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**The Contribution of Sesotho Literature Books Read in Lesotho
Secondary Schools in Perpetuating and Reinforcing Gender
Stereotypes**



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The Contribution of Sesotho Literature Books Read in Lesotho Secondary Schools in Perpetuating and Reinforcing Gender Stereotypes

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Abstract

Purpose: The overarching purpose of this research was to investigate the presence of gender stereotypes in the books used for teaching of Sesotho Literature in Lesotho secondary schools with a view towards recommending corrective interventions to the challenge. The study examined how physical attributes, character traits, gender roles within households and communities, and occupational roles were assigned to males and females in these books. Additionally, the research explored the power dynamics between male and female genders as depicted in these books. These categories served as the basis for coding and analysing the data. The study selected a purposive sample of four literary genres namely novels, dramas, poetry, and short stories.

Methodology: Given the nature of the study, qualitative deductive content analysis was employed to gather and analyse the data from the chapters, stories, and poems within each of the genres.

Findings: The findings indicated a significant prevalence of culturally constructed gender stereotypes within the examined works. The most important finding was that literature books perpetuate negative stereotypes which makes education a key contributor to some of the gender related problems.

Unique contribution to theory, policy and practice: This research contributes to promotion of gender parity, reduction of gender-based violence and homicides which are problems ravaging the nation today.

Keywords: *Gender, Gender-Stereotypes, Reinforce, Sesotho Literature Books*



1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to one American Report, *How Schools shortchanged girls* which appeared in "Doonesbur", girls receive significantly less teachers' attention than boys, in part because boys demand it and they are more aggressive (Allison, 1995). When boys call out answers and comments in class, teachers tolerate or encourage it. The report went on to point out that girls are often rebuffed and told to raise their hands. Teachers denied these claims partly because it happens unconsciously as part of socialization which accommodates boys more than girls. Boys are usually encouraged to work hard to get answers while girls may be given the answers. Textbooks are accomplices in this. They can overlook the existence of girls or create certain stereotypes. Though textbooks are less sexist than before, there is no doubt that they give less space to women. The Report summarized a 1971 study of the most-used US history textbooks. The study found that no text devoted more than one percent of its space to women, and "women's lives were trivialized, distorted, or omitted altogether. Textbooks are guilty of gender stereotypes. Well-known women may be included in stories but the story itself is told from a male point of view.

It is against this background that this research examines the role of Sesotho novels, dramas, poetry and short stories used in schools in relation to how they perpetuate and reinforce gender stereotypes. In doing so, the paper opens with a thematic review of literature dealing with textbooks and the way they entrench stereotypes. This is followed by theoretical and conceptual statements underpinning gender and education. The statement of the problem reveals the extent of the study. The findings of this study indicate a serious challenge of gender related problems that are rooted in the way literature books used in schools are written. The findings will contribute to a re-examination of textbook writing in Lesotho with a view of promoting gender parity in education.

2.0 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Textbooks are a student's companion and are followed by learners without questioning in most instances. The challenge is that their negative imaging of either male or female sex is entrenched through interaction with these readings whether in school or at home. In the case of Lesotho, women's better achievements in education do not translate to positions of equality in society regardless of their numerical superiority (Motsetse, 2006). By extension, this points to the marginalisation of the majority of the population. On the other hand, men may want to take responsibility of tasks which they are barely able to do because of the way they are oriented in school and in society. There have not been adequate studies exploring how portrayal of Basotho girls and boys ultimately direct women to traditional roles and related professions while boys graduate into technical and more paying disciplines thus increasing gender disparities. Miseducation exhibited through (Basotho literature) textbooks contribute to a problem of women's exclusive dependence on men (Mburu and Nyagah, 2012). Women appear in textbooks relative to men partly because the bulk of literature books are written by men and even female writers view the world from the way they were groomed. The fact should not be forgotten that books are image-forming and sources of information on social norms. A study by Makoa (1997) showed Lesotho's Federation of Female Lawyers campaigning against sex and other forms of discrimination. They

were calling upon reform of the country's customary laws. What they seemed not to have realised is that these laws are entrenched in a skewed educational system which should be revised to systematically remove retrogressive gender stereotypes. The problem that seems to continue unchecked is the role of Sesotho literature books in entrenching gender disparities. Not attending to this problem is an impediment to national, regional and global development. An education system rooted on gender parity is a prelude to development in all its forms.

2.1 Research questions

The specific questions which this research answers are:

- a. To what extent do school books assign characteristics and personality traits to females and males?
- b. How do the books differentiate roles between males and females at household, community, and occupational levels?
- c. How do Sesotho literature books allocate short-change girls
- d. What influence do the gender stereotypes identified have on the present and future lives of the learners?

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The fact that gender issues have become a global concern has motivated researchers across the globe to investigate the presence of gender stereotypes in formal, informal and hidden curricula. The findings of the studies allude to the fact that the education system is stuffed with gender bias at all levels hence the need to gradually eradicate that. One study conducted by Shallaita, Nawawi, & Amin (2021) using 2 English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks revealed that gender biases such as stereotyping, linguistic bias, imbalance and selectivity, cosmetic bias, fragmentation, and isolation existed in those textbooks.

The education system across the world creates certain stereotypes which are disadvantageous to learners. There is evidence of an increased interest in the idea of making education more inclusive and equitable in recent years (Ainscow, 2020). This stems from the notion that all children have the right to quality education regardless of their differences. The World Conference on Education for All (EFA) reiterated this approach in 1990, and re-visited the same at the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000. This idea was later included and buttressed in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) Target 4.5. At the heart of these pronouncements is the conscious elimination of gender disparities in schools, ensuring equal access to good-quality basic education, thus achieving gender equality and equity in all aspects of education (World Education Forum, 2000). In pursuit of this initiative, the education sector embarked on developing inclusive and gender-sensitive curricula (UNESCO, 2000). Nonetheless, several studies have revealed that gender stereotypes are still frequently observed in aspects of the school curriculum such as choice of subjects, instructional strategies and materials, teacher-student interaction, and the school environment in general. In line with this concern, the Lesotho Gender and Development Policy (2018-2023) from the Ministry of

Gender, Sports and Recreation (2018) acknowledges that Lesotho continues to exhibit gender disparities in education across all levels between boys and girls. This situation can have adverse consequences for all genders as young individuals are consistently exposed to messages dictating how boys and girls should appear, behave, and interact (Sambles, 2017, Nkosi, 2017, Adam and Harper, 2023). It therefore becomes critically important to conduct a study like this with the primary goal of shaping the minds of these young learners, influencing their conduct and relationships, and inspiring positive changes that contribute to a better world for everyone (Ainscow, 2020). Some research studies have delved into the presence of gender stereotypes within the education system. Interestingly, many of these studies have found that gender biases are particularly prominent in teaching and learning materials. These researches have established a clear link between biased attitudes, and actions among students; and the gender-insensitive formal curriculum. There have been gender-related studies such as one that examined gender stereotypes in Sesotho proverbs (Machobane, 1996); Nenty's (2000) and Mturi (2003). Observably, these studies do not adequately address debates on the state of gender and education stereotyping in Lesotho's secondary school education system.

Textbooks promote rigid gender roles, or gender-based stereotypes and the nature of the roles presented disadvantage women (Magno and Silova, 2003). Females are more often than men associated with domestic chores while outdoor activities are allocated to men. Passing on such negatively stereotyped education to learners regarding what men and women are expected to do in life thus perpetuating exploitation. In the case of Lesotho, we cannot discount the role of gender disparities in labour migration. More men than women go to work outside the country but in schools, there are more girls than boys. Such a scenario is rooted in the skewed education system. In addition to the above, globally, women continue to earn considerably less than men and remain over-represented in service professions and pink-collar work, are dramatically underrepresented in such areas as maths, computer science, engineering, and the "hard sciences" (Thompson, 2003). Again, this is not natural hence the need to explore gender and education. In Lesotho, it is impossible to rule out the relationship between serious crimes that target women such as rape, child abuse, spousal abuse, and sexual harassment and gender insensitive education which is passed down mainly through textbooks.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The social learning and social role theories together with the gender and power theory are used in this study because they are key constituents to the understanding of gender and education. According to Loveless (2023), social learning theory entails the idea that 'all behaviours are learned through social imitation as opposed to genetics'. This coincides with Lawton's (2017) view that social learning theory perceives gender development as the result of observing and imitating influential models, such as parents and peers'. Furthermore, Lawton reiterates that 'behaviour seen to be reinforced for being gender-appropriate is copied and that which is punished for being gender-inappropriate is not copied.' Similarly, learners gradually match their gender-related behaviours to the culturally prescribed patterns depicted in the literature books they read in school, regarding

gender appropriate and inappropriate behaviours. As advanced by one social role theorist, Krain (2023), gender roles and gender stereotypes are learned and internalised through socialization ... children learn which behaviours are considered to be appropriate or inappropriate in society. This basically entails that boys and girls behave differently because of the different roles they hold in society and what will be expected of them in future. As compared to how individuals behave towards each other, this theory emphasizes the larger societal role structures in shaping people's behaviour. In this case, the theory recognizes the role played by external forces in gender identity development as this study hypothesizes. The key principle of social role theory is that differences and similarities arise primarily from the distribution of men and women into social roles within their society (Eagly & Wood, 2016; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). The authors also note that the theory holds that through socialization and the establishment of gender roles, men's and women's behaviours generally promote and sustain the gender division of labour. This suggests that the majority of the behavioural differences between males and females are the product of cultural stereotypes about gender; that is, how males and females are meant to act, and the ensuing social roles that learners are taught in school.

Gender and Power Theory also sets out background information to the problem to be studied. In their study, Wingwood and DiClement (2000) define Robert Connell's theory of gender and power as: 'a social structural theory based on existing philosophical writings of sexual inequality and gender and power imbalance'. According to the theory of gender and power, there are three fundamental social structures that characterise the gendered relationships between men and women. These are the sexual division of labour, the sexual division of power and the cathexis structure. Connell's theory suggests that social norms and affective attachments (cathexis) govern how men and women display their sexuality and impose strict gender roles on them. The sexual division of labour places men and women in unequal positions, with women being assigned to lower-paying jobs, unpaid childcare, or household chores. This deliberate assignment and allocation limit women's economic potential, creating economic dependence on men. Finally, the sexual division of power is maintained by social mechanisms such as the abuse of authority and control in relationships, the structure of the cathexis dictates appropriate sexual behaviour on the basis of gender and reinforces cultural taboos regarding female sexuality (Conroy, 2014).

In all the social theories identified above, it is impossible to separate, culture and cognition in the process of learning and these 3 are intertwined with gender. In turn, gender roles ascribed through the education system develop into professional and non-professional spheres as well as unequal power relations between males and females as products of nurture, rather than nature; and as such, they can be acquired. Women's lives and opportunities are shaped by what goes on in the classroom and literature books are an indisputable conduit of how females perceive the roles which they are expected to play in society.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

This study explores only 3 concepts because they are the fulcrum of this paper. The terms in question are gender, stereotype and gender stereotypes. Gender refers to the socially and culturally

constructed differences between femininity and masculinity (Miller et al, 2016). Put differently, these are social constructions defining what it is to be male or female, boy or girl, men or women. As such, the study is not factoring transgender issues because they are not part of what the paper examines. It is important to bear in mind that gender, woman and women's lives are all feminist concepts, but that within feminism itself they are not all the same thing (Carver, 2003).

According to Beeghly (2015), stereotypes are expressed in speech tend to take the form of what linguists call generics. Generics are characterised by lacking quantifiers like "some," "most," or "all," and they do not make claims about specific individuals. Instead, they state general claims. Stereotypes can be characterized as a subclass of generics that make claims, specifically, about social kinds. "Black men are criminals," "women have babies," and "doctors wear white coats" are case in point (Beeghly, 2015). Gender stereotypes are shared beliefs concerning attributes of individuals based on sex. (Bauer, 2003). They can be cultural or cut across cultural lines. Assertions such as 'girls are bad in mathematics', 'a man is a provider' 'Basotho women are beautiful, constitute stereotypes. Gender stereotypes differentiate between men and women. In education, they are detested because they relegate women to the home as mothers, wives and givers. Stereotyping mitigate against the potential of women from realising their full potential.

4.0. Methodology

The study deployed a qualitative design because it examines human attributes which are not quantitative in nature but play a key role in determining human behaviour from a young age right into adulthood. The study relied thus relied on content analysis to determine the presence of certain words and concepts within some given Sesotho literature textbooks to uncover manifest and latent gender stereotypical messages portrayed in the texts, images, and illustrations. Luo (2023) asserts that content analysis is achieved by systematically collecting data from a set of texts, which can be written, oral, or visual: books, newspapers and magazines, speeches and interviews, web content and social media posts'. The study used content and discourse analysis of Sesotho poems, drama, novels and short stories as a lens to understand gender stereotyping in schools.

4.1 Research context and participants

Primarily, the study relied on Sesotho literature books that used to teach in Lesotho secondary schools. The uniformity of the prescribed books in all secondary schools in Lesotho made this choice appropriate. From several books being used, the study was restricted to 4 books which were 2 read at the junior level and the other 2 at the senior level of secondary schools. This was meant to gain an in-depth understanding of any gender stereotypes depicted at different levels as learners' cognitive development was also considered while selecting those books. Based on the assumed prevalence of these gender stereotypes, the learners, and their ages were considered as those in junior level were known to be relatively younger than those at the senior level. Additionally, the books were purposely selected because they were recommended by the MoET for use in schools and therefore, they were expected to contribute the latest information that can immensely contribute towards gaining more knowledge on the status of gender bias in teaching resources.

As is necessary in qualitative study, the issues of trustworthiness received considerable attention in this study as well. We collected data by directly extracting gender stereotypical Sesotho quotations to avoid distorting the actual meaning when translating them into English, and to ensure the credibility of the data collected. To further assure credibility, we allowed for member-checks, and peer-debriefing to verify that the methodology suited the study. Moreover, categories were correctly formulated, and the collected data was properly sorted and coded. The generation of data in line with the per-defined categories also helped the research to remain focused. Pre-defining limited the chances of including other forms of stereotypes that could be present in the books and ensure that the research tool could not divert.

4.2 Data collection and analysis procedure

The research employed a deductive or direct coding approach to analyse data generated. The initial step was to organise the gender stereotypes identified by further classifying them into pre-designated categories. Data for each category was presented in a table and each Sesotho quote was translated into English for better understanding and interpreted immediately thereafter, thus giving an insight into the messages they convey to the learners. The researcher did formative checks for trustworthiness since this analysis involved a back-and-forth movement.

5.0 Findings

Below is a list of gender roles depicted in specific books used for this research? The roles clearly elaborate the role a female and male character is expected to play in society. The quotations are drawn from 4 separate text books namely; Lejoe *la Mantlha la Motheo*,

Mopheme, *Sephiri ke Moloji* and *Mohale o tsoa Maroleng*.

Table 1: *Household gender roles of the females*

Books	Sesotho	English translation
Lejoe la Mantlha la Motheo	-Basali le baroetsana ba e' o roalla	-Women and girls are going to fetch some fire wood for cooking.
Mopheme	-Botle...a mo phehela, a phetha litsoanelo tsa hae tsohle	-Botle, a female character, continued cooking for her husband, she also performed other obligations expected of her as a wife.
	-Botle a phehile lijo tse monate,	-Botle, cooked delicious food.
	-Baratang a emisa ho ba phehela...	-Baratang, a female character, stopped cooking for the family
	-Ngoanana o ile a thella ha a ntse a roalla.	- The girl slipped and dislocated her joint as she was gathering firewood for cooking.
	-Tlholohelo o na sa khutla selibeng	-Tlholohelo, a female character, was already from the spring to fetch some water that morning.
	-Le mosali oa hao (metsi) ke sekhoba, ntho e sa tsebeng ho ritela	-... So, even your wife is lazy. She cannot even brew traditional beer.
Sephiri ke Moloji	-Motsekae o tsoha ka matjeke o fiela lebala a be a ee selibeng a tlatse linkho metsi. O beha lipitsa a pheha lijo tsa hoseng	-Motsekae, a female character wakes up very early in the morning to clean the surroundings, fills up all drums with water, and prepares breakfast.
	- Ngoetsi e tsoha ka meso e ee selibeng e be e phehe. U fa monna metsi a ho hlapa.	-A newlywed bride is expected to wake up at dawn before everyone else to prepare breakfast and run a bath for her husband.
	- Mosali oa sebele o lokela ho ipabola pitseng	-A real wife or women has to prove herself in the kitchen.
Mohale o tsoa Maroleng	Basali ba qalella ho tlhotla majoala	-Women began to filtrate beer that had been brewed earlier

As seen in Table 1 above, the roles of women are exclusively connected with the household chores especially cooking. They are expected to perform many other roles prior to the actual cooking. This is seen where girls and women gather firewood, and fetch water. Keeping the surrounding at home clean is assigned to women too. Not only that, all these household chores assigned to women are done to ensure the welfare of men, and the entire family.

Table 2: *Household chores done by males*

Books	Sesotho	English translation
Mopheme	- Hosasa ke ea motebong,	-A male character says that he will be going to the cattle post far from home tomorrow.
	-Ba ile bahlankana ho ea tsoma Mopheme	-The young men have left in search of Mopheme (a troublesome creature, community enemy).
	-Bana bano ka bobeli ba motebong oa ka,b'a lisa	-Those two boys are at my cattle post, taking care of my livestock.
Mohale o tsoa Maroleng	Mohaila o ne a phethola masimo ... o ne a chaea eo monna.	-Mohaila was cultivating land, he had high farm yields on a regular basis.
	- Bashanyana baa hama, baa koalla,	- Herdboys milk cows, and take them back into the kraal when it is time to do so.
	-Leballo a emela motebong mona le likhomo.	-Leballo spent some time at the cattle post looking after cattle.
	Ka chelete ea morafong, a reka mohoma le tsohle tse hlokahalang tsa temo	- With the savings from the mines, he bought a plough and other agricultural equipment.

In Table 2 above, males are depicted in traditional and physically strenuous roles. Every time, they are working outside the domestic sphere as farmers and security providers. Even while at home, their work includes livestock rearing, or bringing home some form of livelihood for the survival of the family. They are seen milking cows and ensuring their safety back home after a long day out in the veld.

Table 3: *The roles of females and males in the community*

Books	Sesotho	English translation
Mopheme	<p>...Ke tsoe ke bolella basali hore ba rathole ba se ke ba bapala. A laela hore basali ba ritele joala bo tletseng merifi e 'meli.</p> <p>-Banna ba motse ba sireletsa motse khahlanong le Mopheme</p> <p>-Hoa hlaha bo-ntate ba babeli ba namolela 'me ea betoang</p>	<p>...so I can instruct the women of this village to brew plenty of traditional beer for the up-coming feast. He actually did.</p> <p>-The village men protected the village/community against a troublesome creature called Mopheme.</p> <p>Fortunately, two men came out of nowhere to rescue the woman from a rapist.</p>

Table 3 indicates that cooking and brewing beer for the community feasts have been assigned to the females, while the role ascribed to the males is the provision of security to the individual and entire community members.

Table 4: *Female and male occupations*

Books	Sesotho	English
Lejoe	la -O il' o sebetsa likichining tsa	-She is going to work as domestic
Mantlha	la makhooa	worker in South Africa.
Motheo		
	-Mosuoe-hlooho ke David	-David, the school Principal was a male.
	-Lehlohonolo la ho fumana mosebetsi morafong, e le malaesha, a thuha majoe	-He was lucky enough to find a job in the mines, specialising in chipping and loading heavy stones.
	-Monghali Molepe ke mosuoe-hlooho	-Mr. Molepe was a school principal.
	-O ne a emetse rangoan'ae ea tsoang merafong	-He was waiting for his uncle who was coming home from the mines.

Data presented above indicates that occupationally, the books depict women's roles as domestic workers while men's occupational roles are, shown as those with respect and integrity (e.g., school heads), and occupation that requires physical strength and is high-paying (e.g., mining).

Table 5: Power relations between males and females

Books	Sesotho	English translation
Lejoe la Mantlha la Motheo	-A khorohela mosali ka seatla, hoa!	-He aggressively clapped his wife on the face
	-Mosali oa hlokomeloa. Ke sa lo bona banna ba tsebang ho hlokomela basali	-A wife is taken care of by a husband. I am leaving for men who have financial muscles to spoil women.
	- A tšajoa ke bo-rangoanae	- Everybody feared him, including his uncles
	-A beta le ho khama le ho etsetsa banana ba bangata bana	-Was raping, strangling and impregnating countless number of girls
	-Bophelong mohlankana o ikhethela kharebe empa kharebe eona e lumela mohlankana	Normally, a boy is the one who chooses the girl he wants to marry, and a girl's role is just to accept the proposal.
	-Tatolo a bolella thope mabinabine a pelo ea hae	-Tatolo (a male character) tells her how much he loves her.
	-Tatolo a lebala hore o ne a se a tšepisitse Lilahloane lenyalo	-As if he had forgotten that he had enaged Lilahloane(a girl)
	-Liemisa a tlotsoe ke beke a se a hloka tsepo ea hore mohlankana o tla mo nyala	-It had been a while since Liemiso (a girl) lost hope that a boyfriend would continue to marry her.
	-Ratatolo a isa likhomo	-However, Ratatolo, a father to a boyfriend eventually showed up to pay the bride-price.
	Mopheme	- Morena Phefumoloho a laela bahlankana ba motse
-Lesokolla o ne a nyetse mosali		-Lesokolla (a male character) had married a wife.
-O nyala sethepu mosali a rata kapa a sa rate		-He continues to marry a second wife despite disapproval by the first wife, thereafter, he shifted all the attention to the second wife.
-Ka nako ena Botle o ne a sa hlokomeloe ka joaloka pele. Baratang...a hlokomeloa ka lijo le liaparo		
-E ne e re mohla u mpherehang...		-The day you (male character) proposed love to me (female character)...
- Mopheme o fereha Tlholohelo. Tlholohelo 'nake kea u rata ka moea ohle oa ka, ka pelo eohle ea ka		Mopheme, a male character, proposes love to Tlholohelo (a girl), and tells her how much he loves her.
- Mosa ke eena ea nyalang		-The boy by the name of Mosa is the one marrying a girl.
- Ha a ka re 'one' nka re 'two'. O nkha chelete		-A girl swears that if a particular boy can propose love to her, she cannot hesitate to accept the proposal. He seems to have plenty of money
-Sefako le Mosa ba fereha Lindiwe le Hleziphe		-Two boys, namely, Sefako and Mosa propose love to two girls, Lindiwe and Hleziphe respectively.
-Ke mo holisitse hore a mphelise... joale motho ha u na le ea ho phoka boluma		- I raised my son so that he could take care of me when I am old, but now, I cannot even afford to buy myself some coffee.
Sephiri ke Moloi	-Le ena ea ho thuha majoele ho aha matloana ...o e batla kaofela.	- My mother even takes all the money I have earned through hard labour.

Table 5 above shows that boys and men have powers over girls and women. There are displays of powers over the female gender, which include taking care of them financially, proposing love and marriage, giving instructions to, and abusing them. At the same time, a husband has the right to make decisions that concern his wife without her consent. The worst scenario is seen when men physically abuse women, including clapping, strangling and raping them.

Table 6: *Physical characteristic and personality traits of females*

Books	Sesotho	English translation
Lejoe Mantlha Motheo	<p>la -Ngoanana o motle</p> <p>-Liemiso e ne e le ngoanana e mosehlana ba lamunu, mahlo a le bolea</p>	<p>- A girl is described as beautiful.</p> <p>Liemiso is described as a girl who was light in complexion, and her complexion was compared to that of an orange, and she had seductive eyes.</p>
Mopheme	<p>Mosali ea bitsoang Botle, e le sekoala sa mosali joalokaha lebitso le bolela</p> <p>-Mahlo a Botle a bontša o sa na le lerato le tebileng, ea ikokobelitseng haholo ho monna oa hae. Ha monna a hloname, ...o ne a sa tsebe ho fetola.</p> <p>- Mosali a makha mollo oa lisu, a mo beha lefoqo holimo, a mo apesa kobo e 'ngoe.</p> <p>- Ha u ka tsoa mona u tla shoa hang,ka moo u kulang ka teng.</p>	<p>-Botle was a female character described as the most beautiful women in that area as her name (Beauty) denotes.</p> <p>-From her eyes, it was obvious that she still respected and loved her husband deeply despite the treatment. She would not answer back even when her husband was angry with her</p> <p>-A husband became feverish; a wife made some fire and added one more blanket to keep him warm. She warned a husband to not leave the house because the moment he did, he would die; given his health condition.</p>
Sephiri Moloji	<p>ke -Bua le ngoana hantle.</p>	<p>- She urges the husband to stop being rude, but talk to their daughter in a polite manner.</p>
Lejoe Mantlha	<p>la -M'ae matsale le m'ae bobeli ba fihlela hong ho ea bona lesea sepetelele.</p> <p>- Lindiwe ke ngoanana e motle.</p> <p>-Ke ee ke hane ha ho thoe basaling mabala-buka lea tella</p>	<p>-Her biological mother and mother-in-law arrived at the hospital at the same time to welcome her new-born baby.</p> <p>-Lindiwe is portrayed as a beautiful girl.</p> <p>-All these times, I have wrongly never admitted that educated women are disrespectful.</p>

In view of the data presented in Table 6 above, girls and women are portrayed as outstandingly beautiful. They are also characterised as kind, assertive, respectful and polite. In Lejoe la Motheo, the author depicts educated women as disrespectful, and therefore not easy to control.

Table 7: *Physical characteristic and personality traits of males*

Books	Sesotho	English translation
Lejoe Mantlha Motheo	<p>la -Chemane a senya banana ba bangata, a ba beta a re o tla ba bolae ha ba ka li bolela, a fetotse khaitse ea hae lekhoba la thobalano a ba a e roba lengole, a bile a utsoa</p>	-A man called Chemane was characterised as a serial rapist, who impregnated multitudes of girls, threatening to kill them in case they hold him responsible. He habitually raped his sister and eventually impregnated her.
Mopheme	-Ho tsena kaofela lesokolla a ikoala litsebe...a nyala moqekoa	Despite his wife's disapproval of marrying a second wife, Lesokolla continued to do so.
Sephiri	<p>Bashanyana ha ba nahanele batho...Ke eena mo-nna hantle. Ha a tsotelle hore na o utloisa motho bohloko, ha feela a khotsofetse.</p> <p>-U bua joaloka monna</p> <p>- Ha ke 'Masekhoahla ke Sekhoahla</p>	<p>-In their conversation, one girl says that boys are self-centred as the word "mo-nna" denotes. All they care about is to satisfy themselves at cost of people around them.</p> <p>-Says... you are now talking like a man.</p> <p>-A male character (Sekhoahla) swears that he is actually a man not a woman ('Masekhoahla-his mother); therefore, he will find the village enemy at all costs.</p>

It is deduced from the data presented in Table 7 that men are self-centred, cruel abusers, and some even rape their sisters without mercy. They are also characterised as thieves and dictators. Furthermore, it is implied that there is a particular way in which males are expected to speak.

6.0 Discussion

The overall view of the study is that while strides have been made to reduce gender stereotypes in the Lesotho education system, they continue to exist in Sesotho literature genres to varying degrees suggesting that corrective steps remain on paper as opposed to being practically implemented. In these books, the division of labour at household, community and occupational levels is gender-based. Housekeeping, and care-giving are still depicted in these books as women's primary roles. Such textbooks create a situation in schools where the practice of science becomes associated with masculinity while subjects like Home Economics and Fashion and fabrics are associated with

femininity. A study by Villar and Guppy (2015) found that the majority of the world's university students are female. Women constitute 73% of education majors and 65% of all arts and humanities students, but only 34% and 36% of engineering and science students, respectively. Reasons may be sort in gender stereotyping as reflected in textbooks. Negative stereotyping of girls leads them to lose confidence, avoiding STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) and end up doing programmes which lead them to earn far less than their male counterparts.

School textbooks are out of date because they are not factoring changes in Basotho society where women are taking up tasks previously reserved for men. Modo (2001) established that since about 40% of men in the age group of 20-39 years are working in South Africa at any one time, the land and associated agricultural activities are managed by their wives. Above all, the migrant labour system implies that women practically take up the majority of tasks and division of labour ceases especially for rural households. Moreover, it was the Aliens' Central Act of 1963 that foreign women were prohibited from entering the South African labour market. Therefore to assume and flood literature books with division of labour as defined by nature is incorrect. Above all, literature textbooks in Lesotho seem to ignore the fact that men have been overtaken by women as breadwinners since retrenchments from South African mines in the 1990s when gold production slowed and employers became more inclined towards employing men from the local South African labour force. The retrenchment of Basotho men opened a new dimension which forced many women to take over from men as bread winners and to enter the labor market (Moletsane, Cortzee and Rau, 2017). Even with these developments, Sesotho literature books identified above still portray men as sole breadwinners and giving the impression that this order is natural.

In the case of Lesotho, the secondary curricula, as depicted in the texts above remain, as in colonial times, largely irrelevant to rural girls. Few of the subjects studied in school are of relevance to women's triple roles of engaging in production, household reproduction and community management (Ansel, 2002). In Lesotho, girls outnumber and outperform boys hence the need to study gender in education so that capacities of girls can be further enhanced. Interventions are geared towards improving girls within a patriarchal mode of production. One significant result of stereotypes is that because femininity is most often constructed in opposition to masculinity, there is a tendency to imagine femininity as being in opposition with science (Villar and Guppy, 2015). These images are also represented in popular culture and literature. Stereotyping gender roles might be counterproductive to boys who may be physically weaker than some girls yet society overlooks that. The division into 2 rigid groups excludes queer sexualities making the system of less relevant to such groups.

The above findings are similar to what Kehinde, et al. (2022) reported about the use of language and culture to assign and perpetrate gender stereotypes against women giving care to children with autism in Nigeria and South Africa. These authors established that gender-based stereotypes are situated in most African culture, and reinforced by using certain phrases and expressions. Cooking has also been assigned to the females, while provision of security at the community level is ascribed to males. Some of the best cooks in hotels and restaurants are men yet the curriculum discourages

them from pursuing such professions. Textbooks are rigid on what it is to be a man and cooking is not one of them. The best cooks among men may even feel ashamed to cook at home because society has made that to believe that such is the responsibility of women. To date, the school system and that of society remains organized along sexist lines which disadvantage girls because they lean in favour of patriarchy. Some girls' academic performance drops once they reach high school or even middle school, and they abandon previous interests in sports or science (Thompson, 2003). They may drop out of school altogether at puberty because of fears that they may become pregnant or experiment on drugs. In Lesotho, a father sees his daughters' marriage as bridewealth through cattle. So goes the saying that '*ha lea tlala le maripa*' (the kraal is overflowing) or '*morali oa ka o tla tlisa likhomo*' (my daughter will bring the cattle). The above quoted texts from literature books emphasize the centrality of marriage as a great achievement of females. As such, if we care about equality of opportunity for boys and girls, we need to look beyond the building of human capital, to what children are exposed to in schools

Substantial segregation of formal labour market by gender is observed where the books divide occupational activities into feminine and masculine categories. The occupations males are engaged in are either more decent, respectful (e.g., school heads), or show how powerful men are (e.g., mining), while females are assigned domestic occupational roles. In essence, ascribed to relatively physically demanding household, community and occupational roles is the perceived physical build of male gender. This concurs with the results of the studies carried out by Islam and Asadullah, (2018) and Nkosi (2013) which revealed that women are portrayed as nurturers, housewives, dependent, and uneducated, while men are portrayed as heads of families, independent, successful, artful, business-minded, strong, and brave. Looking at the data collected, higher leadership positions such as chiefs are occupied by males, thus affording them the opportunity to dominate and control the entire community. In these books, the habit with the authors is to portray boys and men as those who have the right to sexually admire the opposite sex, and not vice versa. Males also have the right to pursue their feelings by proposing love, and often times, ultimately proposing marriage. Conversely, it is immoral for girls and women to do the same. They are expected to ensure they care about their appearance and look beautiful to attract males. Worse yet, with all the powers invested in them by society, males are free to marry multiple wives without their current wives' consent, because culturally, a husband has a final word. The situation gains support from the fact that males are active breadwinners, thus rendering women dependent on men, and in turn making women powerless.

Moreover, women are portrayed as beautiful, and associated with this beauty is their obedience and kindness, which keeps them as caregivers and peacemakers; thus, they have their place at home. An educated woman is described as a control freak and therefore, not a marriage type. The impression is that these females do not deserve to be married as they lack feminine qualities such as submission and humility, and are likely to control their husbands (the behaviour that is culturally inadmissible). Regarding their personal traits, males are depicted as cruel, invincible, self-centred, and heartless (as they are abusers, rapists, and murderers) who care less to pull a stunt on anyone, particularly women.

7.0 Recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Training should play a key role in ensuring that literature books used in secondary schools have been cleared of negative gender stereotyping because it is detrimental to sound education required to meet the demands of the 21st century. Various stakeholders such as parents, teachers, students, curriculum developers, education policy-makers, authors, and publishers can join forces to eliminate the culturally inherited gender stereotypes inculcated by society from birth, and further reinforced through all forms of curriculum at a later stage. What is urgently needed is a prompt review of the criteria for selection of teaching and learning materials in general in an attempt to achieve equality, equity, and inclusivity in all aspects of education as espoused by SDG4. The anticipation is that on the receiving end, both boys and girls will benefit from a system of education that is free from gender bias as it will create opportunities for them to fulfil their potential despite their sex differences.

8.0 Conclusion

The study analysed four out of 4 literature books prescribed for reading in Lesotho's secondary schools, also focused on selected types of gender stereotypes. Findings of the research showed that literature books are not gender sensitive and have not incorporated changes which have occurred in Basotho society where those stereotypes are not always correct. It is evident therefore that occupational gender stereotypes have a negative impact on the girls' career prospective and earnings because it gives them low esteem. These gender stereotypes can reinforce societal gender norms, and limit the aspirations and potential of both boys and girls. Boys and girls may feel pressured to conform to societal expectations of masculinity and femininity, which can restrict their self-expression, and limit their interests and career choice. The study found that literature books play a critical role in perpetuating and reinforcing gender stereotypes.

9.0. Declaration of Conflict of interest

We declare that we do not have any conflict of interest in this study, direct and indirect.

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