



Abuse, Frustration and Trauma in Fiction: Rethinking Power, Patriarch and the Politics of Fatherhood in *Ndzi Ngo Tinciki* by F. A. Thuketana and *Hi Ya Kwihi* by M. J. Maluleke

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Abstract

This article explores the themes of abuse, trauma, and frustration in two Xitsonga novels, *Ndzi ngo Tinciki!* by F.A. Thuketana and *Hi ya Kwihi?* by M.J. Maluleke, through a feminist and psychoanalytic lens. The title *Ndzi ngo Tinciki* translates to "I would rather hang myself," evoking a sense of overwhelming despair, while *Hi ya Kwihi?* translates to "Where are we going," hinting at existential uncertainty and frustration. Using textual analysis as the research method and thematic analysis as the data analysis method, the article examines how these themes manifest and intersect within the narratives, reflecting broader societal issues of gendered oppression, psychological distress, and resistance. The feminist framework highlights the power dynamics and systemic inequalities that shape the characters' experiences, while psychoanalytic theory provides insights into the emotional and psychological effects of abuse and trauma. Through this approach, the article seeks to uncover deeper meanings related to the characters' inner worlds and their struggles for agency, offering a critical understanding of how literature portrays the complexities of abuse and its enduring effects on individuals and communities. This article contributes to the broader discourse on African literature, particularly in how it reflects and critiques cultural norms surrounding gender and mental health.

Keywords

abuse, trauma, frustration, feminism, psychoanalysis, Xitsonga

INTRODUCTION

While significant research has been done on abuse, trauma and frustration, there is a gap in examining the intersectional experiences of individuals facing these issues, especially in African contexts where race, gender, and class often intertwine. There is a lack of focus on the long-term psychological effects of trauma, particularly in under-researched rural and marginalized communities in Africa. More comparative studies are needed to explore how themes of abuse, trauma, and frustration are represented differently in South African literature with special reference to literature in Xitsonga, African and global literature. Within the spectrum of human experiences, people encounter both uplifting possibilities that bring enjoyment and the darker realities that can manifest as pain, abuse, frustration and trauma. This article derives its motivation from the fact that studies in Xitsonga literature fall short of literature on social ills of abuse, frustrations and trauma even though these concepts have become household names in Xitsonga communities. The examining of these elements in the two selected books will unravel harsh realities and eminence of abuse, frustration and trauma in characters crafted by the authors in the texts.

The researcher has selected from the pool of many Xitsonga books, two novels to expose abuse, trauma and frustration as depicted by the authors. Authors often draw upon their own life experiences, encounters and pressing issues of their time to impress and craft narratives that reflect the influence of their cultural backgrounds. Through their works, they aim to illuminate certain practices and phenomena and impart valuable lessons to their readers. Since human life is a tapestry woven with a lot of experiences, people find themselves in different situations blending with joy and hardship. Abuse, frustration and trauma are complicatedly linked in a cycle that perpetuate suffering and emotional distress.

Understanding this relationship is important for developing effective support systems and mitigations. By recognizing the effect each element has on people, we can work towards breaking the cycle of abuse and fostering environments of healing and redress the ill practices of our generation. Through understanding, education and promotion of resilience society can begin to mitigate the impacts of abuse and assist individuals to reclaim their lives free from the shadows of trauma and frustrations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The cycles of abuse, trauma, and frustration have persisted throughout human history, as old as civilization itself. These elements are universal, experienced across cultures locally, in Africa and around the globe. They have been found in scholarly works from multiple disciplines of sociology, and psychology, inclusive of local, African and global literatures. It is worth mentioning that literary authors have explored these themes (abuse, frustration and trauma) through various lenses, including historical, socio-political, psychological, and cultural perspectives.

Abuse in South African, African and Global Literature

South African authors and researchers have explored abuse as a manifestation of gender-based violence (GBV), domestic violence and racial oppression. Moffett (2006) explores how sexual violence was used as a means of control and dominance in the post-apartheid era, especially against marginalized groups. The study highlights that violence against women was deeply rooted in South Africa's social and political structures. Across Africa, abuse in literature is often portrayed as a product of patriarchal systems, colonial violence and conflict situations. Nnaemeka (1997) critiques the way African feminist literature often depicts the subjugation of women through traditional norms and the societal structures that perpetuate abuse. This is reflected in works that portray domestic abuse and societal pressures. Globally, abuse is a recurring theme in literature, especially in narratives that focus on domestic violence and systemic oppression. Walker (1982), in *The Color Purple*, examines the abuse endured by Black women in the American South, highlighting the intersection of race, gender and violence. Similarly, Morrison (1987) in *Beloved* explored the trauma of sexual and physical abuse experienced during slavery.

Trauma in South African, African and Global Literature

In South Africa, trauma is frequently linked to the country's legacy of apartheid and the ongoing struggles for racial and social justice. Gobodo-Madikizela (2003), in *A Human Being Died That Night*, reflects on the psychological scars left by apartheid atrocities and explores the processes of healing and reconciliation through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The book investigates how trauma affects both victims and perpetrators. In African literature, trauma often arises from colonial violence, wars and ethnic conflicts. In *Half of a Yellow Sun*, Adichie (2006) delves into the trauma experienced during the Biafran War, focusing on how violence and displacement deeply affect individuals and communities. The novel depicts how trauma disrupts identity and leaves lasting psychological wounds. (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1967) in *A Grain of Wheat* also explores the trauma of colonial exploitation, depicting how the fight for independence from British rule scars individuals both physically and mentally. On a global scale, trauma is explored in the context of war, genocide and slavery. (Herman ,1997) provides a foundational analysis of how trauma affects the psyche, especially in survivors of abuse, war, and violence, addressing the long-term psychological impact of traumatic events. (Wiesel,1960) in *Night* describes the traumatic experiences of Holocaust survivors, focusing on the emotional and psychological devastation caused by genocide.

Frustration in South African, African and Global Literature

In South African literature, frustration is often tied to economic inequality, unemployment and the unfulfilled promises of post-apartheid democracy. Ngwenya (2010) examines how South African novels reflect the frustration of the working class under corrupt governance, depicting characters trapped in cycles of poverty and disillusionment. In *The Heart of Redness* (Mda, 2000), frustration is portrayed through the conflict between modernity and tradition and the failure of the political system to meet the needs of ordinary citizens. In African literature, frustration is often linked to post-colonial disillusionment, economic hardship and political corruption. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1977) in *Petals of Blood* critiques post-colonial leaders who fail to deliver on the promises of independence, leaving ordinary citizens frustrated by the enduring social and economic inequalities. Similarly, Achebe (1966) in *A Man of the People* addresses the frustrations of living under corrupt political regimes, highlighting how economic stagnation and social inequality fuel the anger of the population. Globally, frustration in literature often emerges from class struggles, economic deprivation and existential dilemmas. Dickens (1854) in *Hard Times* explores the frustration of the working class in an industrialized society, while Kafka (1915) in *The Metamorphosis* addresses existential frustration, depicting a man's isolation and dissatisfaction with societal norms.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article integrates Feminist theory and Psychoanalysis to uncover themes of trauma, abuse, and frustration in the two selected books. Feminist theory, an interdisciplinary approach, seeks to understand the social, cultural, political, and economic roles and experiences of women and other marginalized genders. It critiques and challenges gender inequalities and power imbalances that disadvantage these groups in society Hekman (2018). Key aspects include the critique of patriarchy, gender as a social construct, and the critique of gender roles, stereotypes, and political activism for social

change. Tong (2009) defines feminist theory as an extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse, aiming to understand the nature of gender inequality and examining women's social roles and lived experiences. Hooks (2000) states that feminist theory is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression, with the goal of transforming society's understanding of gender relations and power structures that subordinate women. Butler (1990) describes feminist theory as a critique of the categories of gender and sexuality, exploring how these are socially constructed and questioning the binary logic that underpins gender roles and identity. Psychoanalysis, on the other hand, focuses on the mind's influence on behavior, emphasizing the significance of past experiences, repressed emotions, and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships Freud (1920). By combining these frameworks, the article reveals deeper insights into the psychological and social factors shaping the narratives of trauma and oppression within the novels. Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) describe psychoanalysis as a clinical method for treating mental disorders through dialogue between a patient and psychoanalyst, aimed at uncovering unconscious conflicts and motivations that shape behavior. Mitchell and Black (1995) explain psychoanalysis as a set of theories concerning the psychological development of individuals, with a focus on how unconscious desires, fears, and conflicts shape mental health and interpersonal relationships.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative approach has been adopted for this article, as it does not involve numerical data. The researcher explores and uncovers themes of abuse, frustration, and trauma by analyzing two Xitsonga novels by different authors through textual analysis. These novels were selected from a broad range of Xitsonga literature. Textual analysis is used to serve as a method for understanding how individuals make sense of the world, enabling researchers to explore how people from different cultures and subcultures perceive their identities and roles within society, providing a structured way to interpret how these themes are depicted in the narratives, Fairclough (1995) defines textual analysis as the study of the language, structure, and meaning of texts to uncover the underlying ideological and social meanings embedded in the discourse. According to McKee (2003), Textual analysis is a method used to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world, by interpreting the content, structure, and meaning of texts in various forms, including written, visual, or spoken media. In addition, Krippendorff (2004) describes textual analysis as the process of analysing text-based data in a systematic way to identify patterns, themes, or meanings, often in the context of communication, culture, or media studies.

TEXTUAL SUMMARY

Ndzi ngo Tinciki! by F.A. Thuketana

Ndzi ngo Tinciki is a compelling novel set in the picturesque village of Rixongile, which translates to "it is beautiful." *Ndzi ngo Tinciki* is set in a time where education marks a clear divide between those who attend church and those who, for some reasons, do not attend; where those who do attend are seen as morally superior, while those outside the Church are considered heathens. Educated individuals often flaunt their status, looking down upon their less educated relatives. This era also reflects a shift away from traditional cultural norms and values, as people increasingly prioritize personal ambitions over the customs of their heritage. The story centers on the respected Ntekele family, led by Mr. Ntekele, a successful bus company owner, church elder, and devout Christian. Ntekele is deeply committed to his faith, striving to raise his three children, Rice, Mpfuleni, and Manayila according to strict Christian values. However, his rigid expectations create tension within the family. The children struggle to conform to their father's ideals, leading them to live secretive lives. Each child embarks on clandestine love affairs, fearing their father's disapproval. Rice dates Khanyisa, Mpfuleni falls for Lefty, a notorious gangster, and Manayila is in love with Jamboti, the son of a shebeen queen. The situation escalates when Rice impregnates Khanyisa, leading to his father's wrath and eventual expulsion from the family home. Tragically, on the night Rice is forced to leave, he is struck by a car and dies, leaving his mother and sister, Mpfuleni, devastated. The grief is too much for N'wa-Xitlhelani, Rice's mother, who passes away before her son's funeral, leading to a double tragedy.

Mpfuleni blames her father for the deaths of her mother and brother, and in a fit of rage, Ntekele beats her severely. Seeking refuge, she turns to her gangster lover, Lefty, but lies to protect her father. Lefty, suspicious of her story, pressures her into revealing the truth. Upon learning that Ntekele is responsible for her injuries, Lefty vows to take revenge. Although he is dissuaded from murder, Lefty and his gang burn down Ntekele's bus company, leaving the family in ruins. With his business destroyed, Ntekele spirals into despair, seeking solace in alcohol. At a shebeen, he meets Muzayiwe, a wealthy tycoon, who offers to help him rebuild his business in exchange for Manayila's hand in marriage. Desperate, Ntekele agrees, despite Manayila's protests. She reluctantly consents but secretly plans her escape. It is on the day of the forced wedding, that Manayila disappears, leaving behind a suicide note near a crocodile-infested river. The wedding guests are thrown into chaos, and Ntekele is inconsolable, believing his daughter has taken her own life. However, Manayila has actually fled to find Jamboti, determined to reunite with her true love. The novel poignantly explores the themes of rigid parental expectations, the consequences of secrecy, and the lengths to which individuals will go for love and freedom.

Hi ya Kwihhi? by M.J. Maluleke

The novel *Hi ya Kwihhi?* is set within the context of Tsonga culture and tradition, where the village chief practices polygamy and holds absolute authority over his household. In this patriarchal setting, the chief dictates important family decisions, including determining who his children will marry and how the children are supposed to live their lives. *Hi ya Kwihhi?* is a captivating novel set in the Vatsonga village of Mudyaxihi, a place where the land is so fertile that its name translates to "you eat anything you want." This bountiful land provides for its people, who are prosperous with livestock, schools, a college of education, an agricultural college, a church, various businesses, and a town called Boerenshoop. The village is ruled by Chief Makolo, who has three wives, N'wa-Njomboti, N'wa-Mapimele, and N'wa-Hozanandhichi and two children, a daughter named Fanisa and a son named Mabutho. True to his name, which means "the greedy one," Chief Makolo is driven by selfishness and a desire for wealth. He arranges for his daughter, Fanisa, to marry Rhelela, the son of a local businessman named Maboko. Makolo sees this marriage as an opportunity to access wealth, using the excuse that he does not want his daughter to marry into a poor family. However, Fanisa is repelled by the idea, as she knows Rhelela from school. To her, he is a careless, unclean, and arrogant schoolteacher.

In contrast, Fanisa secretly loves Khorombi, a charming and kind-hearted man of Venda origin who lectures at the local agricultural college. Under pressure from her family, Fanisa reluctantly agrees to the marriage with Rhelela, but her heart is not in it. When Rhelela invites her to his home, Fanisa goes to please her parents but is appalled by his behaviour. She leaves, refusing his offer to drive her home. Rhelela, enraged by her defiance, chases her down and beats her with a belt. This assault gives Fanisa the strength to stand up to her parents and declare that she would rather remain unmarried than marry a man who would treat her so cruelly. The stress of the situation drives Fanisa into isolation and despair. She distances herself from her family and speaks to no one after work. Despite the pressure, Fanisa continues her secret relationship with Khorombi. When it becomes evident that she is pregnant, her father, Makolo, is furious to discover that the child is not Rhelela's, but Khorombi's. Makolo's plan to enrich himself through Fanisa's marriage falls apart.

According to tradition, Fanisa is supposed to be accompanied by older women to confirm the paternity of her child. Although Makolo is initially against this, he is persuaded to allow it, on the condition that Fanisa is brought back home afterward. However, when Khorombi accepts responsibility for the pregnancy, Fanisa decides to stay with him at the Ndzwambis, his family's home, instead of returning to her own. In a twist of fate, Chief Makolo signs a treaty that enforces the separation of the Vatsonga and Vavenda people, a move backed by the government. This decision leads to protests, resulting in the arrest of Khorombi, Mabutho, and Sumbulani. The treaty also forces Fanisa to return to her family, as she is Tsonga-speaking and her husband is Venda-speaking. Rhelela, eager to see Fanisa separated from Khorombi, is sent by Makolo to bring her back home, along with Khorombi's child. *Hi ya Kwihhi* explores themes of greed, cultural conflict, and the struggles of women caught between tradition and their own desires. The novel paints a vivid picture of a community where the pursuit of wealth and power can tear families apart, and love is often sacrificed at the altar of societal expectations.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher uses thematic analysis to break down data for analysis to identify, analyze and report themes of abuse, trauma and frustration within the novels to interpret how they unfold. Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It organizes and describes your data set in rich detail, and interprets various aspects of the research topic. Guest et al. (2012) define thematic analysis as a technique that involves identifying and recording themes or patterns within qualitative data, used to make sense of rich and complex sets of information. And according to Joffe (2012), Thematic analysis is a method used to analyse qualitative data by searching for and interpreting meaningful patterns (or themes) that capture something important about the data in relation to the research topic.

ABUSE, TRAUMA AND FRUSTRATION IN *NDZI NGO TINCIKI!*

Emotional and Verbal Abuse in the Hands of Ntekele

In *Ndzi ngo Tinciki!* the abuse experienced by Manayila and her siblings is evident through their father, Ntekele, who imposes strict Christian values, forcing his children to conform to his rigid beliefs. This environment creates fear and compels them to lie to avoid his wrath. The conversation between Jamboti and Manayila highlights the oppressive life Ntekele's children are subjected to due to his strict rules. In their conversation, Manayila exudes deep-seated fear for her life in the face of a life-threatening Ntekele, and even warns Jamboti for not take seriously, the consequences that may befall not only Manayila but her sister Mpfuleni who enviably maraudes with her boyfriend without much regard for her father. Manayila emotionally burst out thus, "Siku va nga to swi ntswhoo, ... hambu ku ri ku n'wi hlongola lahaya mutini va nga n'wi hlongola" (once he discovers it ... even dismissing her from home can be possible). Jamboti encourages Manayila to deceive her father so they can be together, saying:

"Vona, va-Rice na Mpfuleni va nga n'wi chaveki ku fana ni wena. Va famba hi ku rhandza. Mpfuleni i xikwelekwele na Lefty kambe a nga vuri nchumu ha swona." "A va vuri nchumu ha swona hikuva a va swi tivi. ("Look at Rice and Mpfuleni, who are not afraid of your father. They walk freely. Mpfuleni and Lefty are always together, but your father says nothing about it." "He does not say anything because he does not know about it." (p.30).

The cited words expose a complex scenario that buffets the psyches of Ntekele's children, and more specifically Manayila who finds herself cornered by her boyfriend who will not tolerate her compliance to the iron-rod rule by her father Ntekele. Jamboti, being Manayila's boyfriend, and curious to spend time with her girlfriend blames his Manayila for not being resourceful and device plans to tell her father lies. In their heated conversation, Jamboti is almost audibly heard shouting at Manayila in the ensuing way:

Hikwalaho ka yini na wena u nga n'wi lukeri vunwa? Ntswari wo khoma vana hi ndlela leyi mukhalabye loyi a khomaka hayona, u kota hi kona ku hamba a lukeriwa vunwa, a kanganyisisa swinene") (p.30) ("Why don't you fabricate lies? A parent like this old man, who treats his children like this, needs to be lied to.")

This represents emotional abuse, as the children are denied the freedom to live authentically, constantly suppressing their true selves to appease their father. Manayila and her siblings live under immense pressure to impress Ntekele, fearing the consequences of being dishonest. Even after the tragic death of his son Rice, Ntekele shows no remorse and continues to impose his rigid values, saying:

"Ndzi te a ndzi lavi xihunguki laha mutini wa mina", ku hlamula nkulukumba Ntekele." Ni ni sweswi ndza ha vula tano. Ndzi ri swihunguki ni madlakuta a ndzi swi lavi laha mutini wa mina" (p. 43) ("I said I don't want a fool in my household," says Mr. Ntekele. "Even now, I still say so. I don't want prostitutes in my household.")

This is an example of verbal abuse, as Ntekele degrades his children by calling them fools and prostitutes simply for falling in love. His harsh words and lack of compassion further illustrate the emotional harm inflicted upon his family. The extreme way in which Ntekele verbally admonishes his siblings is censored, not only by the siblings but their lovers as well. This creates tension in both in the family and the secretive love grounds occupied by his siblings.

After accusing her father of causing the deaths of her brother and mother, Mpfuleni is thoroughly beaten with a sjambok by Ntekele. She reported to her gangster lover saying, "A ndzo chava ku vula, ndzi be hi tatana, I papa loyi a nga ni yevulela hi ndlela leyi hi ntshilana" (p. 61) (I was scared of saying that I was beaten by my father. It is my dad who has cruelly beaten me this way by a sjambok) This physical abuse drives her to flee and seek refuge with her gangster lover, Lefty, showcasing how abuse from her father drives her away from her family. Ntekele's malicious approach to child grooming is not only backward, but proceeds to embody his personality as deficient and inhuman. This unravels a deeper sense in which his fatherhood is not only marred with cruelty but also leaves behind a lot to be desired in a father of his caliber.

Also, Ntekele attempts to marry Manayila off to Muzayiwe, an older, wealthy man, without her consent. This forced marriage is another form of abuse, denying Manayila autonomy over her own life and relationships. This abuse is as a result of power imbalances in family relationships. This is evidenced by what Ntekele told Manayila as he forced her to marry Muzayiwe saying: "Tsunzuka leswaku ndzi tata wa wena, hikwalaho u fanele ku endla hi ku lerisa ka mina. Muzayiwe u ta ku teka hi ndlhi ya Manghezi" (p.132) (Remember that I am your father, for that reason you must take my instruction. Muzayiwe will marry you by force). This application of power by a father over a helpless daughter tacitly demonstrates how society improperly imposes traditions over people against the dynamic customery and traditional setting in contemporary society.

Such abuses also unveil during Jamboti's imprisonment. Jamboti was forced to work on Baas Donder's farm alongside other prisoners. Seizing an opportunity, he asked Baas Donder to post a letter to Manayila. In response, Baas Donder hurled cruel insults at him, exclaiming, Hoeveel maal moet ek jou se dat ek het nie tyd vir jou vuille briewe? Jou blitsem se donder" ku vula Baas Donder hi ku bakanya papila leri a ra ha ri evokweni ra Jamboti a va a ku hi mpama mahlo lawa phyaa! Jy is baie prumandag ek sal jou wys vandag" (p.140) (How many times must I tell you that I have no time for your filthy letters? you good-for-nothing!" says Baas Donder as he brushed the letter out of Jamboti's hand. Without warning, he slapped Jamboti hard across the face, adding, "You're too bold. I'll show you!". This scene vividly portrays the dehumanizing treatment of prisoners, emphasizing the power imbalance and cruelty exerted by Baas Donder. Jamboti's attempt to maintain a personal connection through the letter is met with harsh physical and verbal abuse, which reflects the oppressive environment in which he is trapped. The slap, accompanied by insults, highlights Baas Donder's intent to assert dominance and degrade Jamboti, reinforcing his position of authority while stripping Jamboti of his dignity.

Ntekele's Governance and Resultant Traumatic Encounters

After being thrown out of his father's house, Rice's confusion and emotional turmoil lead him to wander aimlessly, resulting in his tragic death in a car accident. The sudden loss of Rice profoundly traumatizes his sister, Mpfuleni, who witnesses his lifeless body and she is the first to find him on the street. The tragic and untimely demise of Ntekele's only son further destabilized the already disintegrated fabric that loosely held together the 'alleged Pastor's' family. In the following citation, the writer details how the discovery of the deceased Rice's body by his sister Mpfuleni led to a socio-psychological and emotional meltdown in the family thus:

Ku swi vona xikan'we leswaku a a ri Rice loyi a dlawe hi movha, a namba a tlhandleka mavoko enhlokweni, a tlhelela ekaya hi mukhosi wa mayimbulo. Ku na fika ekaya, o namba a ya bela vatswari va yena rivanti, a va a titlatlalata-tlatlalata kwala nyangweni a ri karhi a kalakala a ku... (p.42) (The moment she realized it was Rice who had been hit by the car, she was instantly overcome with shock. Traumatized, she placed her hands on her head and sobbed uncontrollably as she rushed back home. Upon arrival, without knocking, she flung the door open and collapsed to the floor, lying there in despair, her body limp as she wept.)

Mpfuleni's discovery of her brother's death triggers intense trauma. She is overwhelmed with grief, crying hysterically and accusing her father of causing his death. This moment marks a deep emotional wound that permanently alters her relationship with her father and her sense of security within the family. This lends a poignant connection to the mother, N'wa-Xitlhelani, who successively suffers a fatal heart attack after hearing of her son's death. N'wa-Xitlhelani succumbs to death before the burial of her son with both tragic instances psychologically and financially hitting heavily upon Ntekele who has to see it through.

Ntekele's Fatherly Rule as Seed for Frustrations

Among the most frustrated of characters in the novel *Ndzi ngo Tinciki* is Ntekele. Ntekele's frustration stems from his desire to control his children and his failure to make them conform to his principles. His frustration grows as his children secretly rebel against his strict rules, pretending to live as he wants while secretly defying him. The loss of control over his family becomes a central source of his frustration. In the same vein, Rice experiences frustration and confusion after being kicked out of his father's home. With no clear direction or support, he leaves in a disoriented state, which ultimately leads to his tragic death. His frustration is explained by the author's words saying:

Dyambu a ku ri khale ri luve Makumbila loko a huma ekaya. A famba tano a ri karhi a nga tivi lomu a a ya kona. A famba tani hi munhu loyi a nge ku lorheni. A rhendzeleka ni switarata ku kondza byi endla vusiku lebyikulu. Xana u ta ya kwihi vusiku lebyi? (p.38) (It was already dusk when he left home, walking aimlessly with no idea where he was headed. He wandered like someone lost in a dream, roaming the streets until late into the night. Where would he go in the darkness of this night?)

The cited words incisively embody a sense of despondency that attends Rice as he wanders along the streets – as if he is already smelling death and searching for it. It is sad to consider that even after the death of Rice, the dark cloud of frustration hovers over Manayila, with emotional distress and frustration building up as her father tries to force her into a marriage with Muzayiwe, a man she does not love. Her frustration with the pressure to marry drives her to contemplate suicide and eventually to plan her disappearance.

On the day of the arranged wedding, Manayila's disappearance frustrates not only her father, but also Muzayiwe and the entire community. Ntekele, already overwhelmed with guilt, anger, and failure, spirals further into emotional breakdown after realizing his plan has completely unraveled. These experiences demonstrate how abuse leads to trauma, which in turn feeds into a cycle of frustration for the characters, affecting their lives in profound and tragic ways. Worth of note is the fact that Ntekele's frustration over his inability to rebuild his business, along with the loss of respect from his community, drives him into alcoholism and further deepens his emotional despair.

ABUSIVE, TRAUMATIC AND FRUSTRATIVE TWISTS IN *HI YA KWIHI*?

Abuse, Violence and the Dominance of Masculinity

Hi ya Kwihi, more like the aforeanalyzed text, *Ndzi ngo Tinciki!* is demonstrative of a very abusive environment in which characters feel the gross iron hand of Chief Makolo's authoritative prowess. Chief Makolo's authority is abusive, as he imposes his will on his daughter, Fanisa, by arranging her marriage to Rhelela without her consent. Fanisa is treated as a tool for her father's ambitions rather than a person with her own desires. Makolo prioritizes his greed and wealth over his daughter's happiness, showing emotional abuse by disregarding her wishes and forcing her into a relationship she despises. Such treatments are plainly archaic since they lack considerations over the personal rights of females. The Chief's option of abuse and harassment poses critical human rights questions that are not compatible with modernity, especially that the skewed treatments are largely, and entirely so, meant for personal gains.

Rhelela's beating of Fanisa with a belt when she refuses to comply with his expectations is a clear act of physical abuse. Rhelela feels entitled to control Fanisa, and when she defies him, he uses violence to assert dominance, reflecting the abuse women often face in patriarchal systems when they resist oppressive norms. Rousseau in Boss (2008:448) asserts the ensuing understanding:

Woman was created to please men... This is the law of nature. If woman is created to please and to live in subjection, she must render herself agreeable to man instead of provoking his wrath.

The statement underscores the bottomline of Rhelela's understanding of what it means to have a female with him. Thus, his actions are bossy, masculine and depictive of a young man groomed under the tutorship of proponents of patriarchal

systems. He understands himself as bestowed with the powers to beat women simply by virtue of being a man. To the contrary, Fanisa rejects the oppressive system by not conforming either to Rhelela's assumptions of a husband or her father's outmoded imaginations.

Fanisa's Trauma and emotional breakdown

The combination of being forced into an unwanted marriage and enduring physical abuse from Rhelela drives Fanisa into isolation and despair. Her emotional trauma is evident as she withdraws from her family, distances herself from others, and speaks to no one after work. The emotional burden of being pressured by her family and abused by Rhelela leaves her mentally drained and devastated. Fanisa's trauma is deepened when Khorombi, the man she truly loves and the father of her child, is arrested following protests against the treaty that separates the Tsonga and Venda people. This separation does not only physically remove her from Khorombi but also symbolically highlights how cultural and political forces tear apart personal relationships. The trauma of being forced to return to her father's home while losing her autonomy over her life and family contributes to her emotional suffering.

Patriarchal and Socio-political frustrations

Fanisa's frustration stems from her helplessness in the face of her father's authority and societal expectations. Though she initially agrees to marry Rhelela out of pressure from her family, her frustration grows as she feels trapped between her duty to her family and her personal desires. Her defiance, when she eventually refuses to marry Rhelela after the beating, is an expression of her frustration with the oppressive system. Makolo's frustration surfaces when his plans to enrich himself through Fanisa's marriage to Rhelela fall apart. First, Fanisa rejects Rhelela, and later, her pregnancy by Khorombi completely destroys Makolo's ambitions. His greed and manipulation are thwarted by Fanisa's refusal to comply, and his frustration mounts as he loses control over his daughter and his desired financial gains.

The separation enforced by the treaty, which mandates that Tsonga and Venda people must live apart, fuels frustration in both Fanisa and Khorombi. Fanisa is forced to return home due to her linguistic and cultural identity, which separates her from the man she loves. The broader societal frustration with this forced cultural separation is evident in the protests that lead to the arrest of Khorombi, Mabutho, and Sumbulani. The novel *Hi ya Kwihhi* explores the abusive control of patriarchal traditions, the trauma that arises from forced marriages and societal expectations, and the deep frustration experienced by Fanisa and Rhelela as they navigate cultural and familial pressures. These themes intertwine, exposing the emotional and physical toll on Fanisa, a woman, caught between tradition and her own desire for autonomy and love.

CONCLUSION

As evidenced by the forgoing appreciation of the novels *Ndzi ngo Tinciki!* and *Hi ya Kwihhi?* the thematic concepts 'abuse, frustration, and trauma' are inextricably linked, particularly in patriarchal, culturally restrictive environments where individuals, especially women, are denied autonomy. Both novels explore how the rigid expectations of family and society can lead to deep emotional and psychological damage, with tragic consequences for all involved. In both novels, abuse is depicted primarily through the control and manipulation of women by male authority figures. In *Ndzi ngo Tinciki!* Ntekele's abuse of his children, especially through physical beatings and forced marriage highlights how patriarchal control suffocates the individuality and freedom of those under his care. Similarly, in *Hi ya Kwihhi*, Chief Makolo's decision to force Fanisa into an unwanted marriage reflects how women are often treated as property, with their futures dictated by greed and desires of men. In both instances, the abuse manifests in the denial of personal agency, emotional neglect and at times, physical violence. In *Ndzi ngo Tinciki!*, Manayila's frustration with her father's attempts to marry her off and control her life pushes her to contemplate suicide and eventually disappear. In *Hi ya Kwihhi*, Fanisa's frustration at being forced into a marriage with Rhelela grows to the point where she defies her parents and refuses to comply. In both cases, frustration stems from a system that oppresses individual choice and forces characters into situations that clash with their desires and values. The trauma experienced by these characters is profound, shaping their actions and leading to tragic consequences, including death, isolation, and psychological breakdowns. Both novels depict abuse, frustration, and trauma as products of patriarchal and cultural systems that value power, control, and wealth over the well-being of individuals, especially women. The oppressive expectations placed on the characters lead to cycles of abuse, emotional breakdowns, and the eventual collapse of family relationships.

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