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The Dynamic Character of Botho as Depicted in the Basotho Folktale of *Phokojwe le Mokoko*

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ABSTRACT

This investigation was inspired by the description of *botho* that is currently available. The phrase “botho”, which is commonly used to describe a distinct kind of African humanism, specifically originates from the Basotho proverb *Motho ke motho ka batho*, which translates to “a person is a person through other people”. There was a correlation between compassion, sincerity, and humanness as key African characteristics. This study argues that human nature—*botho*—should not be read too narrowly or as biased, as it is not always seeking peace. Because human nature is a dynamic phenomenon, Basotho folktales, such as *Phokojwe le Mokoko*, have always highlighted a variety of human attributes to raise awareness of the various personalities that exist in society. The folktale *Phokojwe le Mokoko* was examined and interpreted in a study that utilized Psychodynamic Theory, which considers human behavior, interpersonal connections, social issues, and the environment. The data were collected using textual and thematic analyses. The findings of this study revealed that *botho* is dynamic, as portrayed by *Phokojwe le Mokoko*, as Phokojwe lacks compassion, sincerity, and humanness. This study concludes that people should use both inner conflicts and social experiences to inform their choices, and that Basotho folktales are still relevant and can be used to help people in making good decisions.

Keywords: Basotho Folktale; Botho; Intrapsychic; Dynamic; African Humanism; Psychodynamic

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1. Background and Introduction

In Basotho culture, the concept of *Botho*, frequently interpreted as “humanity” or “humanness”, underscores the interdependence of individuals and their mutual obligations. It is founded on respect, care, and shared responsibilities within the community. Researchers in several disciplines have examined this theory; however, its significance in analysing the dynamic character of folktales remains relatively underexplored^[1-7]. The Basotho people used folktales to pass down moral lessons from one generation to another. According to Masowa^[8], folktales are referred to as “oral” literature because they are traditional stories that were passed down orally from one generation to the next, long before writing systems were invented. Basotho, the residents of Lesotho and South Africa, employ folktales to instill discipline and values in society. The folktale *Phokojwe le Mokoko* offers a compelling illustration of these values, showing how personal actions and relationships can either build or disrupt community harmony. The narrative of *Phokojwe le Mokoko*, translated as “The Jackal and Cock”, is a renowned Basotho folktale that illustrates how dynamic *botho* can be.

Previously, Africans lived in harmony with society until this time, when everything was ruled and overpowered by politics. Lying has become part of the South African political and relationship landscape. South Africans are more concerned about what will happen in the five years of the new era of coalition government in South Africa. For the past 30 years, citizens of South Africa have been living with empty promises from the previous ruling party. In line with this statement, in the State of Nation Address of 2018, President Cyril Ramaphosa promised South African citizens to find jobs for youth; build factories and roads, houses, and clinics; prepare children for the world of change; build cities and towns where families may be safe and productive and maybe contend; build a society defined by decency and integrity that does not tolerate the plunder of public resources or theft by corporate criminals of the ordinary people^[9]. However, crime rates, including rape, carjacking, violence, and murder, are increasing every day^[10]. These are indicators that *botho* philosophy is either dying off or becoming dormant in society, or rather, the country. However, this study provides some optimism. This hope marks the beginning of the dialogical journey of *botho* that seems to be missing in today’s world.

The central aim of this study is to highlight the fact that *botho* is dynamic and results in an unstable society. In this instance, *botho* contributes to societal cohesion in a chaotic world replete with injustices, biases, marginalization, deceit, lying, and various forms of cruel treatment by others.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

This study uses psychodynamic theory to analyse and interpret the Basotho folktale ‘*Phokojwe le Mokoko*’. The psychological theory stems from Freud’s work. Sharing the same sentiments is Deal^[11], who posits that psychodynamic theory is a theory of personality that originated from Sigmund Freud. Its basic tenets, consciousness processes, defense mechanisms, developmental perspectives, and subjectivity guide the analysis and interpretation of the study. Psychodynamic theory explains human behavior in terms of intrapsychic processes and the repetition of interpersonal patterns that are often outside an individual’s conscious awareness and originate in childhood experiences^[11]. Intrapsychic, in the context of this study, refers to what is happening within the mind, and interpersonal experience refers to the relationship between two people. This theory was deemed relevant to the study, as it will help the researcher interpret the behavior of *Phokojwe* and *Mokoko* in relation to what is happening in a contemporary society. Fulmer^[12] asserts that a psychodynamic approach acknowledges the human mind’s frequently irrational and misleading nature. He further argues that the approach views the mind as a curvilinear and intricate system.

1.2. Literature Review

This study will review the literature related to the philosophy of Africans, known as *botho/ubuntu*, and how other scholars have employed it in their work to establish what has already been done. *Botho* is a social theory that stems from the Basotho proverb *Motho ke motho ka batho*. Through descriptions and opinions, *botho* as African philosophy can be incorporated into official and informal educational procedures, claims Resane^[10]. Its ideology “has to do with recognizing another person’s humanity and the interconnectedness of our lives” or “with being human to each other” (Madigele, Mogomotsi & Mogomotsi 2021). The fountain of African ontology and epistemology, *botho* is the root of African phi-

losophy^[13] and has communalism as its expression. Several scholars have employed this approach in their studies. In her research, Resane^[10] finds that philosophies such as *botho* are theologically engaged dialogically for the maximum influence towards positive contribution in human dignity, integrity, and dignity. Whistle Mensele and Khanyetsi^[14] in their study found that Basotho folktales can still provide people with insight into the realities faced by different individuals, and societies in today's life, and that the dynamics of *botho/ubuntu* are observable in the folktale of Leobu.

On the other hand, Matswapong et al.^[15] in their study found that the spirit of *botho/ubuntu* continues to be deeply rooted in celebrations such as baby showers. Mokuku^[16] also have used this philosophy in his study and have found out that this philosophy could be engaged in a third space as a setting that recognizes equal power relations between environmental conservation experts and the community, so that all could share knowledge and explore innovative and effective hybrid strategies for a sustainable conservation of the environment. Over and above Metz and Gaie^[17], in their study, found that *botho/ubuntu* is worthy of attention from international moral theorists as it goes beyond piecemeal criticisms and instead presenting a unified foundation for them in the form of a single, comprehensive principle. All the above studies are very important in this study, as they informed it of the importance of *botho/ubuntu*. However, they differed from the present study as they did not analyze the Basotho folktale "Phokojwe le Mokoko" to explore the dynamic character of *botho* as portray by Jackal and Cock in the Basotho folktale *Phokojwe le Mokoko*.

2. Methodology

Textual analysis was employed in this qualitative study. Textual analysis depends on intricate originality, creativity, inspiration, history, and civilizations, as claimed by McKee^[18]. This approach of data collection is deemed relevant to the study as it helps the researcher interpret the text within its cultural, social, and historical context^[19]. The tale of *Phokojwe le Mokoko* was taken from the book *Diqatjwa tsa Basotho*, written by Ngcangca^[20]. The data were analyzed using Thematic Analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves examining a dataset to find, analyse, and report recurring patterns^[21]. Thematic

Analysis is deemed relevant to the study as it allows the researcher to seek experiences, thoughts, or behaviors across a dataset^[22]. This study achieved its objectives by examining the activities and behaviours of the main character in this folktale, *Phokojwe*. The analysis of the character of *Phokojwe le Mokoko* is significant because it will help the researcher ascertain that *botho* is dynamic; it does not always confide with good as the philosophy of *Botho* stipulates.

2.1. The Folktale of *Phokojwe le Mokoko*

Ba re e ne re e le Phokojwe le Mokoko, Mokoko o dutse hodima setha sa mabele; Phokojwe ya tla ho Mokoko, ya re: "He Mokoko ee! He Mokoko ee!"

Once upon a time it was Jackal and Cock, The Cock was sitting on top of the heel of sorghum. The Jackal came to the Cock and said, 'Hey Cock! Hey Cock!'

Mokoko wa re: "Wee"

The Cock said, "Yes"

Phokojwe ya re: "Na monna o utlwile hoba kajeno ke kgotso, re tshwanetse ho tshakelana le ho dula hammoho!"

Jackal said, "Have you heard that today it's peace, and we must visit each other and stay together!"

Mokoko wa re: "Ha ke so utlwe taba e jwalo." Phokojwe ya fihla, ya fumana hoba Mokoko o hodimo.

Cock said, 'I have not heard such news.' Jackal arrives and finds that Cock is sitting above him.

Ya dula tlasa setha, ya re: "Ke kgotso hohle lefatsheng, re tshwanetse ho dula hammoho; theoha, mokane, re tlo tsuba kwae ke ena." Jwale Mokoko wa hetla ka morao, jwalo ka ha eka o bona ho hong ho tlang.

It set down below the heel and said, "It's peace all over the world, we must stay together, come down my friend so that we can have some smoke'." The Cock then looked back as if he sees something coming.

Phokojwe ya botsa: "O bonang, monna? Molato ke ofe ha ke tswa o bolella hoba kajeno ke kgotso hohle, empa ke bona o tshaba ho hong?"

The Jackal asked, "What do you see man? What is the problem because I have just told you that today it's peace all over, but it seems like you are afraid of something?"

Mokoko: “Tjhe, ke bona sehlopha sena se tlang sa dintja.”
Yaba moo Phokojwe e tlohang fatshe ka pelepele.

Cock: “No, is just that I see a pack of dogs coming,’ That’s when the Jackal started to run away.

Ya re ho Mokoko: “Sala hantle, ke se ke ile.”

And said to Cock, “goodbye, I am gone.”

Mokoko: “Jwale molato ke ofe, ha o tswa re ho nna ke kgotso? Jwale o balehelang?”

Cock, “then what is the problem you have just said to me it’s peace? So why are you running away?”

Phokojwe: “Ke a kgolwa mohlomong bao ba ne ba le siyo pitsong maobane, ha ho buuwa taba tsena.” Mokoko wa hlaba mokgosi, Phokojwe ya baleha hampe. Mokoko wa phela ka mokgwa o jwalo. Ke tshomo ka mathetho.

Jackal, “I think maybe those were not present in yesterday meeting when we were talking about this news. Cock shouts and Jackal ran away. The Cock lived this way. That’s the end.

2.2. The Dynamic Principles of Botho in Phokojwe le Mokoko Folktale

2.2.1. Respect for Others

In this tale, a lack of respect between the two characters leads to deception. The Jackal, often depicted as a trickster or someone who always wants to outsmart others, who learns the ways of acting smart just to manipulate others, as shown in the phrase below:

Phokojwe ya re: “Na monna o utlwile hoba kajeno ke kgotso, re tshwanetse ho tjhakelana le ho dula hammoho!”

Jackal said, “Have you heard that today it’s peace, and we must visit each other and stay together!”

This teaches the audience that mutual respect is the cornerstone of social harmony, which is a principle rooted in *Botho*. Jackal did not respect the right of the Cock to live and his privacy, as he just jumped into his property and spread lie. This further shows that Phokojwe did not show compassion and honesty as he intended to kill and destroy but acted as if he bring good news to the Cock. This is how

people live today, and do not care about others. They bear false news to people, as a way of hocking them into their trap. Killings, rapes, and high crime rates are the result of people caring about themselves, not others. People who want to enrich themselves in the interests of others. This is a kind of character portrayed by Phokojwe.

2.2.2. Empathy

Phokojwe did not show any signs of empathy towards Mokoko. He thought of himself. He pretended that everything was okay, as shown by the following phrase:

Ya dula tlasa setha, ya re: “Ke kgotso hohle lefatsheng, re tshwanetse ho dula hammoho; theoha, mokane, re tlo tsuba kwae ke ena.” Jwale Mokoko wa hetla ka morao, jwalo ka ha eka o bona ho hong ho tlang.

It set down below the heel and said, “Its peace all over the world, we must stay together, come down my friend so that we can have some smoke’.” The Cock then looked back as if he had seen something coming.

We see Phokojwe continuing to spread lies just to hock Mokoko so that he could come down the heel. On the other hand, we see Mokoko also pretending to see something. This action of Mokoko is caused by internal stimuli. He does not trust Phokojwe. At the same time, Phokojwe never thought Mokoko would act in this way. Phokojwe did not exhibit any signs of empathy towards Mokoko. He never thought that his intentions to eat Mokoko would affect his family members. In this way, this does not honour empathy as the philosophy of *Botho* upholds. Today, people do whatever it takes for them to survive. We see politicians promising people heaven and earth during door-to-door campaigns, and after being elected, they vanish. Like Phokojwe, they show no mercy to the vulnerable. The participants showed no mercy towards each other. All of them think of their survival, and how they survive is not their concern. That is why Mokoko had to pretend as if he sees something coming as a way of scaring Phokojwe. He knew for the fact that Phokojwe fears the dogs. Therefore, he had to use something that he was scared of so that he could win him over. That is what is currently happening. When people fear dying from hunger, they do whatever the politicians tell them so that they could starve.

2.3. The Importance of Community

Botho fundamentally concerns belonging to a community in which every individual's well-being is tied to others. The interactions between Phokojwe le Mokoko and the eventual outcomes of their decisions serve as reminders that humans are part of a larger social framework in which collaboration and mutual care are essential. However, in this tale, we see Phokojwe using the community to fulfil his wrong intentions. He pretends to care about the well-being of Mokoko, but deeply inside knows that he intended to kill, not to promote oneness and unity, as the philosophy of *Botho* upholds. When he was caught in his lie, he runs away as shown in the following phrase.

Mokoko: “*Jwale molato ke ofe, ha o tswa re ho nna ke kgotso? Jwale o balehelang?*”

Cock, “What is the problem you have just said to me about peace? So why are you running away?”

This character portrayed by Phokojwe is exactly what is happening at the present moment. We have seen cases of politicians, pastors, and leaders running away after being caught in their lies. They enriched themselves by using the name of the communities. Many churches and organizations collapsed because of the act of greed. There is no honesty amongst people, which leads to distrust. Same with South Africans, they did not know who to trust during the past elections, which has led to a coalition government. See members of political parties switching from one party to another, despite having made promises to remain loyal to their original parties. Churches are no exceptions. Tendering systems have left most of the South African roads filled with potholes. People have run away with the money after hearing that the hawks are after them.

2.4. Wisdom in Decision-Making

This tale reflects the idea that decisions should be made with foresight, considering the consequences for both oneself and others. The eventual realization of the damage caused by Phokojwe's deceit suggests that wisdom and prudence should guide one's actions. He (Mokoko) used his wisdom to rescue himself from the tricks of Phokojwe, as seen in the following phrase:

Phokojwe ya botsa: “*O bonang, monna? Molato ke ofe ha ke tswa o bolella hoba kajeno ke kgotso hohle, empa ke bona o tshaba ho hong?*”

The Jackal asked, “What do you see man? What is the problem because I have just told that today peace all over, but it seems like you are afraid of something?”

Mokoko: “*Tjhe, ke bona sehlopha sena se tlang sa dintja.*”
Yaba moo Phokojwe e tlohang fatshe ka pelepele.

Cock: “No, is just that I see a group of dogs coming,’ That’s when the Jackal started to run away.

This is another character portrayed by Mokoko, of being deceitful which is against the principle of *botho*. There is this saying ‘ho bua leshano le phelosang’ which translates to tell a lie that rescues. At first Phokojwe thought he will catch Mokoko by saying today there is peace all over. Now Mokoko become clever and used the same lie to catch Phokojwe. Today, people use their wisdom to overpower others. They even used the saying that *dithotho ke lefa la ba bohla* which translated that the foolish are an inheritance to the wise. We have seen this in many political organizations where people have been used by others to accomplish their goals. After being used by Helen Zille, Mmusi Maimane was forced to walk away from the Democratic Alliance (DA) because is not what he thought is it. He mentioned in his speech that ‘DA is not the vehicle best suited to take forward the vision of building one South Africa for all’. Like Phokojwe is not an animal that could be trusted due to its tricks.

3. Analysis of Phokojwe le Mokoko

The analysis was divided into the following themes: lie, deception, and distrust.

3.1. Lie

The concept of lie in this study refers to not telling the truth or tricks, and to convince others about something. According to Sobel (p. 908)^[23]:

A lie is a statement that the speaker believes is false.

In accordance with the explanation by Sobel^[23], a lie is a behavioural aspect that does not correlate well with the principles of *botho/ubuntu* as seems to be expressed in

Phokojwe's actions. In seeking gratification of his drive, Phokojwe was confronted with the frustration imposed by the external world. Upon arrival, he found Mokoko sitting on top of the hill of sorghum and tried to use his tricks to convince him to come down. He softly approached and asked Mokoko to come down the hill, as today is the day of peace and visiting each other, as the phrase indicates "Na monna o utlwile hoba kajeno ke kgotso, re tshwanetse ho tihakelana le ho dula mmoho?" (p. 18)^[20]. "Have you heard that today it's peace, and we must visit each other and stay together!". Phokojwe was lying to Mokoko because he knew exactly that there was no such thing of living in peace and harmony. This demonstrates another characteristic of Phokojwe: he is an individual who cannot be trusted. This character that he portrayed does not confide with what *botho* upholds. He uses politeness to hide his dirty thoughts. The conscious of Mokoko did not allow him to easily accept what Phokojwe told him, and he pretended as if he saw something coming, to evaluate whether the statement said by Phokojwe is true or just a pure lie, as the phrase indicates, "*O bonang, monna? Molato ke ofe ha ke tswa o bolella hoba kajeno ke kgotso hohle, empa ke bona o tshaba ho hong?*" (p. 18)^[20]. "What do you see man? What is the problem because I have just told you that today it's peace all over, but it seems like you are afraid of something?". As a result, Mokoko was forced to devise a defence mechanism, as his consciousness tells him that Phokojwe might be lying. He portrayed the other character as someone who is speaking a lie to rescue himself; hence, the saying, *Ke leshano le pholosang*, translated as it is a lie that rescues.

However, Phokojwe, wanting to satisfy his drive and his ego, could not allow himself to let it go. He also devised a mechanism to help him satisfy his superego. This demonstrates that the character displayed by Phokojwe is against the principle of *botho* which seeks harmony. He did not seek peace or harmony, but he pretended to seek harmony. This type of behaviour is intolerant and is an indication that *botho* is dynamic, is not always seeking good, and it should not always be read as seeking good, as demonstrated by Phokojwe. Coleman and Kay^[24] assert that a person must be able to use the criteria they propose and assess whether the assertion being made is true or false. What is being said by these scholars correlates with the psychodynamic perspective, which suggests that the individual, when confronted

with a situation, needs to apply his or her consciousness to help him or her devise a defence mechanism to alleviate the situation. This criterion suggests that one must satisfy the following three criteria:

1. The statement is false.
2. The speaker believes the statement to be false.
3. The intention of the speaker is to deceive.

By examining the folktale, Mokoko was so subjective, and he managed to satisfy these three criteria. His subjectivity helped him not fall into the tricks of Phokojwe, and at the same time, Phokojwe was not subjective; however, he used his consciousness to rescue himself from the kennel of dogs that Mokoko said they are coming. This is the challenge we face today: societies read and listen to fake news on various media outlets almost every day in today's life. Instead of scrutinizing the news that they have received, they choose to accept it at face value by looking at the brand or name and position of the bearer. They are not being sceptical, but rather being subjective, like Mokoko. As a result, they end up falling into tricks and traps used by political leaders and church leaders as they brainwash them. Even today, leaders still use nice words filled with empty promises to attract the attention of people who are falling into their trap. In the folktale, "*Ke kgotso hohle lefatsheng, re tshwanetse ho dula hammoho; theoha, mokane, re tlo tsuba kwae ke ena*" (p. 18), which means it's peace all over the world, we must stay together, come down to my friend so that we can have some smoke."^[20] This indicates that bearers of lies, fake and misleading news, are still present in our societies even today because they are, in most cases, people whom the communities trust and respect, and whom they believe will come to their rescue, only to find out that they are just crooks. We see this kind of character being portrayed by Phokojwe.

Church liars are a societal problem as well. While the lessons of love from authentic, trustworthy priests—the true messengers of God—are ignored and their churches remain empty, there are imposters whose churches are crammed to the gills with devotees. The workplace is no exception to this. Senior positions in many work contexts are often occupied by individuals with forged degrees, while applications from those with legitimate degrees or certifications are frequently rejected. The political sphere is not far behind, with many adversarial members deceiving people with regular false

statements or hollow promises. The researcher observed this in the Cutting-Edge program, which was playing on SABC 1 on November 19, 2024, where residents in Cape Town were relocated to temporary structures after their squatter camps burned. Since 2016, they have been promised RDP houses by the previous ruling party. To date, people continue to live in congested areas. Like Phokojwe, they use nice words like temporary, giving people the hope that they will have a permanent place. On the other hand, the residents did not apply their conscious and being subjective like Mokoko to defend themselves from crooks. Unfortunately, they fell into the trap and failed to distinguish truth from a pure lie. News reports concerning phony identity documents, traditional phony healers, and phony medical professionals were read and heard by the public. Currently, lies abound and grow more practically daily. What is concerning is that, like the dialogue of Basotho folktale between *Phokojwe le Mokoko*, these lies, and misleading messages are being spread by reliable sources. In the same vein, Mensele and Khanyetsi^[14] allude that even today, the bearers of lies are still being easily accepted by people because of their status. However, we saw Mokoko being more subjective. He did not allow the fact that he was not in a meeting to influence him in making the wrong decision by just accepting what Phokojwe brought to him.

The human quality found in *Phokojwe* is consistent with Mboti's^[25] description of *botho/ubuntu* as a phenomenon marked by eruptive, rolling, and unstable human qualities and behaviour that is not necessarily harmony-seeking. Many people in the modern world have friends, family, and even their own children who share similar characteristics like those of *Phokojwe*'s. Individuals with low conscientiousness tended to be more impulsive, reckless, and spontaneous. This is a trait of jealous people, motivated by their interests and impressions of others. Just like the impression *Phokojwe* gave to *Mokoko* that there is peace and harmony today, he had to come down and join him.

Furthermore, *Phokojwe* knew exactly what he was saying to Mokoko was false information; hence, it was a lie, as shown in this phrase. "*Ke a kgolwa mohlomong bao ba ne ba le siyo pitsong maobane, ha ho buuwa taba tsena.*" (p. 18)^[20]. I think of those who were not present in yesterday's meeting when this news was discussed. We see Phokojwe trying to escape from his tricks and lies, which is another

character that he portrays. This is what most politicians and leaders do when they must account for their actions. This character goes with Basotho's saying that, *O leme le ntlha di pedi kapa ke maloma a fodisa*, which translates to a tongue with two sides like a needle or he bites and heals. *Botho* involves harmonious relationships with other people, leadership, and other living things^[16]. Based on Mokoku's^[16] *Phokojwe* does not seem to abide by these relations, which is what we are experiencing today: many people are good pretenders. Now a person who exhibits these characteristics of *Phokojwe* is considered "not human" or "ha se motho" from the *botho* perspective^[17, 26, 27] because his or her intentions are not to build but to destroy others. This also proves that *botho* is dynamic and does not always seek good, as seen in what Phokojwe has portrayed in this folktale.

3.2. Deception

According to Sobel (p. 919)^[23], deception is a deliberate attempt by the sender to induce incorrect beliefs. *Phokojwe* was trying to deceive *Mokoko* with his nice words. He gave the news that seems to be good to Mokoko to easily access him when he is down; hence, the Sesotho proverb *Phokojwe ho phela e diretsana*, which translates to the jackal that survives is the one with tricks. This unacceptable drive-based wish threatened the consciousness of Mokoko and triggered a conflict in his mind, which forced him to use his internal feelings and personal experiences he has towards Phokojwe to alleviate the situation. Mokoko could not find it easy to accept the news that Phokojwe was bearing to him; hence, he pretended to see something coming. *Mokoko* had inferior belief and that forced him to apply a defence mechanism to outsmart *Phokojwe* as the phrase indicate "*Jwale Mokoko wa hetla ka morao, jwalo ka ha eka o bona ho hong ho tlang*" Then the Cock looked back as if he sees something coming. According to Sobel (p. 908)^[23]:

Inferior beliefs refer to sending a message that leads to beliefs that are farther from the truth than those that could be induced by another feasible message.

As mentioned earlier, *Phokojwe* wanted *Mokoko* to believe that today is a day of peace for everyone, but knowing exactly that he is just being decisive. He was only making this trick so that *Mokoko* could come down. *Phokojwe* was

duplicitous, as he intentionally misled Mokoko by saying something and acting differently over time. *Phokojwe* at first said to *Mokoko* today is peace, and they should stay together. Suddenly, after hearing the message of dogs coming over from *Mokoko*, he changed his mind and ran away, as the phrase indicates: “*Jwale molato ke ofe, ha o tswa re ho nna ke kgotso? Jwale o balehelang?*” (p. 18)^[20] “What is the problem? You have just said to me it’s peace? So why are you running away?”. We see *Phokojwe* coming up with a fake message, pretending that the message comes from a gathering where all animals have attended. Jones^[28] defines disinformation as the deliberate creation and distribution of inaccurate and manipulative information with the objective to deceive and mislead others, whether to harm them or for financial, political, or personal gain. *Phokojwe* was intentional, just as *Mokoko*, as they both misled each other. Today, people share incorrect information with others to enrich themselves. Churches are filled with false prophets and leaders who misuse public funds.

3.3. Distrust

Distrust is an act that we always experience as a people. This is the kind of feeling that we experience because of certain daily practices by people for various reasons. Being under pressure from parents, partners, and communities at large. We see this practice in the workplace, as well as in the political arena. As people, we tend to lose trust when someone fails to fulfill his or her promises, or we can distrust if one believes that what is being said sounds untrue and cannot be trusted. Hawley^[29] defines distrust as a lack of trust. *Mokoko*, after hearing what *Phokojwe* said, he was very uncertain and pretended as if he saw something, as the phrase shows ‘*Jwale Mokoko wa hetla ka morao, jwalo ka ha eka o bona ho hong ho tlang*’ (p. 18)^[20]. Then *Mokoko* looked back as if he saw something coming. The personal experience taught *Mokoko* that *Phokojwe* is very manipulative, and the only way to discover his intentions was to scare him. The dialogue between *Phokojwe* le *Mokoko* has helped *Mokoko* to discover that *Phokojwe* is lying. He did not just jump down the hill once he heard the good news that was spread by *Phokojwe* that today is peace all over, and he needed to come down and enjoy smoking with him. The challenge that we are facing today is that many people are being swindled or brainwashed daily because they are unable to

test whether what is being said is true or untrue, and whether the person saying it can be trusted, like what *Mokoko* did with *Phokojwe*. South Africans were very unsure during the 2024 elections whether the previous ruling party African National Congress (ANC) would be able to sustain them for the next five years, yet at the same time very scared to elect the new party to take the lead after the previous experience they had before 1994; hence, they went for coalition. Here we can attest that South Africans were very subjective and have used their consciousness in making good decision. This was the only way to defend themselves from the brutality caused by the apartheid and the empty promises that were delivered for the past 30 years by the former ruling party. On the same breath, it is very difficult to decide when one is not aware of the kind of person one is dealing with. Fortunately, *Mokoko* was aware of the characters that he was dealing with. He was aware that the *Phokojwe* could not be trusted. Same with the South Africans, they were aware that the other parties like the DA could not be trusted, at the same time, they could not throw themselves into the pit by electing the ANC again, hence the coalition.

However, the challenge that we face today in society is that even if we know the kind of people we are dealing with, we tend to believe them. The fact that *nonyana tsa siba leng di fofa mmoho* translated the flock of the same father flew together could not be ignored when dealing with politicians, leaders, and managers nowadays. In support of this viewpoint, Hawley^[29] implies that we are occasionally uncertain about whether to trust or distrust someone. He further argued that if we do not know a person well enough, we are unable to judge his or her skills or intentions. Fortunately, enough *Mokoko* knew the tricks of *Phokojwe*, and he take the advantage of that to outsmart him as seems in this phrase “*Tjhe, ke bona sehlopha sena se tlang sa dintja.*” *Yaba moo Phokojwe e tlohang fatshe ka pelepele* (p. 18)^[20] “No, is just that I see a pack of dogs coming’ that’s when the Jackal started to run away.

It is the practice of people, companies, and organizations to find a way to escape when they are caught or find that they cannot be trusted. Hawley^[29] points out that the most critical issue for all of us is who to trust, why, and what to trust. Because *Phokojwe* knew that he was lying and dogs could expose him, he made excuses and ran away, as shown in this phrase “*Ke a kgolwa mohlomong bao ba ne ba le siyo*

pitsonong maobane, ha ho buuwa taba tsena” (p. 18)^[20]. I think those were not present in yesterday’s meeting when we were discussing this news. The character portrayed by Phokojwe in this phrase contradicts the *botho* principle of unity in a community. This demonstrates the dynamic characteristics of people. The idea that South Africans could no longer trust ANC like Mokoko did not trust Phokojwe came as a shock. This was the result of empty promises that they had delivered in the past 30 years.

4. Findings

From this folktale, it was discovered that *botho* is dynamic. Usually, *botho* philosophies are demonstrated through respect, care, empathy, wisdom, unity, and reconciliation. However, in this folktale, the main character Phokojwe does not follow these principles. He demonstrated another side of *botho* that did not confide in good deeds, such as lying, deception, and distrust. This is what we refer to as a character, hence the saying in Sesotho ‘Ke botho ba hae’ translates it’s his character. For instance, Phokojwe wanted Mokoko to come down the hill to promote the two principles of *botho* unity and reconciliation. However, these principles were violated by Phokojwe, who knew that he was lying to Mokoko. His intentions were not to build or unite but to destroy. He portrayed the dynamic character of a poisonous person. The results also showed that Mokoko used his wisdom and personal experience to outsmart Phokojwe. He allowed his conscious to lead him in making good decisions. He was very subjective when dealing with matters. This demonstrates that *botho* is dynamic and can be enacted or violated.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

According to this study, folktales from the Basotho people can still give individuals insight into the realities that many groups and societies face in the modern world. This study also highlighted the need for strong analytical abilities, which are currently lacking in most individuals. It has shown how crucial positive interpersonal interactions prevent miscommunication and negative behaviours. As observed in the dialogue between Phokowe le Mokoko. Mokoko was able to apply his conscious to defend himself against Phokojwe. This type of character could be relearned and emphasized

during storytelling when narrated during the lesson in a classroom setting. These skills could be shared with the learners to teach them to be more subjective than being objective when faced with situations like what is being portrayed by Mokoko. This may make individuals more aware of false information, lies, and fake news from what are so-called reliable sources. Many people fall into scams, and fraud due to a lack of critical skill. Therefore, this study urges people to be mindful of and alert to those who abuse the respect and trust that others have in them and who pose as truth-tellers when they are not, like Phokojwe. Therefore, this study recommends that the Basotho return to their origins to protect and utilize their Basotho folktales, thereby preventing the loss of these priceless oral traditions, which are fundamental to the country’s identity. Societies, groups, and individuals must become more curious, investigate, question, and carefully examine any information they are given, regardless of the source, to prevent suffering in the modern world. People should exercise caution and keep in mind that not everyone or everything needs to be trusted. Therefore, they should scrutinize any information provided to them before acting on it. The department of Basic and Higher Education should incorporate the oral literature in their curriculum to foster and instil the moral in our new generation. People should utilize social platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, radio, and television to teach this oral literature, and during the narration, the narrator should emphasize the moral of the story.

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Informed Consent Statement

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Data Availability Statement

I used secondary resources such as books, articles and are available through request.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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