also instigates violence as it makes him happy to see his victims suffering and being injured. He plays tricks on people and manipulates them to get what he wants. The message that hare folktales seek to teach is flawed in that the hare character who assumes immoral behaviour always succeeds in all his immoral plans and is seldom caught to account for or be condemned for his behaviour. The obvious message portrayed is the encouragement of immoral behaviour as it is always followed by desirable outcomes for the doer.

According to Oschatz, Niederdeppe and Liu (2022:378), “the recipients develop attitudes and intentions that converge with the position provided in the message”. This means that children who are exposed to hare folktales are likely to develop attitudes, intentions and behaviour that is related to the message provided by the content of these folktales. Children might also engage in behaviour such as stealing, lying and violence under the impression that such actions will result in positive outcomes similar to those in folktales. According to the study, moral degeneration affect children as perpetrators, victims and witnesses of the immoral behaviour depicted in some folktales. In Chapter 5, children were exposed as perpetrators who have committed murder, abused their peers, disobeyed parents and engaged in violent activities similar to the hare in folktales. In some cases of moral degeneration, adults employ immoral behaviour and victimise children through murder, violence, abuse and witchcraft accusations. Another implication is that children grow up in households and communities where members of society engage in immoral behaviour in the presence of children and, therefore, vulnerable children witness and adopt similar behaviour as a culture that they will carry into adulthood. As a result, moral degeneration in society is perpetuated.

A further implication is that children who are still taught the Setswana hare folktales, become exposed to a variety of morally questionable behaviour through the folktales and in society. The hare character, who is barely punished for his immoral behaviour and always successfully completes his missions, represents the justification of moral degeneration in society, given that folktales were studied as part of social constructs and moral degeneration as a social change threatening societal stability, as discussed in the adoption of the Functionalist Theory in Chapter 3.

## **6.5 Summary of the findings**

- 6.5.1 Setswana hare folktales ostensibly intended to teach moral lessons opposingly feature behaviour that contravenes the concept of morality.
- 6.5.2 Folktales and society expose children to a variety of immoral behaviour.
- 6.5.3 Children continue to become perpetrators, victims and witnesses of moral degeneration.
- 6.5.4 Setswana hare folktales justify the moral degeneration crisis as inappropriate behaviour is always depicted to be followed by positive outcomes.

6.5.5 Unless meaningful intervention is implemented, children may mimic the behaviour of the characters they admire in folktales and continue to do so into adulthood.

## **6.6 Limitations of the study**

Although the study was not intended to be an interdisciplinary study, the researcher assumed theory-borrowing by applying the Theory of Moral Development and the Behaviourist Theory from the psychology discipline and the Functionalism Theory from the sociology discipline. These theories were used as they argue about morality, behaviour and societal changes, respectively, while the study also sought to investigate the concept of morality, the behaviour of characters in folktales and children in society, as well as the crisis of moral degeneration as a societal change currently occurring in South Africa. The Theory of Moral Development was not used in totality; instead, only Stage 1 of moral development, obedience and punishment orientation was applied to the analysis of hare characters' and children's social behaviour. For this investigation, only two components of the Behaviourist Theory were used, namely stimulus–response and operant conditioning.

The theories are more practical in that prior studies employed theories on a sample population of live individuals, while this study did not. The study is based on assumptions rather than real observations of live participants, notably those who had spent some time hearing Setswana hare folktales.

The findings of the study were generalised to a larger population of children in society, despite the fact that it was focused primarily on Setswana hare folktales and South African children who were possibly exposed to the folktales. The episodes of moral degeneration discussed in Chapter 5 did not occur exclusively among children who were directly exposed to Setswana hare folktales; however, the study made conclusions that some folktales could potentially teach children immoral behaviour.

## **6.7 Recommendations**

It was indicated earlier that Setswana hare folktales expose children to immoral behaviour and unless meaningful intervention is implemented, children might mimic undesirable behaviour from folktales and ultimately portray similar behaviour, even in

their adulthood, consequently perpetuating the crisis of moral degeneration. Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007) suggest that the first step to using folktales to address social issues, including moral degeneration, is to identify folktales that potentially perpetuate and justify such issues, and adopt the content to align with appropriate and acceptable beliefs, social behaviour and conduct. Although this remains a challenge for many folklorists, the researcher recommends the following:

### **6.7.1 Recommendations for folktale narrators**

Folktale narrators should emphasise the inappropriateness of the hare character's behaviour in folktales in an attempt to instil morality in the audience of folktales to assist them in thinking about avoiding and discontinuing immoral behaviour. While certain folktales are primarily told for entertainment, narrators must also convey that some behaviours are undesirable and inappropriate as they cause harm, injury and death to the victims. This can be done in the form of a quick discussion immediately following narration to extract the message taught by the folktale. The moral lesson in Setswana hare folktales is frequently flawed and unclear; accordingly, narrators should guide the audience in evaluating the victims' sufferings and determine whether the behaviour was appropriate or inappropriate, good or bad, moral or not, and then to address the behaviours accordingly.

### **6.7.2 Recommendations for literature teachers**

According to Quintero and Makgabo (2020), folktales are part of the curriculum for African language subjects in South Africa; therefore, literature educators are encouraged to raise awareness about the inappropriateness of the hare's behaviour and moral degeneration, rather than portraying the hare character as the typical smart and famous trickster figure who knows how to lie, steal, get away with murder and avoid accountability for his actions. This is to encourage positive social behaviour and moral development in students who are taught the topics of hare folktales at school.

### **6.7.3 Recommendations for adults**

Adults in households, communities and stakeholders in schools, government and the media must impose discipline in children by enacting appropriate and fair punishment in the form of reprimand, caution and other lawful disciplinary measures for children who violate moral standards. However, the researcher does not conclusively imply that

adults do not teach discipline to children. It is recommended that additional and continuous disciplinary measures should be consistent with the rights of children, as outlined in the country's constitution. The implementation and distribution of codes of behaviour in institutions should be enforced so that students who behave in unseemly ways that perpetuate moral degeneration are aware of the potential consequences of their actions. According to operant conditioning, every inappropriate behaviour must be followed by a negative outcome, in which the behaviour is reduced. This will eliminate behaviour that contradicts the concept of morality.

#### **6.7.4 Recommendations for the media**

Considering that African folktales were largely narrated to convey moral lessons (Ngapo, 1995), the researcher recommends that folktales with acceptable moral lesson material be aired on digital media, given that children spend a significant amount of time on digital media (Kritzinger, 2015). To reach the envisioned audience, the content may be animated and disseminated on television, YouTube and other visual digital media platforms. As discussed in the literature review, folktales can serve a recreational function as some of the content is hilarious. This will provide children with amusement while also teaching them moral lessons. This suggestion may be useful for moral regeneration, especially in young children who have been observed to spiral out of morality.

#### **6.8 Suggestions for further research**

The researcher suggests that interdisciplinary research be expanded, notably in the literature–psychology multidisciplinary field. Literature appears to have the potential of influencing the moral sense of the target audience in that characters and the content of literary texts inspire them to think in a certain way. The possible relationship between the content of literary works and the audience's psychological being – behaviour and thinking – could add to the growing field of research aimed at resolving various social challenges such as the moral deterioration dilemma. This can also help to observe a sample of children who may have favourably modified their mindsets, behaviour and attitudes after having heard and having learnt about folktales. This will also demonstrate whether or not folktales still have the potential of teaching moral lessons, even in modern times.

## **6.9 Conclusion**

The potential implications of Setswana hare folktales for the moral degeneration crisis of children in contemporary South Africa was investigated in this study. A detailed and critical literature review of the functions of folktales was undertaken and research claimed that folktales were primarily told to teach moral lessons to children. However, it was found that the Setswana hare folktales have a potential of serving the opposite rather than the intended message after having thematically analysed the behaviour of characters in hare folktales. In fact, Setswana hare folktales depict morally questionable behaviours such as trickster behaviour, manipulation, murder, violence, lying, stealing, the use of magic, greed, jealousy and disloyalty. These are behaviours associated with the crisis of moral degeneration. The main concern is that children are exposed to immoral behaviour through the content of hare folktales and the potential risk is that children could mimic the behaviour seen in the folktales.

The findings aptly illustrated that morally degenerated behaviour depicted by children and adults in contemporary South Africa reflects those of folktale characters such as the hare. As a result, the researcher concludes that Setswana hare folktales are more pro-moral degeneration than anti-moral degeneration and that the crisis continues to implicate children as perpetrators, victims and witnesses of moral degeneration-related behaviour. Modern occurrences of moral degeneration were reflected on as reported in popular newspapers and in digital media.

It was discovered that the hare went unpunished for his immoral deeds and according to the Theory of Moral Development and Behaviourist Theory, behaviours that are not punishable, are perceived as appropriate as they are followed by positive outcomes and are, consequently, likely to be reinforced and continued (Walinga, 2019). The Functionalism Theory was also used to assist in interpreting the moral degeneration crisis as a social change endangering societal stability and folktales as social constructs meant to serve particular functions in society.

The argument is that children exposed to folktales might mimic the behaviour of folktale characters, thereby teaching them immoral behaviour. If children can learn moral lessons from folktales (Ngapo, 1995; Chinyowa, 2001), they can also learn about immorality from some folktales. Moreover, children observe a variety of

behaviour associated with moral degeneration in adults in society, which has the potential of establishing a culture of a lack of morals in children. The conclusions of the study coincide with the findings of Malimabe-Ramagoshi et al. (2007), who determined that some folktales perpetuate and justify child abuse. It can also be concluded that Setswana hare folktales might perpetuate and justify moral degeneration as the hare is seldom caught and constantly receives positive outcomes following his immoral behaviour. This gives the impression that the behaviour of hare characters in Setswana folktales is good and appropriate to employ in social environments.

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