

# The Gendered Ideologies of Naming Traditional Male Aphrodisiacs in Lesotho

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## Abstract

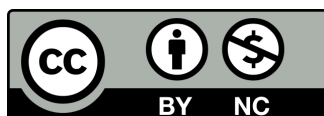
This article examines the naming practices employed for traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs with the aim of unveiling the ideologies reflected and promoted by these names. It draws on a combined analytic approach of socio-onomastics and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Feminist CDA). While a socio-onomastic analysis of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs shows that naming is a discursive practice interwoven with the cultural beliefs of the Basotho, a Feminist CDA makes visible the disparaging beliefs often hidden in seemingly neutral discourses. Feminist CDA further reveals how gendered power relations are discursively reproduced by explicit and implicit meanings inherent in the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs. This analysis thus shows how dominant gendered power relations are promoted; however, it also shows how, to some extent, these gendered power relations seem to be contested. Overall, this article argues that naming is a discursive practice that is used, on the one hand, to sustain and, on the other hand, to seemingly challenge patriarchal inequalities imposed by the cultural beliefs of Basotho society.

**Keywords:** Basotho cultural beliefs, critical approach, naming practices, power relations, sexually enhancing medicines

## About the Author

Lipuo Motene is a researcher who is motivated by the betterment of human conditions. Her research interests are in Discourse Studies (gender, media, and politics), Onomastics, Semantics and Narrative Analysis. She holds a Master of Arts degree in English Language and Linguistics from the National University of Lesotho. Currently, she is affiliated with the University of KwaZulu-Natal where she is pursuing her PhD in Linguistics.

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## Introduction

In contemporary Lesotho society, there is a burgeoning trade in traditional medicines for many purposes. The World Health Organisation (2018) reports that 80 percent of the developing world's population depend on traditional medicine for healing purposes. One of the significant current discussions around traditional medicine is about aphrodisiacs (see e.g. Alabi 2012; Fiaveh et al. 2015; Nyambi et al. 2016). According to Naveed Saleh (2019, 1), an aphrodisiac is understood to be any food or drug that stimulates sexual instinct, induces sexual desire, or increases sexual pleasure and performance. Traditionally, aphrodisiacs are prepared from plants (Saleh 2019, 1).

Of particular concern for this study is the names of male traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs, that is, the naming practices employed by Basotho for traditional aphrodisiacs. According to Edwin Lawson (1971), a *name* is a word or an arrangement of a group of words by which a person, place, a body or class, or any object of thought is labelled, titled, or known. As indicated by Sara Wheeler (2018, 1), "names are an important social phenomenon and ought to be a topic of interest in many of the scholarly disciplines engaged in considering language and social interaction." A scholarly discipline concerned with the study of names is called *onomastics* (Leslie and Skipper 1990). Socio-onomastics is a branch of onomastics involved in the study of names within a society or culture.

This study emanated out of interest in the nomenclature of traditional medicines. Lesotho's media landscape proliferates with advertisements for traditional medicines meant for various forms of ailments. Amongst these, advertisements for Sesotho traditional male aphrodisiacs dominate. Chief amongst the reasons why I as a gender scholar was drawn to focusing on male aphrodisiacs in my research is that when I heard the names of these aphrodisiacs, I cringed. The names

of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs appeared to have ideological investments that condone violence against women. Sherryl Kleinman (2007) states that feminist researchers naturally care about various forms of injustices. She describes this situation as having a twinge-ometer, which is an alarm that gets activated when one senses that something is not quite right in a situation.

The media advertisements left me feeling uncomfortable, and the names of male traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs, especially, gave me a sense of unease. While I have my personal opinions as a woman living in Basotho society, my overriding preoccupation in this study has been on understanding how the targeted buyers of these medicines perceive the names. This is mainly because I wanted to gain deeper insights into men's lived experiences of the consumption of traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs. As a result, I embarked on a qualitative study in which I gathered the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs and their interpretations by the targeted buyers, that is, Basotho men. The underlying objective was to understand the targeted consumers' interpretations of the names given to traditional male aphrodisiacs. This is important because, based on the tenets of socio-onomastics, names are significant in a society as they are intertwined with the languages and cultures from which they emanate.

It becomes critically important to study the naming practices used in traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs because, in the context of Lesotho, the ideological implications of these names still remain empirically unknown. It is crucial to unmask these ideologies in order to understand whether they function to curb or perpetuate social ills such as gender based violence, which is very prevalent in Lesotho. This study thus aims to answer the following research questions: What are the meanings of the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs? What ideologies do their names reflect and promote? In this paper, I have adopted a

working definition of *ideology* from Norman Fairclough (2003, 28), who explains that “ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation.” I therefore take ideologies as systems of ideas and attitudes which are both conveyed and reproduced in the social practices of people and perpetuated through discourse.

To unveil the ideologies promoted and reflected by the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs, I adopted the Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Feminist CDA) approach. From the Feminist CDA perspective, the process of assigning labels to referents is a social practice which is worthy of investigation. This is because it is important to establish whether the assigned labels promise or promote equitable power relations between men and women. If asymmetrical power relations are perpetuated by the labels, analysts examine whether this is achieved overtly or through subtle and seemingly innocuous ways (Lazar 2005). In this regard, Feminist CDA offers relevant tools for unravelling the communicative functions of the naming practices relating to traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs.

This article consists of six sections. The first section following the introduction focuses on the cultural significance of names. I give an overview and situate my research within previous studies on naming practices and aphrodisiacs. The second section gives a description of my combined analytic approach of socio-onomastics and Feminist CDA, and the third section outlines how I conducted this study. In the fourth section, I present my analysis of the meanings of names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs and the ideologies they reflect and promote. This is followed by a discussion section in which I situate the results of this study within previous literature. The argument advanced by this article is that naming is a discursive practice that is used to

achieve communicational goals, such as using language resources that have the potential to attract consumers. These naming practices are representative of the belief systems of Basotho society, showing, for example, how masculinity is perceived. I also argue that while these naming practices reflect ideologies which promote violence both overtly and covertly, there are some deviant cases where naming practices reflect ideologies which seemingly promote resistance to the prevailing gendered social relations.

### The cultural significance of names

Previous studies of naming practices in different societies have been consistent in articulating a view that names are not randomly assigned to people, places, characters, and objects; rather, they are given for specific reasons. There is a consensus among onomasticians that names are important in societies because they are culturally meaningful resources. Names are indicative of the life experiences of individual people, but at the same time they also reveal the belief systems and norms of a given society. It has conclusively been shown that names reflect social relations between people, power dynamics, and a society’s goals.

A number of studies have been conducted on names and naming practices across the world and the majority of these studies have highlighted the significance of names and naming practices. Western scholars such as Gabriele Vom Bruck and Barbara Bodenhorn (2006), Lawson (1971), and Willy Van Langendonck and Mark Van de Velde (2016) have studied the etymology of surnames in their given societies. Most importantly for this article, there are also many examples from within the African context. For instance, Kofi Agyekum (2006) has looked at how Akan personal naming systems reflect the Akan philosophy and culture. Philip Boateng Ansah and Patricia Beatrice Mireku-Gyimah (2021) have

examined the morphological and semantic features of selected Kwahu towns and village names in the eastern region of Ghana. Theresah Patrine Ennin and Nancy Boahemaa Nkansah (2016) have explored the naming of characters in African novels. Other research on naming in the African context includes Charles Pfwukwa's (2008) study of diurnal names in Shona and Nobuhle Ndimande-Hlongwa's (2010) study on the nicknames of South African soccer teams and players. From an African point of view, the onomastic studies conducted reveal that names are not arbitrary labels, but have cultural and pragmatic significance.

Studies conducted by Joseph Oluwatobi Alabi (2012), Fiaveh et al. (2015), and Nyambi et al. (2016) are very relevant to my study. These studies explore the phenomenon of the usage of aphrodisiacs in Africa; however, they employ methodological approaches different from those used in my study. While my approach is based on socio-onomastics and Feminist CDA, Alabi (2012) and Fiaveh et al. (2015) study traditional aphrodisiacs in African societies from sociological perspectives. Alabi (2012) investigates the notion of women's agency in the usage of traditional aphrodisiacs in North Central Nigeria. A major objective of Alabi's study is to gain deeper insights into why women use aphrodisiacs. Fiaveh et al. (2015) examine how traditional aphrodisiacs influence the manner in which phallic competence and male dominance are constructed in Accra, Ghana. They further explore how the notions of phallic competence and aphrodisiac consumption are conceived by men and women. Their findings show that men engage in the consumption of traditional aphrodisiacs in order to prove real manhood, understood in terms of phallic competence.

Nyambi et al. (2016) study the names of traditional African sexually enhancing herbs from a socio-onomastic perspective. Their area of focus is South Africa and the research participants are men who identify as nationals of various African countries. Nyambi et al.

(2016, 359) classify their findings into four categories, showing the ideological implications of the names of traditional African sexually enhancing herbs. The categories are as follows: (1) male sexual alertness, (2) gender stereotypes depicting women as sexual objects and men as superior beings, (3) the depiction of men as having animal attributes, and (4) names endorsing violence against women. Through a Feminist CDA approach, my study explores how these categories correspond with the ideological implications of the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs. Nyambi et al. study the names on one dimension; that is, their analysis demonstrates how gendered social relations are only exercised through naming practices. By employing a Feminist CDA approach, my study adds to Nyambi et al.'s study by developing a nuanced understanding of how gendered social relations may be contested through naming practices.

In the context of Lesotho, the available literature on naming practices includes Masechaba Mokhati-Mbhele's (2006) analysis of Sesotho personal names, Puleng Makholu Letsoela's (2015) study of the names of bus stops, and Rethabile Possa and Palesa Khotso's (2015) investigation into the meanings of medicinal plant names from a socio-onomastic point of view. Importantly for my study, Possa and Khotso (2015) show that the plant name meanings correlate with the functions the plants are believed to perform. Furthermore, they argue that the meanings of Basotho medicinal plant names can be viewed as an effort to promote the usage of medicinal plants to restore health. However, although Possa and Khotso (2015) deal extensively with the naming practices for Basotho medicinal plants and their implications, they do not cover aphrodisiacs. My study thus adds to theirs by applying the socio-onomastic approach to give a descriptive analysis of the names of traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs. Yet, unlike Possa and Khotso's (2015) study, my analysis does not end here but adds another analytical

dimension by combining the socio-onomastic approach with a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. Thus I aim to go beyond a descriptive analysis of traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs to analyse the ideologies reflected and promoted by the naming practices.

### **Socio-onomastics and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: A combined analytic approach**

This study employs a combined analytic approach of socio-onomastics and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (Feminist CDA). Socio-onomastics highlights the significance of how the names are used in everyday discourse. It looks at why some names are avoided, why certain names are associated with certain disapproving attitudes, and how name users themselves understand the very names they employ (Leslie and Skipper 1990). The socio-onomastic approach also considers the social, cultural, and situational realms in which names are put into practice.

The basic tenets of socio-onomastic theory highlight that names are important elements in the make-up of a society. This is because names are connected to human experiences and may consequently have far-reaching implications in the construction of identities and relationships at the micro level of societies (Hough 2016). It is through names that social structures are brought to the fore, and it is through naming systems that social problems and cultural developments can be understood (Hough 2016). At the heart of all socio-onomastic endeavours is the view that names are always born in the interaction between people, the linguistic community, and the environment.

The primary concern of Feminist CDA is the manner in which, in constructions of social practices, ideologies of gender, and gendered social relations are exercised or resisted between people through discourse, that is,

through talk and texts (Lazar 2005). CDA is an emancipatory critical social science that is openly committed to the achievement of a just social order through a critique of discourse. Lazar (2005) points out that demystifying discourses that maintain patriarchal social practices is the central concern of feminist critical discourse analysts. Patriarchal social practices entail power relations that endorse male privilege, while women are subjugated as a social entity. A principal objective of Feminist CDA is to lay bare the gendered nature of social practices, highlighting the absence of neutrality.

Similar to Lilie Chouliariaki and Norman Fairclough (1999), the position of Feminist CDA analysts is that discourse is one component of social practices. Lazar (2005) maintains that features of social practices that are discursive in nature are of primary concern to Feminist CDA analysts; for instance, discursive manners of acting entail writing and talking, and this is achieved through certain ideological means of representation (Lazar 2005). This refers to the framing of issues in different manners in order to achieve effects in specific contexts.

In the combined analytic framework I adopt in this article, these approaches work in a complementary manner, that is, one approach covers for another where the other has limitations in the analysis of the research material. A socio-onomastic approach offers tools for analysing meaningful aspects of naming practices. It also underscores the importance of not studying names as abstract entities divorced from their context of usage. In this way, a socio-onomastic approach guides the parameters of this article by offering tools for a descriptive analysis of the meanings of names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs.

Employing a Feminist CDA approach is crucial in Lesotho's present-day patriarchal society, where gender based violence (GBV) is a pervasive social problem with a high prevalence rate. 86 percent of Basotho women

experience violence perpetrated by men in their lifetime (United Nations Population Fund 2019). The significance of Feminist CDA in this context is that it is openly committed to a realization of a just social order through the analysis of discourse. The choice of this combined analytic approach of socio-onomastics and Feminist CDA enables a holistic approach in order to fully account for the research problem.

### Studying the names of traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs

The research participants chosen for this study were Basotho men who commute through and work in Maseru (capital city of Lesotho), and specifically in the upper and lower Maseru bus stop areas. I selected these areas for my research because people from different parts of Lesotho migrate to Maseru as an economic hub. I used a simple random sampling technique to select a sample of 50 men within the age range of 25–50. The men were street vendors, bus and taxi drivers, and commuters. They were all native speakers of Sesotho. To recruit the participants, I approached any man in the bus stop areas to request their participation. I informed them about the purpose of the study, and when they gave consent to participate, a questionnaire was given to them. I requested them to submit completed questionnaires to one street vendor per location, from whom I then collected the completed questionnaires. I allocated three working weeks for the collection of data in the two locations in 2021. I decided against using research assistants as I wanted to have a first-hand experience of participants' reactions when approaching them and handing the questionnaires to them.

Elwys de Stefani (2016) explains that in analysing names, socio-onomastics use several methods of data collection, such as interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaires, as their primary methods. A

questionnaire was relevant in the context of Lesotho because it ensured the anonymity of participants, while also offering participants privacy and freedom to explain intricacies of sexual activity. Sexual matters are still a taboo subject in the context of Lesotho as there is a culture of sexual conservatism; for this reason, interviews and focus group discussions would not generate useful data for the purposes of this study. While conducting this study, I observed that there is secrecy around the usage of traditional aphrodisiacs. During data collection, I was given an unwelcoming reception by some men. While these men acknowledged that they use traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs, they did not cooperate with me because I am female. They refused to participate, claiming that *pitsa tsa banna ke taba tsa banna feela* ('men's aphrodisiacs are men's issues alone').

In the questionnaire, I asked each participant to list about five names of traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs they used or knew. For each name, I requested them to provide an explanation as to what might have inspired the assigning of each name. For the sake of user-friendliness and to save participants' time, participants were requested to mention only about five names each. Some participants listed five names while others listed less. In most cases, similar traditional medicines were mentioned by different men. In total, the dataset of names mentioned by participants was 160. Most names were mentioned more than once. Altogether, 26 different names of traditional medicines were mentioned. From the 26 names, I selected 12 names whose interpretations revealed that they were traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs.

I disregarded 14 names because participants' descriptions of these names disclosed that they are general medicines which are either used as goodluck charms or to enhance physical appearance. The focus of this study is on traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs alone. Therefore, I selected only 12 names of male aphrodisiacs as a sample. The 12 names

mentioned by the participants also included the names I had initially heard in media advertisements which had made me uncomfortable. The participants also mentioned names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs I had never heard before.

I systematically studied the meanings of names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs based on two levels of meaning, namely literal meaning and connotative meaning. In order to establish the literal meanings of the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs, I used *Patla-mantsoe Ya Sesotho Ya Machaba/ Sesotho International Dictionary* (PYS) (Chitja 2010). PYS is a bilingual online dictionary that provides English translations of Sesotho words. Although I am a native speaker of Sesotho, I used a translation dictionary for consistency in order to maintain reliability. I derived the connotative level of meaning from the explanations offered by the participants in relation to their beliefs about what motivated the names given to traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs.

Nyambi et al.'s (2016) classification of ideological implications of the names of traditional African sexually enhancing herbs was used as a basis to group the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs into themes that have similar characteristics. In cases where the ideological implications of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs could not fit into the categories of Nyambi et al. (2016), I adjusted the classification by developing other categories which best described the ideological implications of these names. Moreover, I applied Feminist CDA to study the ideologies reflected and promoted by the names.

### Meanings of names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs and the ideologies they reflect and promote

The literal meanings of all traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs show that the names

assigned are commercial labels which serve to offer an identifying function. This can be exemplified by *berella* 'heavily press down', *mapotsanyane* 'young ones of a goat (kids)', *hloella-hape* 'climb again', *tsoha re bue* 'wake up so that we can talk', *lebetlela* 'a fighting stick', and *sentheohe* 'do not get off me'. Name givers assign names which they deem to be desirable in order to achieve their communicational goals. Further, the literal meanings reflect that these names are descriptive of the functions of the aphrodisiacs on the consumers. Take, for instance, *moroba-bethe* 'bed breaker', *mofafola* 'that which pulls a body part painfully', *mafasana* 'that which equally ties objects together', *matlatlapa* 'that which abuses', *mafofela* 'that which flies towards', *monyolla-koto* 'that which raises a knobkerrie'.

Tenets of socio-onomastic theory indicate that there is a strong interface that binds people's naming systems and their cultural practices; it is through names that social structures are established (Hough 2016). This underscores the point that the worldview of a society and its social problems can be understood by studying names (Hough 2016). Names are a crucial element as they have far-reaching consequences in constructing social relationships in societies. They can promote equal societies, divide societies by endorsing violence, or alienate certain members of society. As we can see, these consequences may either be positive or negative, and we can see them manifested in the connotative meanings embedded in the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs.

I derived the connotative meanings of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs from participants' explanations about their beliefs on the motivations for the product names. The connotative meanings reflect their attitudes, together with the stances participants have towards the names of the products; and, as I observed, these connotative meanings are laden with ideology. I have attached

a table which shows the meanings of names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs as Appendix 1. A Feminist CDA analysis of the ideologies reflected and promoted by the connotative meanings of names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs has been classified into the following five categories: (1) violence against women, (2) sexual activity depicted as war, (3) depiction of men as having animal attributes, (4) women appearing as agents, and (5) equality between men and women. These categories were developed on the basis of participants' interpretations of the names.

### *Violence against women*

The names of several traditional aphrodisiacs, such as *berella* ('heavily press down'), *moroba-bethe* ('bed breaker'), *mofafola* ('that which pulls a body part painfully'), and *matlatlapa* ('that which abuses') promote violence against women. They do this either by using discursive practices which overtly promote violence, or by using those that allude to violence in seemingly innocuous ways. For instance, a name such as *matlatlapa* promotes an ideology of violence against women as male aggression is overtly alluded to. This is because the participants' connotative meaning indicates that a man who uses the aphrodisiac will be strong and have prolonged sexual stamina, and the sexual encounter will be painful for the woman due to an extremely firm erection and a long encounter.

The connotative meaning of the name *matlatlapa* explicitly suggests that the objective is to inflict harm on a woman. This naming practice inculcates a perception that real manhood is violent masculinity; for a man to assert his manhood, he should be able to desecrate a female body. In this framing, rationale is found for the infliction of pain, and, in this sense, ideologies of abuse are endorsed as real manhood. Following a CDA approach, the ideologies embedded in the name *matlatlapa* are

significations of reality in the physical world. An ideological construction which frames real manhood as pain inflicting is problematic because it works to encourage violence in societies.

The tenets of Feminist CDA indicate that there are implicit ways in which power is habitually instantiated in everyday communications (Lazar 2005). This article maintains that a critical analysis of the names of traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs such as *moroba-bethe* ('bed breaker') reveals that the name evokes violence against women in a subtle and seemingly innocuous way. As indicated by the participants, connotatively, this name suggests that the medicine evokes sexual power, and that as a result, the energy and strength that the user will accrue from this medicine will last him until he breaks a bed. At face value, the name *moroba-bethe* ('bed breaker') appears to be unproblematic because it naturalizes violence that is directed at a bed.

A close CDA examination reveals that *moroba-bethe* promotes violence in an opaque manner since power paradigms are softened and masked as neutral. This is achieved through the naturalization of practices as 'normal' behaviours that seemingly adhere to common sense. The power of the dominant groups may be integrated into norms or habits which are found to be natural and are accepted by general consensus; this is what Antonio Gramsci (1971) calls hegemony. As stated by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), hegemonic discourse becomes an ideology when it is accepted as natural and objective, and is therefore perceived as unproblematic.

The bed is the place where we should feel safe, safe enough to commit ourselves to sleep, that is, to relinquish our watchfulness, lower our guard, be in a state of unconsciousness, in which we are susceptible to harm and death. When we invite another human being into our bed, we invite them to share our sanctuary. The central theme projected in the name of the aphrodisiac is that of a bed-breaking



man during a sexual encounter. The sexual act becomes so powerful that the bed, the sanctuary, breaks.

The man's fleeting moment of destructive (sexual) power play is celebrated while the fundamental and long-term needs of intimacy and safety on a woman's part are demoted and relegated to the periphery. This naming practice suggests that non-violent masculinity is weak, for in a patriarchal setup, violent masculinities appeal to culture and the cultural structures become instrumental in securing masculine power and hegemony. Formulations of masculinity are based upon re-productions of culture which promote notions of violent masculinities by associating manhood with sexual prowess, dominance, control, and virility (Schneider et al. 2008).

Moreover, in keeping with the tenets of Feminist CDA, this naming practice covertly disempowers women because it assures men's hyper visibility and promotes women's invisibility and erasure in sexual activity. Teun Van Dijk (1985) points out that the analysis of ideology looks at what information gets downgraded while other information gets highlighted. In the case of *moroba-bethe*, information on a highly sexually powerful man is highlighted while a woman's body is downgraded; it is passive and akin to a bed that will be broken by a virile man. A woman's body is objectified, rendered invisible, and disempowered. This is an example of the subtle and discursive workings of power which cement unequal social relations.

### ***Sexual activity depicted as war***

Through the names of traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs, such as *lebetlela* ('a fighting stick') and *monyolla-koto* ('that which raises a knobkerrie'), sexual activity is depicted as war, that is, it is militarized.<sup>1</sup> The naming

<sup>1</sup>A knobkerrie looks like a walking stick (*kirri* in Khoekhoe or San) with a knob or ball (*knop* in Afrikaans)

practice in this category employs war metaphors. For instance, there is a war metaphor in sexual relations communication because, as the participants explained, the name *lebetlela* ('a fighting stick') connotes that the user will have an extremely firm erection that will help him to fight in a war of sexual activity. A war metaphor is also seen in the connotative meaning of *monyolla-koto* ('that which raises a knobkerrie'), since the participants pointed out that the name suggests that users who consume it will be highly stimulated and therefore become prepared to batter a woman with a weapon while engaged in a sexual encounter.

As stated by Flusberg et al. (2018), an analogy of war evokes a fight between opposing forces with a clear division between the conflicting sides, who are engaged in a tug of war to achieve different goals. Warfare metaphors create dichotomies of fighter versus enemy, winner versus loser, good versus evil (Flusberg et al. 2018). A critical analysis of the name *lebetlela* ('a fighting stick') reveals that it has connotations that create adversarial relations because it says a man who uses it will fight in a battle. Van Dijk (1985) explains that the analysis of ideology considers the lexicon, looking at what words are used and what meanings are attributed to specific words. A CDA approach discloses that in a case of *monyolla-koto* ('that which raises a knobkerrie'), a man is depicted as a warrior or a fighter, while on the other hand a woman becomes an enemy; through this logic, a man is a warrior who has to triumph in a battle. The metaphorical war frame conjures up imagery of harming or even obliterating the enemy, a woman in this case, and this shows militarized masculinity which brews violence.

Following a Feminist CDA approach, the metaphorical war frames in *lebetlela* ('a fighting stick') and *monyolla-koto* ('that

at one end. A knobkerrie is a traditional African weapon that can either be thrown or used as a blunt force weapon. Knobkerries are used both for hunting and in combat.

which raises a knobkerrie') are negative and inherently damaging because they are not only power based but violent. They contribute to ideologies of male dominance and the passivization of women in sexual relations. These naming practices ascribe power to men while women are framed as subjugated. They espouse notions of the all-powerful, invincible, and infallible manhood that defeats and tames those defined as subjugated by it. *Koto* is a knobkerrie and *lebetlela* is a fighting stick; these are weapons used in fierce battles. This proves that in Basotho society, violence is a representation of masculinity, and through language, this is normalized and left to exist unchallenged.

Being a man in a patriarchal environment means that a man should be powerful all the time; he should be dominating, controlling, sexually performative, aggressive, and unaffectionate. This shows that in the prevailing patriarchal setup, sexism is a quality men should have in order to be accepted as men.

### ***Depiction of men as having animal attributes***

This article maintains that through the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs such as *mapotsanyane* ('young ones of a goat (kids)'), men are given attributes of animals. Participants' explanations revealed that the connotative meaning of *mapotsanyane* extends to describing the users of the medicine as kids. The belief is that users of *mapotsanyane* will be extremely active and as aggressive as kids while engaged in sexual activity. As kids begin to grow, they exhibit their dominance within their social groupings by ramming their heads into their peers, objects, other animals, and even humans (Roy's Farm 2021). Participants revealed that *mafofela* ('that which flies towards') connotes that this aphrodisiac gives the user extreme sexual potency

almost immediately; for this reason, a partner must be near so that the user of the medicine can fly at them.

A man who uses these aphrodisiacs is depicted as a creature that rapidly and repeatedly rams into its 'victims' who are women; it does not differentiate who the ramming is directed at. This begs the question, what does it mean to be a man in Basotho society? This article maintains that the entrenched Basotho ideals of masculinity are that manhood should involve violence as a means of asserting its legitimacy. Men should be aggressive animals in order to be men. Manhood largely manifests itself as strength and sexual zeal for savage behaviour is presented as socially acceptable. Cultural constructions of manhood present men as incapable of expressions of love and affection (Kumalo and Gama 2018); being intimate and showing vulnerability signals weakness.

Naming strategies which depict men as having animal attributes reveal that the discursive practices employed have ideological effects that help to reproduce unequal power relations between men and women through the representation and positioning of people in sexual relations. *Mapotsanyane* ('young ones of a goat (kids)') and *mafofela* ('that which flies towards') highlight the element of toxic masculinity that permeates Basotho society. Toxic masculinity is a traditional ideology of masculinity which encompasses a set of behaviours which dictate that men should suppress emotions, always uphold an appearance of ruthlessness, and be violent to indicate power (De Boise 2019). Toxic masculinity denies men an opportunity to be in touch with their emotions because men should not be seen as non-aggressive. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (2009) indicate that discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned; it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and social identities as well as relationships between people. In this light, it is seen how the discourse used in naming

practices for traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs is instrumental in shaping constructions of manhood in Basotho society.

This article maintains that naming practices which depict men as having animal attributes instil a perception of sex as a performance, especially as a way through which to exhibit masculine bravery, male supremacy, and aggression.

### *Women appearing as agents in sexual activity*

In some cases, the ideologies reflected by the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs are such that women are portrayed as authoritative agents, for example, *sentheohe* ('do not get off me') and *hloella-hape* ('climb again'). Participants pointed out that the connotation of *sentheohe*'s ('do not get off me') suggests that the user will pleasure their partner to such an extent that the woman will tell the man not to get off her. Similarly, the connotative meaning of *hloella-hape* implies that when a man uses this medicine, a woman will order him to get on top of her again due to the pleasure derived from the sexual activity. Through these names, women are not depicted as passive entities; instead, they are presented as agents who are commanding sexual activity.

Drawing on the Feminist CDA approach, this observation is indicative of a phenomenon of contestation of domination. This interpretation is motivated by the name *sentheohe* ('do not get off me'), which implies the authoritativeness of women and inherently goes against gendered expectations. The discursive practices employed in the naming strategies of these traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs show the force of an utterance. Norman Fairclough (1992) states that the forceful part of a text is its actional component, which is what it is being used to do socially, what the speech act is being used to perform. In this

case, a speech act performed in these naming strategies is giving an order.

The depiction of women as agents suggests a subversion of the status quo where women occupy the position of authority. The name suggests a woman's overt position of authority because the utterance carries directive force. As stated by Lazar (2005), this points to the fact that unequal relations of power in which women are subjugated can be discursively contested in a variety of methods through textual representations.

### *Equality between men and women?*

Interestingly, the names of some traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs seem to promote ideologies of symmetrical power relations between men and women. For instance, participants explained that in the case of *mafasana* ('that which ties objects together equally'), the connotation of the name suggests that the medicine gives a user a stimulation that will have him and a woman tied together in sexual activity because of the supposedly intense sexual pleasure she receives from the user of the medicine. In the same manner, participants indicated that *tsoha re bue* ('wake up so that we can talk'), connotes that the user will be sexually aroused so much that he will feel a strong urge to ask his partner to wake up so that they can have sexual intercourse.

These names seem to promote symmetrical relations of power. From a Feminist CDA perspective, the fundamental conception of binary gender is understood as an ideological construction that splits people into two distinct classes, men and women, grounded on the hierarchical domination and subjugation of the latter (Lazar 2005). The notions of men's domination and women's subjugation seem not to prevail in the naming strategies employed here.

CDA is not neutral in its approach to the study of discourse, but is closely associated

with social problems and a goal of radical social change (Van Dijk 1985). Based on this premise, this article argues that the names *mafasana* ('that which ties objects together equally') and *tsoha re bue* ('wake up so that we can talk') only appear to promote the notion of symmetrical relations of power while the underlying connotations do not support this interpretation. In the case of *mafasana* ('that which ties objects together equally'), the ideology of the systematic subordination of women and unequal power relations between the genders is indeed absent from the meaning of the name. Yet, while the name of the aphrodisiac deviates from patriarchal models of masculinity and femininity, the fact remains that the aphrodisiac itself is exclusively consumed by men. Therefore, the unilateral consumption of the aphrodisiac may still result in non-matching sexual desires and hence a situation where women are sexually disempowered.

## Discussion

The findings of this study are in line with those of previously conducted studies on naming practices. As I have shown, the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs are representative of the society's belief systems; they are a phenomenon signifying the society's experiences. Letsoela (2015, 1) substantiates this by pointing out that "a name is not chosen arbitrarily, but is chosen based on a combination of socio-cultural factors. This is because language cannot be divorced from culture, for it is through language that speakers reflect their cultural and socio-linguistic effort." Additionally, tenets of socio-onomastic theory indicate that names communicate what is meaningful in social contexts; hence, to understand the actual name, the context in which it is employed should be critically examined (Leslie and Skipper 1990).

This article maintains that naming practices employed for traditional male Sesotho

aphrodisiacs suggest that the naming of these products is heavily influenced by a need to market these medicines to the users; this assertion is supported by Possa and Khotso's (2015) study. The naming practices employed entail creative uses of language which have ideological implications, some of which are negative while others appear to be positive. This is consistent with Susan Ehrlich's (2001) assertion that language is not merely a transparent vehicle through which information is transmitted; rather, it is ideology laden, and through discursive practices, language moulds and shapes realities in various contexts.

Analysis of the names of male Sesotho aphrodisiacs provides important perspectives on challenges within Basotho society. This marries with Agyekum's (2006) assertion that naming practices constitute an indicator of people's beliefs, ideologies, religion, culture, philosophy, and thought, because there is a strong dialectical relationship that binds people's language and their cultural practices. In the context of Lesotho, the naming practices for some traditional aphrodisiacs are indicative of a phenomenon where gendered power relations that endorse violence against women are exercised either overtly or covertly. These naming practices give men what Robert Connell and James Messerschmidt (2005) term a "patriarchal dividend" which accrues them symbolic capital, that is, power and dominance over women's bodies (Lazar 2005).

With regard to naming practices that depict sexual activity as war, Flusberg et al. (2018) note that war metaphors are prevalent in natural discourse. Previous studies suggest that war metaphors have been used in communications of issues such as cancer and HIV/AIDS, and a majority of the studies have highlighted that there are both possible benefits and negative consequences to employing war metaphors in the framing of significant social issues. For instance, a study conducted by Semino et al. (2018) established

that war metaphors are pervasive in the illness discourse on cancer. War metaphors used in cancer discourse work in a variety of ways; while some war metaphors empower cancer patients, others stigmatise them (Semino et al. 2018). This article argues that war metaphors in sexual activity discourse have the effect of condoning violence perpetrated on women.

Some names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs depict men as having animal attributes. Kumalo and Gama (2018) posit that heroism and bravado birth violent masculinities, and this assertion is supported by the current study as the names of the aphrodisiacs indicate that men might use them in order to heighten their own self-esteem and praiseworthiness. As the tenets of Feminist CDA assert, in a patriarchal social order, men may suffer from an ego complex (Lazar 2005).

This article argues that men's consumption of aphrodisiacs may at least partially emanate from a space of anxiety because men do not want to be perceived as weak and unmanly because of how they experience and express their sexuality. Kumalo and Gama (2018) hold the view that violent masculinities are underlain by the fragility of manhood. This points to the elements of toxic masculinity which bolster the social identity formation processes of manhood. Basotho men are imprisoned by dominant ideas of what it means to be a man; cultural socializations have ingrained in the minds of men that to be real men, they should be emotionally and physically strong, and exhibit dominance and aggression. Toxic masculinity has disallowed men the full dynamics of emotions and experiences of a human being because they are deemed to represent weakness. This is evident in Basotho proverbs such as *monna ke nku, ha a lle* translated as 'a man is a sheep, he does not cry' meaning that a man must endure all forms of emotions in silence. This is an indication that the Basotho culture inculcates in the minds of men that they cannot enjoy a full spectrum of emotions that make

up a human being as they are incarcerated by the ideals of what it means to be real men.

Through my own lived experience, I can attest to the prevalence of toxic masculinity, which also permeates in the shape of misogyny, in present day Basotho society. When I was conducting this study, some men blatantly refused to participate in the study by categorically claiming that issues around male aphrodisiacs are the preserve of males alone. In this way, these men were creating firm boundaries demarcating what women should and should not do. This was an attempt to deepen and cement gender roles. I maintain that adherence to these gendered attitudes and beliefs exhibits men's ingrained prejudice against women.

When considering an ideology where some names portray women as agents in sexual activity, it would be very interesting to trace the origin of the names for aphrodisiacs that impart authority to women. Were these names assigned by women? Or were they assigned by men? Given that the targeted consumers of these aphrodisiacs are men (and not women) there is also a possibility that the names serve to create the image of an insatiable female lover in the minds of the buyers. This idea obviously places men under great pressure in terms of their sexual performance and almost prevents them from exhibiting more 'sensual', slow, soft types of sexual behaviours. Therefore, the idea of an insatiable female who finds great pleasure in a sexually aggressive male seems to influence these naming practices. Attwood and Smith (2014) confirm this narrative by stating that this is a common male fantasy that aids tremendously with the global sales of pornographic material.

When interrogating the notion of equality in a name such as *tsoha re bue* ('wake up so that we can talk'), a close critical analysis reveals that the implied equality exists merely at face value and is thus superficial. When the name is considered within Lesotho's patriarchal social order, the concept of meaningful equality conveyed in the name becomes

slanted. The social context – in addition to the fact that this aphrodisiac, too, is consumed by men (and not men *and* women) – suggests that the desire for the metaphorical ‘talking’ could be rather one-sided. The aphrodisiac will keep the men’s desire awake and create a strong sexual urge. Consequently, rather than creating a mutual desire, the aphrodisiac *tsoha re bue* (‘wake up so that we can talk’) might result in a situation where the men (repeatedly) ask their partners to wake up in order to have sexual intercourse. These subtle elements of power are revealed through close inspection of this name because, as Ansah and Mireku-Gyimah (2021) put it, naming shows that language is a powerful tool that mirrors a society’s worldview and philosophy. Consequently, upon closer inspection, the *apparent* parity appears to be questionable; the two bodies that engage in sexual intercourse are not on an equal footing because only the man consumes the aphrodisiac that extremely heightens his sexual drive.

## Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to examine the names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs as well as the gendered ideologies reflected and promoted by them. A socio-onomastic analysis of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs reveals that naming is a discursive practice intertwined with Basotho cultural beliefs. With regard to the ideologies reflected and promoted by the names of traditional Sesotho aphrodisiacs, the analysis of naming practices shows that while some names of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs overtly promote ideologies of asymmetrical power relations, other names covertly serve the same function. In this regard, a contribution this study makes is to apply a Feminist CDA approach in order to make visible the ideologies embedded in the names. A basic tenet of CDA is that there

is a dialectical relationship between people’s language and their cultural practices. Based on this premise, the importance of unveiling gendered ideologies lies in the fact that gender based violence (GBV) is a social ill that is rife in Basotho society. Consequently, it is important to unmask the ideologies that shape this reality.

The combined analytical approach I adopted in this article presents a development of conceptual innovation. The interaction between socio-onomastics and Feminist CDA assists in offering a fully fledged account of naming practices for traditional male aphrodisiacs. The socio-onomastic approach employed in many studies simply gives a descriptive analysis of the names under investigation. This study adds to this approach by combining it with Feminist CDA, which takes us beyond describing the names to unravelling the ideologies reflected and promoted by them.

The argument advanced in this article is that when violence is masked as either real manhood or shared pleasure, it becomes entrenched as valid and harmless in Basotho cultural beliefs. The linguistic naming practices for male aphrodisiacs depicted furthermore create a situation where the ideal of a sexually insatiable female becomes normalized and valued. Yet when women, for whatever reason, are unable or unwilling to respond to the heightened sexual urges of their partners, conflict may ensue which may ultimately lead to intimate partner violence. Hence, the naming practices discussed, in conjunction with Basotho ideals of patriarchal gender stereotypes, create a fertile environment where a vicious cycle of various forms of violence thrives. In this regard, the naturalization of violence – regardless of the level at which this happens – has adverse consequences because when (sexual) violence is deeply ingrained in a society, its far-reaching implications may not be fully understood.

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**Appendix 1: Names and meanings of traditional male Sesotho aphrodisiacs**

<b>Names</b>	<b>Literal Meanings</b>	<b>Connotative Meanings</b>
(1) <i>Berella</i>	Heavily press down	The medicine gives its users the power to heavily press down and have absolute dominance over the women with whom they are having sexual intercourse.
(2) <i>Moroba-bethe</i>	Bed breaker	The medicine evokes sexual power. The energy and strength that the user will accrue from this medicine will last him until he breaks the bed.
(3) <i>Mafofela</i>	That which flies towards	The medicine gives the user extreme sexual potency almost immediately. A partner must be near so that the user of the medicine can fly at them.
(4) <i>Mapotsanyane</i>	Young ones of a goat (kids)	Users of the medicine become kid goats. They will be extremely active and aggressive, like kids, while engaged in sexual activity.
(5) <i>Mofafola</i>	That which pulls a body part painfully	The medicine is highly effective and it gives a man a strong erection that is capable of painfully pounding a woman's vagina.
(6) <i>Mafasana</i>	That which ties objects together equally	The medicine gives a user a stimulation that will have him and a woman tied together in sexual activity because of the supposedly intense sexual pleasure she receives from the user of the medicine.
(7) <i>Hloella-hape</i>	Climb again	When a man uses this medicine, a woman will order him to get on top of her again due to the pleasure derived from the sexual activity.
(8) <i>Tsoha re bue</i>	Wake up so that we can talk	A user will be sexually aroused so much that he will feel a strong urge to ask his partner to wake up so that they can have sexual intercourse.

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*Lipuo Motene*

(9) <i>Lebetlela</i>	A fighting stick	A user will have an extremely firm erection that will help him to fight in a sexual activity. A man's erection resembles a fighting stick in a battle.
(10) <i>Sentheohe</i>	Do not get off me	A user will pleasure his partner to an extent that the woman will command him not to get off her.
(11) <i>Monyolla-koto</i>	That which raises a knobkerrie	A user who consumes it will be highly stimulated and therefore becomes prepared to fight while engaged in a sexual encounter.
(12) <i>Matlatlapa</i>	That which abuses	A man who uses it will have a prolonged sexual stamina, and the sexual encounter will be painful for the woman due to an extremely firm erection and a long encounter.