

**PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN ZAMBIAN MEMES: A THEMATIC
ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS**

BY

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A Dissertation submitted to the University of Zambia in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Literature

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this paper is mine and that it has previously not been submitted for any other degree at this or any other universities.

SIGNED: DATE

APPROVAL

**This Dissertation by Imbuwa Munalula is approved as a fulfilling part of
the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in
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ABSTRACT

In the period of time that the internet has existed, it has become a major player in the production and distribution of humour in general, and humour about gender, in particular. Access to the internet has also increased the ease with which other internet content is located and distributed. Additionally, consumers produce their own forms of content on social media platforms and are capable of distributing and consuming information bits and bytes, no matter where one is, as long as internet access is provided. Among internet content produced by internet users are memes. Not only will this study demonstrate the need for the people who share memes to analyse them before sharing but also encourage those who create memes to be wary of the danger of perpetuating stereotypes through memes. Specifically, the study sought to analyse the ways in which women are portrayed in Zambian memes on social media platforms particularly Facebook and WhatsApp. In addition, it examined the significance of these portrayals and the role language plays in the memes. This study explored a uniquely technologically bound type of humour by adopting a disparagement or superiority theory, feminist and social constructionist approach to examine the content of popular internet memes. Therefore, the knowledge gap that this study is concerned with is: How are women portrayed in Zambian memes shared on social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Whatsapp? Data was drawn from online sources through general scanning of Facebook and WhatsApp. One hundred Zambian memes with an element of women portrayals were sampled. Using thematic analysis on the sample of one hundred memes, two broad themes were identified. These were gender stereotypes and patriarchal messages. The representations of women in the Zambian memes sampled exhibited negative constructions of women and womanhood. The findings showed that women are portrayed as lovers of money, dependent on men, cheats, prostitutes, gossips, liars, sex objects, dangerous, problematic, and talkative. The other findings showed that men are portrayed as providers and victims of women's negative behaviour. In addition, the language used in memes marginalises, demeans, ridicules and promotes misogyny, as it is sarcastic and offensive. In some cases, online sexism and harassment are reframed as humour that is expected to be 'acceptable' to readers. Although the content of the message is the same that women are not equal to men, the humorous nature of a sexist message decreases confrontation. Women are associated more with negative images than men.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of academic work to my dad *Bo Maxwell Munalula Mbangweta*. Dad, you left so early before your words of wisdom could begin to bear fruit in me. The fulfilment of your desires, ambitions and vision for me has culminated into my researched work. Thank you for always believing in me. Your words so rich with wisdom have always given me the strength and energy to push through life. I remember you saying, “*Sikolo ki malamulela mwanake utiseze*”. You are my hero. I will always be grateful to you.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

1.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, theoretical framework, methodology used for data collection and analysis, definition of terms and lastly, conclusion of the chapter.

1.1. BACKGROUND

Media expressions have increased with the advent of computer technology. They have evolved from printed books, magazines, newspapers, brochures to online resources in various forms of expressions. Conceptually, the media are those technological agencies, which engage in the creation, selection, processing and distribution of messages among people. As a logical connotation, the mass media deals with the day to day problems of the nation and especially of the public. Mass media in Zambia, like any other country, comprises the print media and electronic media, which are composed of the radio, the television, the film, the press, publication and advertisements. Croteau and Hoynes (2000) define media as different technological processes that facilitate communication between sender of a message and the receiver of that message. This definition allows us to speak not only about established media, such as television and the press, and their virtual forms on the internet, but also about a variety of new forms of media, such as social media. Some of these are Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Skype, platforms such as YouTube and Instagram among others.

Social media and the internet have been the latest preferred platforms for obtaining and sharing information. This is because they are faster, easier and have a bigger coverage of audience. While there are many societal uses for social media, its users collect news content from peers on these sites. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61) defines social media as “a group of internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”. Web 2.0 is an umbrella term encompassing several new Web technologies, such as blogs, Really Simple Syndication and Wikis.

The foundation of social media came with the introduction of Bulletin Board Systems (BBSes). Independently produced, BBSes allowed users to post codes for messages, games and more in order to share with other users. Ward Christense developed and opened the first BBS to the public in 1979 (Kaplain & Haenlein, 2009). These were accessed via telephone line (Nickson, 2009). Fast forward to the year 2004, when Facebook made its introduction into society courtesy of its creator Mark Zuckerberg. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 8th Edition* defines Facebook as a “social networking website” (2010:525). Facebook is but one of many messaging and social networking applications, that overall dominate the rankings for most used applications on mobile devices (Church et al. 2015). With the advent of Facebook, a revolution of news intake was presented to current youth and middle-aged generation who are common internet users. Individuals now have access to many forms of media at any time and place; mobile devices have enabled accessibility of media like never before through unprecedented connectedness. Rouse and Dean (2014) defines Facebook as a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and videos, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues.

Jan Koum, and Brian Acton former employees of Yahoo founded WhatsApp in 2009. WhatsApp is a pun on ‘what’s up?’ Metz and Cade (2015) described WhatsApp as a freeware and cross-platform instant messaging service for smart phones. Idle and Nunns (2011) states that WhatsApp is where information is spread to multitudes of people in an instant and then shared between friends. For example, WhatsApp users make use of the platform to spread information on WhatsApp groups, which have a maximum of two hundred and fifty-six people.

Technology has transformed the global media environment from one organised around passive media consumption to a far more complex environment. Consumers now have more control over where, when and how they interact with media through mobile devices and mobile inbuilt capabilities such as multitasking. Today, consumers produce their own forms of content and are capable of producing, distributing and consuming information bits and bytes, no matter where, as long as internet access is accessible. Due to the internet’s structure and distributed architecture, access to information has progressively relocated into the users’ hands. Audiences have evolved and adopted a more active role; internet users read, listen and watch. They also express themselves and create their own content (Jenkins, 2006). The consumer, who used to be at the receiving end of the communication chain, has been placed at the centre of the process. This change has mainly been possible thanks to social apps, a corpus of tools,

services and technical devices that enable the user to produce (edit, copy, distribute) content accessible to others (Gluck & Roca, 2008).

While a key component to the digital age is social media platforms, the inner detail of these platforms is equally important. WhatsApp and Facebook users share ideas, problems, plans and programmes. Anecdotal jokes are not an exception. Jokes are of particular interest to this study because using jokes transmitted through the internet, this study attempts to analyse ways in which women are portrayed on social media platforms namely Facebook and WhatsApp. Since we are living in an era of technology where millions of people spend their time gathering, sharing and analysing information on social media platforms, this research is based on these two forms of media communication because they are the most common in Zambia.

The internet has emerged with respect to jokes, as an “active folkloric space” drawing social and cultural forms to effective use (Dorst 1990:183). There are probably as many definitions of the word joke as there are dictionaries. Scholars, however, in their definitions have generally agreed that the term joke “touches on hilarity” (Chukwumah 2018: 2). Sudanese scholar, El-Mahdi Bushra defines a joke as that which is “thought to be a playful judgment of something or someone presented in a humorous expression” (2004:977). Another African scholar David Adu-Amankwah defines a joke as “any narration, action, or interaction that judging from the response it receives from listeners to audience is considered to be humorous” (2004:392).

It is generally believed that a joke is created by people and not by a single author (Davies 2011; Kuipers 2006: 6). People continue to create and share jokes on daily basis. This is what is responsible for a joke to be called a long-standing folklore genre. In addition, Freud argues that man constantly creates new jokes based on new interests of the day (1960:151). This explains why different people circulate a joke from one platform to another. Available evidence further strengthens the argument that when a joke is widespread, people like to tell and listen to it. This behaviour is reinforced by something in the joke. In other words, a joke is thus considered representative of some facet of life.

Jokes can be narrated publicly or privately. Nonetheless, proliferation of internet services has increased the easiness for jokes to be located, distributed and redistributed. Jokes are circulated on the internet through emails and social media platforms, thus represent the real proportions of targets, subjects and genres preferred by the people quite accurately. Jokes on the internet come with a contextual set of information that can be of great importance in processing the data: type of the website (dynamic or passive), the date on which the joke was posted, the

sender (frequent or accidental). Its placement in a category and other additional knowledge about the joke is sometimes openly accessible on these joke-sharing sites (Oring 2003: 139 – 140).

There is a difference between spoken jokes, those found in print media and those that are transmitted online. Internet users refer to jokes transmitted online as internet memes. While not all internet memes are jokes, comparing them to offline jokes makes it clear what makes internet memes unique: the speed of their transmission and the fidelity of their form. A spoken joke, for instance, can only be transmitted as quickly as those individuals who know it can move from place to place, and its form must be preserved by memory. A printed joke, in contrast, can be transmitted by moving paper and can be preserved by a physical arrangement of ink. The movement of individuals no longer limit the speed of transmission, and the form of the joke is preserved by a medium, not memory.

Meme is a metaphor in biology whose roots can be traced back to the works of Dawkins (1976) in his book *The Selfish Gene* and Blackmore (2000) in *The Meme Machine*. Dawkins proposed the term ‘meme’ (based on the ancient Greek word “*mimema*” which means ‘something imitated’). By this term, Dawkins (1976) meant a unit of cultural transmission that may represent an aspect of culture such as fashion, language, religion, songs, and sports. These can evolve change and spread. The very idea of the meme has itself mutated and evolved in new direction. An internet meme is a hijacking of the original idea (Dynel, 2016:662). The original definition of the word meme has undergone many variations in concept over the years and humans have largely driven these variations (Dawkins, 1976).

It is arguably that the term meme is a concept that has largely been controlled by internet users that turned it subsequently into some form of colloquialism. The academia has responded to these paradigm changes. In their debate, the academia has tried to figure out as to what should be considered a meme and what should not be. To this end, they had made serious attempts at defining boundaries to the concept, the battle that is still far from being won. Even though, the question of what should be taken for a meme is of little consequence. Knobel and Lankshear (2005: 205-206), states, that what is vital is the fact that “there is particular content on the internet that people explicitly perceive as memes and associate certain practices with them”. To this end roles played by memes is what should be emphasised within specific cultures.

Many other digital scholars address the cultural and social aspect of memes in line with Limor Shifman (2013: 367), who think memes should be “units of popular culture that are circulated,

imitated and transformed by internet users, creating a shared cultural experience.” Patrick Davison (2009) condenses online meme as “a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission” (quoted in Mandiberg 2012: 122). Other scholars have also given their definitions of the word meme. Dynel (2016: 662) focuses on the digital space to give her definition. She defines meme as “an idea, style, or action that spreads via internet in form of mimicry, which may be variously expressed (e.g. by planking in public places, dancing to the Harlem Shake, or creating a picture-based joke).” These definitions are straight to the point in addressing aspects of internet memes by stating that internet memes are a product of online culture. Secondly, is a social phenomenon whose common purpose is to entertain. Thirdly, the environment of operation is the cyberspace or the internet. With the different definitions of the word “meme”, this study will base its discussion of internet memes on Davison’s (2009) definition of a meme.

According to Davison (2009), the emoticon was one of the first if not the first internet meme. Krohn (2004), states that the emoticon was first used in written by computer scientist Scott E. Fahlman on 19th September 1982 at Carnegie Mellon University. The *Oxford Advanced learner’s Dictionary* 8th Edition defines an emoticon as “A short set of keyboard symbols that represents the expression on the face, used in email, etc. to show the feelings of persons sending the message” (2010:479). Fahlman reasoned that in order to avoid misunderstandings a lack of a visual channel in online communication needed to be overcome. For example, while using humour or sarcasm, he suggested the use of ‘: -)’ as a way of making posts that were not meant to be taken seriously. He also created ‘: (’ which he proposed to be the sign indicating that the post is indeed serious (Krohn, 2004). The smiley quickly spread to other communities and it soon became a meme (Börzsei, 2013).

In the beginning just as internet was taking root, memes spread mostly through e-mails. Years that followed this era, 1990 to 2000 era called “proto-internet memes”, online meme subculture developed further and different kinds of messages and image boards, as well as blogs became the natural habitat of online memes (Marino, 2015). Social networks have furthered the propagation of memes tremendously and there has been a boom in the popularity of thematic websites. It can be argued today that, there is no single internet user that has not stumbled upon an internet meme of some type. Countless new memes are being generated on a myriad of social networks and platforms and content sharing communities every day. Internet users especially those who are internet savvy have gone a step further in creating simple tools for the

generation of memes, such as *Meme generator* (2009) and *Quick meme* (2010). Constantly updated encyclopaedia of memes called *Know Your Meme* has also been around since 2008.

Of many influences on how men and women are viewed, media are the most pervasive and one of the most powerful means (Allan & Coltrane, 1996; Wood, 1994). The issue around gender has overly concerned researchers and the way gender is portrayed in media (Ross Smith & Walker, 1992). The focus of their research has been on sex stereotyping in media's role in perpetuating discrimination, encouraging the disparity and preserving traditional sex role attitudes and behaviours. Internet memes with women portrayals pop up on social media platforms regularly, from sources that are unfamiliar, or many times as reposts either from individuals or from organisations with whom users are indirectly connected on the digital landscape. Woven throughout daily lives, media insinuate their messages into human consciousness at every turn. All forms of media communicate images of the sexes, many of which perpetuate unrealistic, stereotype and limiting perceptions.

Social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp have been used to share memes that may not only have positive portrayals of women, but also negative portrayals that marginalise, objectify or demean women. Sad to say, sometimes these may be considered normal and are generally not even interrogated. Due to the way the memes are framed, people tend to take them as memes shared for fun. It is therefore difficult to analyse their content firstly. It is difficult to see examples that show women harassment and other marginalised groups online. Quite often, the memes are shared with little analysis of their gender implications. There is generally a lack of sensitivity and gender awareness not only on the part of people who share the memes but also, more crucially, on the part of the audience or recipients.

Stereotypes of men and women have been a central theme in the memes shared on social media. Stereotypes are mental generalisations that individuals have against certain groups. This has affected gender stereotypes in the memes making them more aggressive and misogynistic. Stereotypes have positive and negative effects. They produce a magnitude of distortions and incorrect generalisations by providing descriptions of how people think, behave or act. Stereotypes in media influence judgment in subtle ways. Machan (1987: 218), in expressing his opinion about this paradox, suggests that what may make one to laugh, is the height of bad taste to another. Thus, even what might appear to be mere jokes about women on the surface might perpetuate negative stereotypes of women, or might be motivated – consciously or

unconsciously by negative stereotypes about women generally resulting from patriarchal narratives.

Some women share or enjoy memes that actually demean fellow women, often without realising that the meme might be in bad taste. In addition, women may laugh at memes on social media even if other women are the subject of the meme. However, not all people may find these memes funny. Leda and Mark (2009) argue that even though people laugh at the stereotypical portrayals, this does not mean that they are comfortable with them. Emphasising the profound implications of stereotyping, Kerrigan (2011) argues that this becomes more visible when it directly affects the audience such that, when they encounter the stereotyped persons, they already have a preconceived notion and relate with them based on those representations.

Kan's (2004) position is that people involved in the production of comedy shows justify their jokes as a reflection of deep-seated injustices in the society, and therefore, the society mirrors itself through them. The portrayals however, could be harmful to society. In addition, Harwood and Anderson (2002) hold that:

Groups that are minimalised, distorted or marginalised are at risk because these portrayals make the groups less significant than they really are. Thus, media content is important not only for the power it exerts on individual views but also for how it reflects and shapes cultural views. These stereotypical representations have the power to do harm.

Basing on Harwood and Anderson's views, with the rise of social media, dissemination of information has become easier making stereotyped individuals more vulnerable to negative perceptions. Sometimes, social media enables its users to share content on the global platform while maintaining absolute anonymity. This has caused the memes with negative connotations towards both men and women to thrive without being interrogated. Moreover, access to the internet as well as expeditious circulation makes information a lot easier to reach from one part of the world to another. Hence, the degree or impact of what is shared on the internet is far greater than any other medium. For this reason, memes should be analysed to lessen the negative implications arising from people sharing them

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Studies on how women have been portrayed in novels, magazines, films, songs, proverbs and other forms of media have been carried out. Zambian and non-Zambian scholars in their studies have shown that generally both women and men have been stereotyped either positively or negatively.

Mutunda in his study, *Portrayal of African Women in Folklore: A Case Study of Proverbs among the Lunda in the North western part of Zambia* (2016) argued that the selected Lunda proverbs illustrate both negative and positive attitudes of Lunda people towards women. Available evidence shows that Lunda proverbs are unbalanced in that women are portrayed negatively. Majority analysed proverbs indicated that women are evil, dangerous, unfaithful or morally loose, unreliable, untrustworthy; thus, intellectually inferior. In other instances, though very few, women are represented positively and in complementary terms such as carers or nurturers, and homemakers or caretakers. Nevertheless, these proverbs tend to serve the interests of men as they sustain or reinforce the traditional gender stereotype.

In a study by Chilala, *An Analysis of Gender Issues in Zambian Literature in English* (2006), he analysed six Zambian literary texts. The first three were male authored and the other three female authored. The novels were: *The accusing finger* (Nyambe Wina, 1987), *Ticklish Sensation* (Gideon Phiri, 1973), *Changing Shadows* (Henry Musenge, 1984), *Behind the Closed Door*, (Susan Chitabanta, 1988), *The fight For Justice*, (Josephine Bwalya Mucelemba, 2003), and *Picking Up the Pieces* (Maliya Mzyeche Sililo, 2003). According to Chilala, women are portrayed as gold-diggers, ‘witches’, seductresses, gossips, petty, weak, subservient to men, men’s property, evil, cantankerous, hypocritical, and unreliable. Men are associated with authority and power over their wives, making decisions without being challenged by their wives.

Among scholars that have dealt with online jokes are Jessica Drakett, Brigitte Rickett, Katy Day and Kate Milnes. Their article is entitled “*Old Jokes, New Media – Online Sexism and Constructions of Gender in Internet Memes*” (2018). The feminist research found that harassment of women online was viewed as “acceptable and a form of humour”.

Although Mutunda, Chilala, and many other scholars looked at the images of women in their studies, their areas of concentration were proverbs, songs, movies and novels. Jessica Drakett et al’s study was based on internet memes, its focus was mainly on online sexism and

constructions of gender. Using a similar angle of internet memes as Jessica Drakett et al, this study tries to look into the portrayal of women narrowing it to the Zambian memes perspective. Up until now, however, very little research has been conducted specifically to describe the portraiture of women in Zambian memes shared on social media platforms. Therefore, the knowledge gap that this study is concerned with in question form is: How are women portrayed in Zambian memes shared on social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Whatsapp?

1.3. AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to analyse the emergent categories in which women are portrayed in Zambian memes shared on social media platforms, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp.

1.4. OBJECTIVES

1. To analyse how women are portrayed in Zambian memes shared on social media platforms particularly Facebook and WhatsApp.
2. To examine the significance of the portrayal of women in Zambian memes shared on Facebook and WhatsApp platforms.
3. Analyse the role language plays in the portrayal of women in Zambian memes on social media platforms Facebook and WhatsApp.

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How are women portrayed in the Zambian memes on social media platforms particularly Facebook and WhatsApp?
2. What is the significance of the portrayal of women in Zambian memes on social media platforms Facebook and WhatsApp?
3. What role does language play in the portrayal of women in Zambian memes shared on social media platforms Whatsapp and Facebook?

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will provide new data and perspectives on how women are portrayed in Zambian memes on social media platforms adding to the existing body of knowledge on the portraiture of women in Zambian songs, proverbs and other works of literature. Many people tend to think that a joke should not be taken seriously, as it is meant to entertain. This study however, is premised on the view that jokes should be taken seriously as far as they deal with human beings and their portrayals. A joke is a cultural product, which can therefore not be free of cultural prejudices. In addition, a joke is shaped by people's worldviews and worldviews can be biased. It is therefore important that these online jokes called memes be analysed to lessen these cultural prejudices. In analysing how women are portrayed in Zambian memes on social media, this study will not only demonstrate the need for people who share memes on social media to analyse them before sharing but will also encourage those who create memes to be wary of the danger of perpetuating stereotypes through these memes.

Further, the study will encourage people who play the role of administrators of groups of social media platforms to discourage memes that perpetuate stereotypes of both men and women. It will also lessen on the activities such as cyberbullying in Zambia, which ZICTA is seriously trying to address. Students who wish to study memes in any context can also benefit from this study. It is also hoped that this study will be used by group administrators, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), government in workshops, seminars and work places to change the portraiture of women in various social contexts.

1.7. SCOPE OF STUDY

This study focuses only on Zambian memes shared on two social media platforms - WhatsApp and Facebook. It is not concerned about memes shared on other social media platforms. In addition, it is not concerned with other posts on the two social media avenues apart from memes.

Therefore, a corpus of hundred (100) memes were extracted from both Facebook and WhatsApp. Fifty were from WhatsApp and the other fifty were from Facebook. This was done to create a balance between the two social platforms. They were from both individuals and group accounts. The researcher sampled Eight (8) more memes to help in the analysis of the

findings. Although it is difficult to determine the originality and origin of a particular meme as they keep gravitating between Facebook and WhatsApp, it is important to say that the research observed that WhatsApp users draw memes they share from Facebook. However, the researcher did not extract anything from the Facebook accounts of individuals except as shared with her. Thus, almost all the memes from Facebook were from group pages shared by Zambians. In terms of WhatsApp platforms, memes were extracted both from what was shared with the researcher by friends and from group networks.

The study dealt with only memes shared as image macros, in cartoon form, template memes and print text (word only). However, memes shared as audios and videos were not part of the study. The analysis was mainly concerned with the portrayal of women not men, although, in the course of the discussion, men were also mentioned. It is also important to note that the term “woman” refers to the biological feminine figure that includes girls. It does not extend to transgender or men who have decided to become women for social reasons or psychological reasons, and have undergone a surgical operation to cement their desired gender.

1.8. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Bailey et al (2000: 2) postulate that a theory is ‘a device used for interpreting, criticizing and unifying established laws, modifying them to find data unanticipated in their formation and guiding in the interpretation of new and powerful generalisation’. Donald and Delno (2013:56) defines a theoretical framework as being a collection of interrelated ideas based on theories. A theory clarifies why things are the way they are based on evidence. McLaughlin (1991) contends that theories help to generate meaning out of otherwise chaotic and disorganised data collected in the field. This study is informed by the Hobbes’ superiority theory of humour, social constructionism theory and the feminist literary approach.

Joke and humour are two linguistic and literary elements that should induce in the recipient laughter and excitement. Studies have used the two words interchangeably. The present study included another word “meme”, which means jokes transmitted online. Humour is the vehicle that most memes transmit through to infect social media users (Shifman, 2012). The study on humour is well documented (Johnston, Mumby, & Westwood, 2007). Countless scholars have attempted to theorise on what makes us laugh, what constitute something funny, and to explore the consequences and functions of humour (Shifman, 2007). To some internet users especially

the youth and middle aged, consider internet memes are a source of entertainment humour online. Dynel (2016) argues that internet memes provides a conduit for they are “a vehicle for mass entertainment and social bonding” and highlights the use of humour.”

Years of study on internet memes have culminated into three major theories of humour. These are: the superiority also referred to as disparagement theory, the incongruity theory and the release theory called relief theory of humour. Superiority (or disparagement) theories contends that humour is derived from seeing the misfortune of another. The pleasant feeling derived from this act is expressed through laughter. Incongruity theory, credits the combination of incongruent elements in creating humour. Release (or relief) theory, contends that the expressed laughter releases a lot of tension leading to psychological healing (Billig, 2005).

From the three theories of humour, superiority theory also known as disparagement theory was picked for use in this study because it refers to remarks that (are intended to) elicit amusement through the denigration, derogation, or belittlement of a given target (Ferguson and Ford, 2008: 283). However, it is also important to mention that there are three types of superiority theories, which will be discussed later. Disparagement humour disparages the target of the joke. The distinguishing feature is that it “diminishes” and “reinterprets” its subject (Greenwood and Isbell, 2002). In the same way, internet users share jokes with positive or negative remarks targeted at people. The major tenets of Superiority theories are that “mockery, ridicule, and laughter at the foolish actions of others are central to humour experience” (Keith-Spiegel 1972: 6). By doing so, superiority theories believes in ridicule and feelings of relative superiority as essential constituents of humour.

Disparagement humour is pervasive in contemporary society. It has appeared repeatedly in all forms of mass media from printed to online sources. Researchers have recognised the insidious effects of disparagement humour. It is known for communicating cultural knowledge of stereotypes (Devine, 1989), contributing to an outlet for subtle expressions of prejudice (Crandall and Eshleman, 2003), or facilitating hostile and discriminatory environments for others (Ford, 2000; Fitzgerald et al. 2005). Memes with negative stereotypes of both men and women have a negative effect, for this reason, it is important curb the vice of sharing them.

The three superiority theories of humour are Hobbes’ superiority theory, Affiliation and reference group models and Vicarious superiority theory: An identification class model. Affiliation and reference group models extended Hobbes’ superiority theory by introducing the concept of affiliation. Wolf et al. (1934) suggested that affiliated objects are broader

psychological extensions of the self. This suggests that the individual adopts behaviour as that portrayed by those objects (Wolf et al. 1934: 344). Thus, a person should experience self-esteem enhancement upon perceiving disparagement of people or groups with whom he or she is not affiliated.

In Vicarious superiority theory: An identification class model, La Fave and colleagues extended Wolf et al.'s (1934) notion of affiliation by introducing the concept of identification class (IC) to predict amusement with disparagement humor (La Fave et al. 1996). An IC is defined in terms of both affiliation (group membership) and attitude towards a class or category of persons. Vicarious superiority theory expands upon previous superiority theories by addressing the importance of attitudes toward the disparaged group and the disparaging (victorious) group as determinants of amuse.

The researcher preferred Hobbes' superiority theory of humour from the three because it centres the use of humour on the "self" and not on a social group or a particular class that one is affiliated to as the other two superiority theories of humour state. Individuals create and share memes. In addition to that, people respond to the memes according to their feelings or views not collectively. Hobbes is the philosopher most wholly and confidently associated with the standard version of the superiority theories. Michael Billig explains, "Hobbes puts ridicule at the centre of humour and thereby questions the goodness of laughter. He is telling us to look behind the smiles and the jests. If we do so, then we will see something not too pleasant" (2005, 52). Hobbes's so-called theory of laughter comes from Human Nature when he asserts that:

Sudden glory is the passion which maketh those grimaces called laughter; and is caused either by some sudden act of their own, that pleases them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves (1996:38).

Hobbes is committed to the claim that superiority can cause laughter and the joy it is often an expression of, but not that it is always (or the only thing) involved in the said joy. In light of the above mentioned, one would therefore argue that the memes shared could cause laughter and joy. However, there may be something more to the laughter and joy that may not be pleasant. In this context, it is not surprising that Hobbes is most interested in laughter involving superiority and evidencing our competitive tendencies. However, this does not mean that Hobbes's superiority theory show that laughter involves a particular satisfaction felt in one's perceived superiority only.

It is therefore necessary not only to see the positive benefits of humour only but also consider the potentially negative aspects of humour (e.g. ridicule), and to consider the role of humour in establishing or challenging power relations. Internet memes are meant to be humorous, but if they cease to be humorous and take the role of demeaning, insulting, downgrading a particular group of people or individuals, they become a vehicle through which pain is inflicted to those that see themselves aligned to the memes. Perhaps the questions that one may ask are, why that particular meme? Who is the target of the meme? Of what benefits is the meme to the sender and the receiver? Monro (1988:349) says, “According to any superiority theory of humour, the laughter always looks down on whatever he laughs at, and so judges it inferior by some standard.” For example, it is only a person who does not associate himself or herself with being short and fat can share a joke such as “short and fat women should not be wearing yellow clothes because they look like MTN booths”.

Further, Gruner (1997:6) states:

When we find humour in something, we laugh at the misfortune, stupidity, clumsiness, moral or cultural defect, suddenly revealed in someone else, to whom we instantly and momentarily feel “superior” since we are not, at that particular moment unfortunate, stupid, clumsy, morally or culturally defective and so on. To feel superior in this way is “to feel good”; it is to “get what you want.” it is a win!

Because of stereotyping, some jokes articulate a dichotomy of hurtful or harmless that resonates with Freud’s category of tendentious or hostile jokes and non-tendentious or innocent jokes (Freud 1960:96 - 100). In non-tendentious or innocent jokes, “the joke is an end in itself and serves no particular aim, in the tendentious or hostile jokes it does serve an aim” (1960:132). This quotation suggests that not all jokes are innocent as some jokes may serve an aim which can be positive or negative. In addition, Freud (1976: 140) states:

Where a joke is not an aim in itself – that is, where it is not an innocent one – there are only two purposes that it may serve, and these two can in themselves be subsumed under a single heading. It is either a hostile joke (serving the purpose of aggressiveness, satire, or defence) or an obscene joke, serving the purpose of exposure.

This study also used the feminist literary approach in addition to the other two theories. Many scholars have tried to define feminism differently in terms of it being an ideology and a

movement. As an ideology, it indicates “the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men” (Hornby, 2010:5). Odonkor and BampohAddo (2014) contend, “Feminist ideology preoccupies itself with the liberation of womenfolk from the yoke of masculine domination” (2014:123). Hooks (2000) states that “feminism is a movement to end sexism, sex exploitation, and oppression” (2015:315). According to Chilala (2020), feminism as a movement is concerned with issues such as discrimination, objectification, oppression, patriarchy, stereotyping, inter alia. From the definitions of feminism either as a movement or as an ideology given, this study wishes to look at feminism as a movement. It is more inclined to Chilala’s definition as it encompasses most of the aspects this study wishes to bring to the fore.

In essence, feminism talks about making a positive change in society through betterment of women and as a mouthpiece to champion the cause of equality between men and women. It advocates for human rights in all spheres of life. Bressler (1994) argues that women can only free themselves by challenging the literary established canon that helps shape the images of female inferiority and oppression engrained in patriarchal cultures.

The main aims of feminism are threefold. The first one looks at equal rights, privileges and living conditions for all sexes: male gender, female gender and transgender people. The second one advocates for sameness in levels of power, wealth and influence. The third aim is to bring about change of hostile social attitudes that are derogatory, oppressive, offensive and annoying like genital mutilation and domestic gender in order to balance the inequality and restore the lost gender symmetry. Drawing on the third aim of feminism given above, this study brings out examples of Zambian memes that do not just have positive connotations about women but also have remarks that are derogatory, offensive, marginalise and objectify them. Hence, these places women at an angle where they are subjected to feel that they are less human than men. The continuous sharing of memes with negative connotations, for example may be harmful not only to woman but also to men as they promote hostile social attitudes.

Feminism sees through the madness of memetic jokes on social media as a representation of gender disparities. For Millett (1970), women must revolt against the power centre of culture that is male dominated by breaking down existing structures that tend to see women as passive, meek and weak. Of importance to this study is a category of jokes falling under sexist humour. Sexist humour has been an integral part of many patriarchal cultures for centuries. Sexist humor

demeans, insults, stereotypes, victimizes, and/or objectifies a person based on his or her gender (LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998).

According to LaFrance and Woodzicka (1998), the subtle yet staggering association between sexism and humour has surfaced, indicating that sexist humour, despite its seemingly inoffensive and spontaneous appearance, can have serious and damaging consequences. In as much as the memes are meant to have a positive response to recipients by creating psychological relief through laughter and mirth, some memes about women on social media may bring to the fore glaring injustices, disrespect and mockery. More importantly, a total lack of consideration for women in thought and deed as some may have derogatory, marginalising and demeaning remarks making the area of this study an important element worth looking into.

Importantly, women are more frequently the target of aggressive humour and the object of sexual humour than men (Cantor & Zillmann, 1973). Sexist humour is becoming more popular in mass media, workplaces, and informal social interactions. For example, type the words “sexist joke” into any web browser and a library of female denigration immediately appears. For this reason, sexist humour should not be taken lightly but addressed as a serious issue.

Jokes may be placed within the realm of social constructionism. Social constructionism or social construction of reality is a theory of knowledge of sociology and communication that examines the development jointly constructed understanding of the world. Social constructionism stipulates that a great deal of human life exists as it does to social and interpersonal influences (Gergen, 1985:265), whose central idea is that reality is socially constructed. Santaella (1996) argues that media images create an effect of reality, i.e. they make people believe in what they make them see. This means that in this context, a joke is a social construct. The current investigation also relied on social constructionism and assumed that words and images do not have any inherent meanings of their own instead, individuals and societies actively construct meanings and these meanings are more context rather than universal. Following this instance, all memes, their text and images were viewed as having strong socially created meanings that speak volumes about the social-cultural context they are constructed in.

It is possible in this regard to have a situation where what is considered a joke in one situation or context may not be considered a joke in another situation or context. Certain jokes may be offensive in some cultures while in others, they are considered worth laughing at, funny or amusing. Gergen (1985) argues that reality is socially constructed – that each society defines

reality the way it perceives it. Among the Lundas of Northwestern province of Zambia for example, it is believed that women are talkative and gossips who can bring disharmony in the society. This can be seen from the Lunda proverbs (Mutunda, 2016). Therefore, the Lunda society perceives this assertion as reality. Furthermore, Berger and Luckman (cited in Speed, 1991:400) state that people socially construct reality by the use of agreed and shared meaning communicated through language. This suggest that reality is socially constructed as people use agreed upon language and communicate in various ways. Institutions like the media play a vital role in reality construction. Discourses of the media are internalised in social practices thereby defining the identities of people. With the infiltration of several social media platforms, society is certainly influenced by media in numerous ways (Nigeria, 2013) and with such great influence; people's perspectives are changed, formed or upheld as necessary.

Another area of interest is gender stereotypes. Stereotypes often reflect viewers' observation of what people do in daily life (Eagly & Steffan, 2000). If viewers often observe a group of people engaging a particular activity, they are likely to believe that the attributes necessary for such activity is typical of that particular group. In other words, gender stereotypes like other social stereotypes are a reflection of perceivers' constant observation (Eagly & Steffan, 2000) and by extension mediated by media which has the capacity to play a primary role in the creation of realities, public opinion and maintenance of society (Nigeria, 2013). Basing on Nigeria's view, media has contributed to creation of gender stereotypes and realities causing harm especially where these created realities and public opinions are negative.

Gergen and Gerhen, (2012) notes that meanings are socially constructed via the coordination of people in various encounters, therefore it is always fluid and dynamic. Different definitions of a 'joke' given by various scholars' state that a joke only works within the cultural context in which it is produced. This study is also of the view that there are some jokes that one might not be able to appreciate, let alone understand, unless one has an idea of the cultural context in which they are produced. An example could be "Chimbuya", traditional cousinship in English. One may only understand and accept certain jokes if they are made through "*Chimbuya*". Beyond this, one may feel offended or insulted.

To say of something that it is socially constructed is to emphasise its dependence on contingent aspects of our social selves. It is to say: this thing could not have existed had we not built it; and we need not have built it at all, at least not in its present form. Had we been a different kind of society, had we had different needs, values interests, we might as well have built a different kind of thing, or built this one differently (Boghossian, 2001)

For example, while it is a biological fact that women can give birth, it is a social construction (constructivism) that women in most societies are expected to be better suited as dominant caregivers. The Zambians who form the Zambian society share a good number of memes on social media. If they choose to create memes that portray women in the negative, say as prostitutes or gold diggers, society takes that as reality. Hence, we come across negative stereotypes of men and women because of such vices. The same society can choose to create positive stereotypes of women on social media. In this regard, it is what society thinks and feels about women that eventually society comes to believe and accept women are. Because society feels and believes that women are liars, any rumour that comes out may have its source first attributed to women.

1.9. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.9.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

A descriptive research design was used. The study also employed a qualitative approach of data collection. This method of data collection was employed to yield empirical data to compliment the qualitative data. Only memes with an element of women portrayals were sampled for analysis in this study.

1.9.2 SAMPLE SIZE

The population of memes on Facebook and WhatsApp cannot be determined, as these are created and shared every minute of every day. However, not all memes shared have elements of women portrayals. Some are based on other themes or events. A sample of one hundred (100) memes with an element of women portrayals shared as image macros, cartoons, template memes and print text (word only), were picked for analysis in this study. Fifty (50) were drawn from WhatsApp and fifty (50) were drawn from Facebook. The study sampled an addition of eight (8) memes were sampled. These did not have an element of women portrayals. However, they were meant to help in the analysis of some findings. It is important to note that confirming the originality and origin of these memes on social media was difficult as these continue gravitating from one social media platform to another. In many cases, the research observed that Facebook was the source of the memes copied and shared on WhatsApp platforms.

1.9.3. SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

Purposeful sampling was used to obtain meme samples from Facebook and WhatsApp. In addition, in order for a meme to be picked, it had to have the following quality:

- i. An element of women portrayal except for the additional eight (8) memes.
- ii. Shared as print text, template memes, image macros and cartoon form. No audio or video memes were used.
- iii. Authored or shared by Zambians.

As indicated earlier, it was difficult to determine that Zambians authored some memes due to author fluidity. In few cases however, one could determine the originality of some memes as being purely Zambian because they alluded to the events that happened in Zambia. Other memes were written using Zambian languages. Although it is possible that some memes were just adapted to the Zambian situation.

1.9.4. DATA COLLECTION

The study was a desk research. All the jokes subjected to analysis in this study with a portrayal of women were drawn from online sources namely, Facebook and WhatsApp. Popular meme focused websites were used to generate a shortlist of memes. The researcher did a general visual scanning of Facebook and WhatsApp as well as scanning various group pages on Facebook where the researcher was a member. These were Love and Living in Zambia, Zambian Weddings and Kitchen Party, Real life and Hot Issues Discussion Forum with Tina Banda, *Insaka Ya Chupo* Bedroom Issues and Relationships 25 & above, Barotse Memes, Ken Dumbo Comedy, Zambian Memes and many others. Whatsapp groups such as Literature in English (LIE) Group Joke Forum, *Mikwae ba Mbunga*, Graduates Chat Room, Lozi Versus Tonga Western Province, and Ex-Holy Cross Secondary School Girls 1990 / 2000 Forum. Electoral Commission of Zambia (E.C.Z) Master Trainers' Forum to mention but a few were also helpful in data collection as memes were shared on these platforms.

Other memes were drawn from individual accounts owned by people who were friends to the researcher either on Facebook or on WhatsApp. In short, all memes with an element of women portrayal shared and authored by Zambians on Facebook and WhatsApp were sampled. One hundred fifty (150) memes written in both English language and Zambian language were

collected to allow the researcher to have a wider choice of memes with portrayals of women. As earlier alluded, eight (8) memes without elements of women portrayals were sampled to help in the analysis of some findings. After studying and analysing the content, a final sample of one hundred (100) memes with an element of women portrayals were picked. What featured in each meme was downloaded before importing it into the gallery page while those written as print text only were typed and saved in a folder created for data storage.

The collection exercise was undertaken over a period of ten months (January 2019 to October 2019) except for the eight (8) memes without women portrayals, which were picked in January and February 2020.

1.9.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was done immediately after data collection. Memes consist either written words with either an image or without. Therefore, analysing memes entails the analysis of words (in the form of phrases or sentences either independent or with the image). This point was significant for the present study, internet memes in the form of image macros and cartoons utilise textual and visual elements simultaneously, in order to create humour and as such, any attempt to separate these properties would be unwise. Such memes were collected as a single unit. It is worth noting that combination of visual and textual aspects work together to either challenge or reinforce one another. A photos gallery was opened for analysis as most of the memes were in form of image macros that utilise both visual and textual elements to create humour. The work was analysed manually.

Thematic analysis was chosen for data analysis due to its compatibility with large data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, thematic analysis is compatible with various theoretical standpoints, allowing for superiority, social constructionism and feminist literary approach to be taken. With a final sample of one hundred (100) memes shared as template memes, print text, cartoons and image macros collected, Analysis was done in six stages.

The first step was to familiarise oneself with the data as Crabtree and Miller, 1999 states. The researcher went through the data in order to be familiar with it. The sample of one hundred (100) memes was read repeatedly. The researcher gained a high level of familiarity with the content.

Categorisation of units was done after the familiarisation with the content in the second stage by generalisation of the initial codes. The data set, codes relating to the content or subject of the memes were generated for each unit. The researcher simplified and focused on specific characterisation of the data. Important sections of the text were identified and attached as they relate to a theme.

The third phase involved the searching of themes. The researcher developed a list of codes across the data. This phase involved sorting and collating coded data into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The codes were later examined with the aim of searching for broader themes. Some codes fitted together at a broader level. As Braun and Clarke note, this phase re-focuses the analysis, working towards the identification of themes and sub-themes from initial codes.

The fourth stage was reviewing the themes. The researcher reviewed coded data for each theme. This was done to see if they formed a coherent pattern (King, 2004). Individual themes become valid if identified themes reflect meaning evident in the data set.

The fifth stage involved defining and naming themes. The researcher determined the aspect of data captured by each theme and identified what was of interest. Broad themes such as gender stereotypes and patriarchal messages finally came up. Gender stereotype theme was further broken into sub themes such as women as prostitutes, cheats, gossips, sex objects, materialistic, gold diggers, liars, pretenders and many more. Some themes with similar connotations were merged to form one category. For example, themes such as women as lovers of money, women as gold diggers, women as materialistic were merged to form one theme “Women as lovers of money”.

Finally, eleven (11) categories emerged from the analysis. These were women as lovers of money, dependent on men, cheats, sex objects, gossips, prostitutes, dangerous, liars, talkative, good and supportive and others, Once the researcher had fully established the themes, the process of producing a report began. This was the last stage. The researcher wrote a detailed report based on each theme. The researcher used these themes later for discussion. The report provided a concise, coherent and logical account of the data within and across the themes derived from the emergent categories of women portrayals in the study.

1.10. DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Disparagement humour** - Disparagement humour refers to remarks that (are intended to) elicit amusement through the denigration, derogation, or belittlement of a given target (Ferguson & Ford 2008, 283).
- Emoji** - a set of pictographs of faces objects and symbols.
- Emoticon** - punctuation marks, letters, and numbers used to create pictorial icons that generally display an emotion or sentiment (*Oxford Advanced learner's Dictionary 8th Edition*, 2010:479).
- Femme fatale** - Any irresistibly attractive woman, especially one who leads men into danger or disaster (Barthes, 1977:13).
- Image macro** - An image featuring a text overlay (Davison, 2012).
- Meme** - Units of popular culture that are circulated, imitated, and transformed by internet users, creating a shared cultural experience (Shifman, 2013:367).
- Internet meme** - A piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission (Davidson, 2009).
- Sexism** - Prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender (Corcoran & Roberts, 2015).
- Sexist humour** - Humour that denigrates, demeans, stereotypes, oppresses, or objectifies women (LaFrance and Woodzicka, 1998).
- Net speak** - A hypernym for a variety of slangs that have mainly originated in digital platforms such as mobile phones and online chat rooms (Crystal, 2011).
- Text speak** - One of the sub varieties of Net speak often used in memes known for its extensive use of clippings, acronyms, contractions and letter homophones (Procházka, 2014).

1.11. CONCLUSION

This chapter gives background information to social media that includes the two platforms Facebook and WhatsApp. This is followed by the statement of the problem, significance of the study, purpose of the study, research objectives, main research questions, theoretical framework, definition of terms, and finally, the methodology used in the study to collect process and analyse data. The next chapter reviews related literature from various scholars.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter covered the foundation matters of the study. This chapter presents the literature review relevant to the study. It reviews related literature from various scholars from Zambia. It is however, necessary to review what has been written on the subject, not only in Zambia but also elsewhere in the world. In all the studies reviewed, researchers came up with different findings. However, nothing has been done on the portrayal of women in Zambian memes on social media particularly Facebook and WhatsApp. Therefore, a review of literature is important to help us demarcate the boundaries of this study. The gap, which this study seeks to fill up in question form is, how are women portrayed in Zambian memes on social media platforms Facebook and WhatsApp? In addition, link it to what already exists or what has been done by other researchers such as studies on how women are portrayed in Zambian novels, songs and proverbs and even in comedy.

2.1. REVIEW OF ZAMBIAN LITERATURE

This literature review begins with studies on Zambian literature by Zambian scholars. They made their findings pertaining to portrayal of men and women. Studies reviewed under Zambian literature were on Zambian novels, Zambian music, Zambian proverbs and television comedy. In the four studies reviewed, gender stereotypes were a common sight. The stereotypes had both negative and positive connotations. Zambian authors in their studies had shown that while there are instances where men and women are portrayed in both negative and positive light, women are associated more with negative images than men were.

Written media has been one of the perfect means for conveying to society gender perspectives in history. Chilala in his article *Through the Male Eyes: Gendered Styles in Contemporary Zambian Fiction* attributes the negative images of women to male writing tradition as he states “Available evidence suggests that, at least in the case of Zambia, there is no distinct women’s writing tradition in the case of a novel. The reasons for this are historical, and the stylistic

evidence only provides proof of a process that has developed over a period not more than forty years” (2013: 91). Further, Chilala adds that the emasculative style of Zambian novelists not only perpetuates but also reinforces the stereotypes about men and women and their relationships. Similar views were held by Mary Anne Ferguson who notes that, “In discussing the history of images of women in literature, they reflect the masculine vision; masculine images have established our literary tradition and have controlled both male and female authors citing even among female authors who have no distinctively feminine tradition – male attitudes persist” (cited in Chilala 2013:62). Chilala further asserts that, in the light of the above content, this view is relevant to the Zambian situation, adding:

The male writing tradition has influenced not only the stylistic features of creative writing, but also the portraiture of male and female characters, as well as the relationship between male and female characters. While female characters are generally portrayed in negative terms as gossips, weak vessels, cowards, gold diggers, manipulators and destroyers of men, concerned with trivialities of life, inter alia, men are portrayed in more positive terms as brave, decisive, strong and concerned with serious matters of life, among other images (92).

With the above said, one would wonder why female authors also used the male writing tradition. However, according to Chilala (2006), the female authors were emulating the early Zambian novelists who happened to be male. These too followed in the footprints of early African writers such as Chinua Achebe. He further states that *Things Fall Apart*, along with other Achebe – authored novels such as *Arrow of God*, largely influenced the African writing tradition that was reflective of the patriarchy in the African social experience. Achebe and other African writers however, were also influenced by the trends in the West especially English writing tradition that was male dominated. Women were portrayed as witches and dangerous schemers who have the power to destroy Kingdoms. Example being Lady Macbeth, Helen of Troy, and Clytemnestra the schemer (Homer 151). This femme fatale concept has been used especially in Western culture. According to Barthes (1977:13), femme fatale is any irresistibly attractive woman, especially one who leads men into danger or disaster.

Women are stereotyped using this male construct thereby perpetuating male dominance. With this history of the writing tradition that is male dominated, one would argue that the trend of creating negative stereotypes of women has been followed from way back to the latest forms of communication on social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

Chilala also dealt with women portrayals in a study entitled, *An Analysis of Gender Issues in Zambian Literature in English*, (2006) where he analysed six Zambian novels. He states that women are portrayed as gold-diggers, 'witches', seductresses, gossips, petty, weak, subservient to men, men's property, evil, cantankerous, hypocritical, and unreliable. Men are associated with authority and power over their wives, making decisions without their wives challenging them. Of the six texts, three are male-authored, these being: *The Accusing Finger* (Nyambe Wina, 1987), *Ticklish Sensation* (Gideon Phiri, 1973), and *Changing Shadows* (Henry Musenge, 1984). The other three are female-authored: *Behind the Closed Door* (Susan Chitabanta, 1988), *The Fight for Justice* (Josephine Bwalya Mucehelemba, 2003) and *Picking up the Pieces* (Maliya Mzyeche Sililo, 2003).

In the same study, Chilala states that the gender roles in the novels also follow the pattern of the image of the women in the three male-authored novels. The roles of male characters are superior to the female characters. This is compounded by the fact that the three novels are weaved around male establishments, which favour men over women. The male superior role extends to matters of physical strength and authority while women are seen as submissive, mothers, doing tasks such as cooking, drawing water, sweeping and not given a voice to question their husbands' decisions.

Additionally, Chilala states that one thing that may strike a reader when reading some Zambian novels is the male writing tradition, generally perpetuating the negative stereotypes projected about women. There is objectification of female characters. For example, women are talked about as if they are objects to be admired, owned and used by men. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Eleventh Edition* defines objectification as "the act of treating people as if they are objects, without rights or feelings of their own" (2010:1012). The viewer bestows the word object as not having any value of its own except that upon it (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009). According to Chilala (2006), there is also a tendency to describe the anatomical parts of the female characters in sensual terms. This may also be seen in some memes where women's body parts are analysed starting from the face, the breasts, hips and buttocks. Mills (1995) refers to this as fragmentation of the female anatomic parts. Many times, it is done alongside male focalisation. Lemish (2008) postulates: "A woman has long been regarded as a sexual being who can only be evaluated on the basis of her appearance."

This study is in agreement with Chilala's (2006) study as it also deals with gender stereotypes. Women are portrayed negatively with positive connotations only seen when women are treated

as objects or when they are taken as sexual beings. The textual difference is that Chilala's study centred around Zambian novels while this study is based on Zambian memes. However, it has given the researcher an insight into best ways to analyse gender stereotypes.

In a study entitled *Standing in the Circle: Images of Old People in African Literature* (2014), Chilala in his findings argues that in African literature the association of elderly people with experiential wisdom does not betray any gender bias. Both male and female elderly characters are treated as wise and respectable, and deserving of respect. They are perceived and projected as problem solvers, builders of social cohesion, reservoirs of cultural norms, father and mother figures (or patriarchs and matriarchs), and the first as well as the last for those seeking guidance on matters of life. Examples being Old Nana and Loliwe Kuzwe in *The Dilemma of the Ghost* and *Ticklish Sensation* respectively.

However, Chilala further states that the elderly males had more authority and by extension received more respect than elderly females. This was largely because the narratives unfold in the patriarchal African social context where power, wealth and authority were generally associated with men. He cites examples such as the *ndichie* in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* which was a male establishment as was a group of elders in Ngugi's *Black Hermit*. It was only in the absence of male elders that female elders took over the responsibility of guiding the young people. Women are understood to be substitutes.

Based on the findings by Chilala, one would argue that women are associated with being weak and are a second choice after men in society. This study is also of the view that although old women like Chielo in *Things Fall Apart* were respected, women were still treated as weak vessels who had no say in running the affairs of the community. Weakness and laziness were regarded as a feminine trait. Hence, the term *agbala* to mean 'woman' was used for lazy men like Unoka. The study by Chilala relates to the present study as it seeks to bring out the positive and negative images of both old men and women in African literature. However, the present study is more focused on female gender not only the old but also the middle aged and the young as well.

In his study entitled "Marriage, Gender and Freedom in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House: A Zambian Perspective*" (2003), Chilala deals with the question of gender relations in the context of marriage. Specifically the article examines the life of Ibsen character Nora, the protagonist of the play *A Doll's House*, and the dilemma she faces of choosing between individual freedom on one hand and family values and marital commitment on the other. She has to choose between

staying in an abusive marriage and leaving her husband and children to start a new life. Chilala sees Nora as an epitome of what many married Zambian women face: to stay in an abusive marriage or to leave; to report a wife batterer to the authorities or to stay silent and be the submissive wife.

Mutunda (2017) in a study entitled, *Woman of Resilience in Zambian Male Fiction: A Feminist Reading of Binwell Sinyangwe's A Cowrie of Hope* is of the view that African novelists have been seen over the years to be biased in the way they portrayed female characters in their novels. In the same vein, Feminist critics point out that African – male writers are guilty of portraying women in negative and derogatory ways. For instance, citing Ebele Eko, Amouzou (2006) contends, “male writers invariably cast all women in the strict sexist roles of mothers and wives, submissive to the norms and regulations that restrict them” (2006:97). In the same breath, Ohale (2010) denounces the patriarchal bias in African literature by male writers, arguing that women have been cast in marginal roles and depicted as mere objects of sexual gratification, procreation and idle gossips. Sotunsa (2008:371)) corroborates this view when she affirms: “The pioneer African male writers mirrored patriarchy in their works. The man is often the protagonist and antagonist who dominates other people, while the women are made peripheral and their characters hardly developed.”

Challenging the aforementioned assertions, Mutunda (2017) states that not all African male writers have portrayed women in negative light. He further cites Godwin Uwah (1993) who says that some male writers have depicted female characters who have eschewed social convention and determinism to redefine or remake themselves within a given situation” (127). Ousmane Sembene Penda’s *God’s Bits of Wood* (1962) and Ahmadou Kourouma Salimata’s *The Suns of Independence* (1981), among others also tried to create positive images of women. In similar vein, Abena P.A. Busia (1986) criticises Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Arman’s novels that portray women as dependent on men.

Mutunda (2017) further shows how the Zambian male writer Binwell Sinyangwe like Sembene and Kourouma, In *A Cowrie of Hope* (2000) rejects the subjugation of the feminine species. The female characters are empowered by Sinyangwe who departs from the norm of negative portrayal of women. Through his literary work, Sinyangwe further uses education as a tool to free women and reset them in society. In Mutunda’s view, Sinyangwe goes out to recast a new image for both Zambian and African women.

The protagonist Nasula who is female is equipped with democratic values and becomes a role model and symbol of hope, not only for the empowerment of women but also for their total liberation from all negative perceptions and oppressions. She is portrayed as a remarkable woman, strong, competent, ambitious, resilient and courageous. Despite setbacks, she rejects all subjugation and male oppression and protests against the second position of their gender. Mutunda's study gave the researcher insight that not all the Zambian scholars or literature reviewed portrays women in the negative, positive portrayals are also prevalent as can be seen from studies such as this one. This also creates a balance in the study as concentration is not only on studies that have negative portrayals about women but positive ones as well. In the same way, not all Zambian memes have negative portrayals of women. Positive ones are also prevalent.

There have been studies on the portrayal of women in Zambian music. One of the seminal works on the topic in the book, *Women Know Your Place: The patriarchal message in Zambian popular songs* (1988) by Sara Longwe and Roy Clarke. The book focuses in part on the negative portrayal of women in Zambian popular music. The songs generally portray single women as promiscuous, parasites and destroyers of marriages (27), they generally exhibit a patriarchal viewpoint and pervasive assumptions of male supremacy: man as central and woman as peripheral and Other. The research led by Sara Longwe and Roy Clarke draws the following conclusions after analysing 94 songs (1988: 5).

- i. The proper place for a woman is as a wife, and in the home.
- ii. The husband is the head of the household and the wife should submit to him.
- iii. The husband's power in the home provides the basics for power of male establishment in wider society.
- iv. Single women in wage employment are out of control and must be brought under male authority.
- v. Women who are controlled by men are by definition misbehaving.
- vi. Sexual misbehaving originates in the natural sinfulness of misbehaving - women, men are the victims of sinful women.
- vii. Men must respect the patriarchal system by exercising their powers fairly and should not met out punishment without due cause.
- viii. Male supremacy is above question. It is given by custom and tradition and must be part of the natural order of the world.
- ix. The value of authority is the male voice.

In addition to Sara Longwe and Roy Clarke's findings, the current study cites some Zambian songs in agreement with their findings. Examples are: *Na Musonda* by P.K Chishala released on 4th April 2010, which portrayed a woman as being dangerous, to an extent that she was able to kill her husband for comfort. The femme fatale stereotype can be seen in this song. The other one is *Makali wanu* and *Half-Mwenye, Half-Munthu* both released in 2003 by Paul Nyirongo who was commonly known as Paul Ngozi. They all talk about how unfaithful women can be. Daniel Siulupwa commonly known as Danny Kaya also produced a song entitled *Better TV* released in December 2003, where a woman is portrayed as a prostitute who uses her body for money. In the same vein, General Kanene released a song in 2012 entitled *Vala ma Sox*. A woman is portrayed as a prostitute. Having sex with her is putting one's life at risk as one can contract the HIV virus or other STIs. Hence, the advice to use a condom which is being referred to as *ma sox* (socks). Kanene uses the term "mileage" which is used in relation to vehicles to refer to the miles covered by the vehicle after purchase. Hence, it is an indication of how long it has been on the road and how old or finished it is in relation to a female sex worker, suggesting that she has slept with countless men (Chilala, 2018).

There is evidence that women are portrayed positively in some Zambian songs. However, these are common only when they are used as objects, focusing their attention on specific parts of their bodies, which are sexually desired, admired, owned and used by men. An example is *Bana Mulenga* translated as Mulenga's mother by Pontiano Kaiche from his 2013 album *Insaka*, where he sings about the love he has for *Bana Mulenga* who has 'ma figure' implying buttocks that are admirable. Fast forward to September 2018, Elton Mulenga popularly known as Yo Maps featuring Mulaza Kaira with a stage name Macky 2 released a song entitled "Finally" where a man shows his gratitude for finding a good woman. Genesis 1 and 2 quoted in chapter 2:18 as the main scripture. However, objectification can be traced in the song.

There are similarities between the content of the songs cited by the researcher and findings by Sara Longwe and Roy Clarke. This is an indication that the tendency to create negative stereotypes of women started a long time ago and has continued to this day. Negative portrayals seem to outnumber the positive ones. These findings are also similar to Chilala and Mutunda's findings in their research on the images of women in folklore and Zambian novels. However, Sara Longwe and Roy Clarke's study left some gaps as they focused only on single women leaving out the married women. In addition, the study also focused on the songs with negative portrayals leaving out those with positive messages about these single women. However, the memes in this study look at how women, whether married or single, young or old are portrayed.

Proverbs are not an exception in the portrayal of women. The 73 Zambian ethnic tribes use proverbs in many contexts of life as wise sayings, educative sayings and teachings, warnings to mention but a few. There are many definitions of the word proverb but only two are cited in this study. Proverbs can be defined as, “short sayings which are often based on observable facts and heavily linked with the culture of the people” (Zakariyah, 2013:22). Akinmande (2005) defines a proverb as follows:

A proverb is a metaphorical horse in popular and approved saying which carries one beyond the surface meaning of a saying to discover the truth of ideas. It is an in-depth, carefully selected provocative thought that either commands, advises, rebukes or warns a person or thing to which it is applied.

As part of textual analysis, Mutunda’s study, *Portrayal of African Women in Folklore: A Case Study of Proverbs among the Lunda in the North-western Part of Zambia* (2016) was reviewed. It attempts to explore how Lunda women are portrayed in proverbs and to see whether proverbs discriminate against them or not. Mutunda grouped the proverbs under six themes namely marriage and procreation; women’s beauty and physical appearance; women’s immorality; stubbornness and destructiveness of women; women beating encouraged; and unreliability and unpredictability of women. The findings of the study illustrate both negative and positive attitudes of Lunda people towards women. However, despite his findings Mutunda (2016) still mentions that the proverbs are unbalanced because women are portrayed positively only in complementary roles in a few proverbs.

Additionally, he argues that most proverbs suggest that women are evil, dangerous, unfaithful or morally loose, unreliable, untrustworthy; thus, intellectually inferior. The implication is that men usually use these stereotypes as grounds to legitimise their authority over women. The proverbs further suggest the senselessness of women’s thought and actions. This simply demonstrates the society’s misconception about women. In other instances, though very few, women are presented positively and in complementary terms such as carers or nurturers, homemakers or caretakers, and many more.

For instance, representing a woman as “hard-working” because she is multitasking and able to feed her family, or as “heart of the house” because she has borne children, is not a complement but one way of “luring” women to continue the “good” work. This means that men should continue to enjoy such “patriarchal dividends” as being the boss of the home, who does not consult the wife on important conjugal matters (e.g. child spacing or the number of children to

have) and abstaining from domestic chores (Mutunda, 2016). However, Mutunda states a change in social roles of many Lunda women playing leading roles in public and private sectors alike.

Basing the argument on Zakariyah's definition of a proverb, one would argue that the Lunda proverbs as well as other proverbs that portray women in both negative and positive terms might be considered as observable facts that are connected to the culture of the people. Hence, these stereotypes whether positive or negative continue to thrive through the years, either causing harm or promoting the female gender.

Comedy is another area where there has not been much written concerning women portrayals. The *Concise Oxford English Dictionary Eleventh Edition* (2004) defines comedy as "entertainment consisting of jokes and sketches intended to make an audience laugh." Many Zambian comedians have come up with ways to win their fans through comedy. Some comedians have created pages on social media platforms such as Facebook where they share jokes. These have become a source of entertainment to many people. Before the influx of jokes on social media, comedians in Zambia shared their jokes verbally in playhouses such as Lusaka Play House, on radio stations or national television. One such comedian is Bob Nkossa popularly known by the stage name Dorika.

Cheela Chilala's "*Dorika's metamorphosis the elusive potency of a comic character*" in *Joke Performance in Africa: mode, media and meaning*" (2014), shows how the Zambian comedian Bob Nkossa, in his performances as Dorika on Zambian television first portrayed Dorika as a prostitute, reckless woman, easy going, lover of money, illiterate, unmarried, uncultured, un and acceptable. Additionally, Dorika could not even speak English fluently. Despite being a man, Bob Nkossa created this female character with weak traits for the purpose of humour. Bob Nkossa later decided to transform the character Dorika and portrayed her as a good and independent woman who speaks good English, does not depend on men for financial support and encourages other women not to allow men to trample on them. Even after the transformation, women still do not want to be associated with Dorika as they relate the character to old Dorika who was portrayed negatively and had bad traits.

Chilala further states that Nkossa's onomastic decision of the name Ndaifulila problematises the image of the character Dorika as it qualifies her to be a woman of loose morals. This study is similar to other studies that indicate that images of women characters have been negatively stereotyped. This also relates to the present study as it is centred on a female character and

discusses the portrayal of the woman in question. It is on this account that this study has been reviewed. However, Chilala based his study more on metamorphosis of a comic character while the present study views all women in general and is interested in the way they are portrayed in memes not the change in their character.

In the article “Anglophone Zambian Prose Fiction: Transition or Tradition?” (2019) Chilala focuses more on the question of the trends and characteristics of Zambian literature in English and whether they constitute a tradition or they are indicative of a literature undergoing a transition into a tradition. Gender issues are not a key concern of the work although the work does not dismiss the topicality of gender in Zambian society in general and Zambian literature in particular. Even his earlier work which explores traditional Zambian oral literature and its role in social and character development of individuals and society, “The African Narrative Tale as a Tool of Education” (2011) Chilala does not concern himself with the issue of gender or how women are portrayed but focuses more on the role of oral narratives in education.

From the Zambian literature reviewed, the findings show that there are similarities in the way women and men have been portrayed in novels, songs, and proverbs. The studies conclude that portrayals of women are negative except where they are viewed as beautiful. Men on the other hand carry the label of the ideal gender characterised by power and authority.

2.2 REVIEW OF AFRICAN LITERATURE

Apart from Zambian scholars who have also conducted studies on the subject of portrayal of women in various spheres of life, other scholars outside Zambia but within Africa have also conducted studies on the subject of portrayal of women. The present study reviewed African literature: African novels, proverbs, films and internet jokes. In their studies, African scholars have tried to show how the images of both the male and the female gender have been depicted. Both positive and negative portrayals are evident. However, their findings are similar to the findings by Zambian scholars. Women are more associated with negative portrayals than men. However, some African feminist writers and other male authors have tried to change this trend by creating female characters with positive traits.

As earlier mentioned by Chilala (2006), the negative portrayal of women was influenced by the writing tradition set by early African writers such as Chinua Achebe and other African writers. These were also influenced by the trends in the western especially English writing

tradition that was male dominated. Like Chilala, Frank (1987) tries to assign similar reasons for this negative portrayal of women in African novels. She says,

Until recently, most African novels have been written by men and they tend to focus on social, historical and political rather than personal or domestic themes. This explains why in most African novels; women have been defined by their relations to men. They are someone's daughter, wife, mother, shadowy figure who hover on the fringes of the plot. They are sucking infants, cooking or plaiting hair... [they fall] into a specific category of female stereotypes of...men appendage, and prostitutes or courtesans.

Little (1980) also adds that women in male-authored African novels tend to fall into specific categories of female stereotypes. They are girlfriends or good time girls, workers such as secretaries or clerks, wives and other male appendages, prostitutes or courtesans, just as is found in most popular African Language Arts. However, African feminist writers such as Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta and Ama Ata Aidoo have tried to challenge this female stereotype by portraying female characters as strong and independent.

As earlier alluded, Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, and many other African authors created women as characters who are voiceless, objects of scorn, pets that can be controlled and beaten by their husbands, yet still lived a happy life and without authority in decision making. Commenting further on the glaring stereotypical portrayal of women in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Rose Acholonu (2003:39) states that:

In *Things Fall Apart*, we see Okonkwo as a typical tyrant. He rules and directs his wives in the manner of cattle herdsman. He roars like "the thunder" and administers physical blows to his wives at the slightest provocation. The wives live in awe of him. Achebe, true to tradition and precepts of Igbo custom seems to condone this inhuman treatment of Okonkwo's wives. However, in his last novel *Anthills of Savannah*, he changes his perspective and creates Beatrice a revolutionary woman in search for social change and power juxtaposing the characters that he created in his novels earlier.

Mary Ebum Kolawole Modupe (1997:93) in *Womanism and African Consciousness* highlights a new image given to women by male writers: "Some men have shown understanding and sincerity in the need to portray female characters as active, heroines in making meaningful contributions to society." In the same vein, Sembene Ousmane in *God's Bits of Wood* (1960),

presents a certain batch of women led by Ramatoulaye who had a voice and backed up the strike started by railway workers. In addition, Denise Brahimi and Anne Trevarthen helped in the fight for the betterment of their husbands' working conditions and those of their families. Armah's *Two Thousand Seasons* (1973) depicts women in rebellion against the sexual abuses on the fair sex in order to preserve the woman's dignity. Basing on the images of women created by these African writers, it is evident that women are not weak, lazy or naive but fighters, active and capable of bringing change in the society.

Aguessy like Mutunda conducted a study on Sinyangwe's *A Cowrie of Hope* (2000). The study was entitled *Combat for Formal Education* (2014). He notes that the majority of male writers such as Sembene Ousmane, Chinua Achebe to name but a few, through their fiction displayed images of submissive women. He however, mentions that Cheikh Hamidou Kane, in the *Ambiguous Adventure*, has introduced to his readership La Grande Royale who has greatly influenced the decisions of the community as she gives the impression of being a strong woman and that has power. In this line, one can contend that it is because she is a princess. On the other hand, there is Sinyangwe who has empowered a female character and reset her within the community by using education and indicating that women are aware of the fact that they are the true artisan of their destiny.

Aguessy contends that the Zambian novelist Sinyangwe is also one of the rare men in Literature who In *A Cowrie of Hope*, portrays Nasula as a strong and hardworking woman who despite coming from the very bottom of the class hierarchy was determined to ensure that her daughter Sula gets formal education. In analysing the text, Aguessy's study is in agreement with Mutunda (2017) who notes the portrayal of Nasula, the protagonist in the novel as a strong and determined character. It is worth noting that women have been portrayed positively challenging the negative image of women as portrayed by other African authors. Aguessy who based her study focusing on Nasula who epitomises the image of a strong, hardworking and determined woman in *Cowrie of hope* and not on her negative side. In the same way, this study wishes to create a balance by not only sampling memes with negative portrayals but also those positive connotations about women,

A study conducted by Nayef and El-Nashar (2014) entitled *Examining the contents of Egyptian Internet Jokes* observed that the language of jokes, as an institution largely controlled by men is manipulated and used to disparage and promote violence against Egyptian women. The research sought to deal with sexist jokes, what they contain and their impact on the target

audience. The finding was that jokes are always deemed intentional and, for contemporary Egyptians, one of those intentions is to maintain the status quo and masculine hegemony (133). Of particular interest, however, is the revelation that the tendency to deride Egyptian women – be they girls, wives, and mothers in law, professionals or even those partaking in public sphere activities is a recent phenomenon (135). The researchers imply that as their locale modernised, men felt threatened by the increasing sophisticated and liberated women, thus demeaning jokes came in handy to help tame them without feeling the need to apologise (132).

The aspect of internet jokes, women portrayals and sexist jokes that disparage women in Nayef and El-Nashar (2014) study creates a relationship with the current study which also deals with internet jokes referred to as memes and how they portray women. The difference is that this study borders its perimeters on Egyptian internet jokes while the present study deals with Zambian memes (internet jokes). Both studies share the same views on sexist jokes. They state that sexist jokes carry marginalising and demeaning remarks towards women. Although these remarks are also used against men, women seem to be more targeted than men.

Nigeria is one of the countries in Africa that has promoted its film industry known as Nollywood. Chinyere Stella Okunna (1996) conducted a study entitled *Portrayal of women in Nigeria Home Video Films: Empowerment or Subjugation?* In this study, Okunna states that the portrayal of women in the media is examined through selected Igbo language films. She states that the image of women in Igbo films has been found to be very negative and capable of negatively influencing the perception of women among the large audience of video films in the country. Okunna further states that with the recognition of the communication media as a critical area of concern in women's empowerment, it becomes worrisome that media in Nigeria is still dominated by stereotyped portrayal of gender relations and negative images of women.

Several textual and discourse analysis of Nigerian women films (Okunna, 1996; Ogunleye 2003; Ezeigbo, 1996, Azeez, 2010) have argued that Nigerian films portray and position Nigerian women stereotypically and negatively. In line with a feminist ideological perspective of the media then, the films position women at the bottom of the power hierarchy in a way that reinforces their domination and suppression. Scholars like Mutunda (2017) and Frank (1987), the several textual and discourse analysis acknowledge that women are presented in complimentary terms. They are to be home and prepare nice meals for their husbands. In the same vein, Okunna (2002) states that not only are women underrepresented as media professionals; they are also portrayed in traditional roles that reinforce gender stereotypes.

Extensive research has shown that media portrayals often reflect the cultural stereotypes that depict women as weak, passive and dependent (Nigeria, 2013) and as Amobi (2013) explains, women characters are seldom given prominence in the media, they are often presented in stereotypical ways as domesticated, victims and helpless.

In addition, Diop (2009:89) citing from other literature on Nigerian films identifies the stereotypical images Nigerian films purvey of women such as seductive threats to the virtue of men, witches with evil powers, weak and treacherous images. A good example is that of a Nollywood film entitled, *High Way to the Grave* (2000), where the protagonist Sonia takes many men to the grave. The image of a femme fatale is portrayed through Sonia. On occasions when they are portrayed as professionals, Diop notes that they are often shown as incapable of managing in the domestic sphere.

Clearly, Nigerian films serve to perpetuate the private-public dichotomy between women and men. As Jekayinfa (1999) further explains, Nigerian women are often projected as inferior, subservient and less important because the society does not require them to be breadwinners or decision makers and so it seems they have less prominent and important roles to perform in society compared to their male counterparts. Having analysed the studies on Nigerian movies, it is evident that the tendency of negatively stereotyping women is found almost in all the social contexts as this can be seen from the studies reviewed. This suggests that the trend is common and has continued to be used to date. Moreover, it can be seen from the latest forms of communication such as social media platforms.

Many scholars have conducted studies on proverbs. In the review of Zambian literature, examples of studies on proverbs and how images of women are depicted were given. Scholars outside Zambia have carried out research on how proverbs portray women. Hussein's (2009) investigation of Ethiopian, Sudanese and Kenyan proverbs concludes that there are strong intertextual and intercultural threads between the representation of women's roles, statuses and identity, and that the linguistic resources, as found in proverbs are used to perpetuate inequality. This finding is similar to the findings by Zambian scholars.

Diabah and Amfo (2015) also examined the representation of women as espoused in a number of Akan (Niger-Congo, Kwa) proverbs. Their research was to analyse traditional views on the perceptions and roles of the women in Akan society and explore the interrelation between language, gender and culture. Using a (Feminist) Critical Discursive Approach, 62 Akan proverbs about women, selected from both written and oral sources examined, the findings

suggest that Akans tend to present women in particular stereotypical ways with these gendered proverbs, most of which can be interpreted as derogatory, negative or subservient.

It is evident from the studies reviewed on proverbs that men have looked down upon their female counterparts. They have enjoyed the privilege of superiority over women. However, Cecilia Addei and Isaac Addei conducted a study that attempts to bring to the fore most of the language arts that celebrate women to help change the negative perception towards the African woman in a study called *Celebration of African Women in Proverbs, Wise sayings and Folktales: An Example of Akan Tradition in Ghana* (2010). Cecilia and Isaac started by giving examples of proverbs that support subordination of women before discussing proverbs celebrating women.

Proverbs that support subordination of women

1. *Xbaa te se ohuriie; xnom mogya na xmma mogya.* (A woman is like the tsetse fly; she drinks blood but she doesn't give blood). This portrays women as parasites always at the receiving end.
2. *Mmaa pz dz kyiri ka* (Women enjoy themselves but they hate to pay for indulgence). This portrays women as cheats.
3. *Xbaa wx mpempem a, xbarima na xhwz ne sox* (However rich a woman may be, it is the man that controls her). Whatever a woman may do, she needs a man. This portrays women as dependent on men.

The following Akan proverbs, wise sayings and folktales below celebrate women:

Proverbs

1. *Xbaa mmxdemmxfox na neba hy n'akyiri a, xsoa nnuoxma* (if a hardworking woman puts her child on her back, she carries a load at the same time). This proverb portrays a woman as industrious.
2. *Xbaatan na xnim dez ne mma bedie* (It is the mother who knows what children will eat). Women are caring.
3. *Xbaa na xwo xbarima* (It is a woman who gives birth to a man). The woman is a key player in a man's life as she makes him who he is.

Wise saying

1. *Xbarima bi ara bzyz yie a, na efiri neyere* (A man's success depend on his wife).

Folktales

2. Akan shows that God is believed to have a daughter not a son. In addition, other tales portray women to be faithful helpers to men.

The study by Cecilia and Isaac does not rule out the fact that women are portrayed negatively in Akan proverbs, wise sayings and folktales but it argues that although negative portrayals of women are there as it can be seen from the first three examples, there are also a lot of these proverbs, wise sayings and tales that celebrate women. Therefore, emphasis should not just be on the negative perspective but the positive as well.

Diabah and Amfo (2015) *Examination of the representation of women as espoused in a number of Akan (Niger-Congo, Kwa) proverbs* and Mutunda's findings in *Portrayal of African Women in Folklore: A Case Study of Proverbs among the Lunda in the North-western Part of Zambia* are quite similar because their findings portrayed women more negatively. It is also important to note that although Diabah and Amfo did a study on Akan proverbs, they dealt with Niger-Congo, Kwa while Cecilia and Isaac's is an example of Akan in Ghana. The present study is more related to Mutunda, Diabah and Amfo's studies because many of the Zambian memes have more negative portrayals of women than positive ones. Regarding Cecilia Addei and Isaac Addei's study, although it was focused on bringing out the positive side of the women portrayals, the examples given either positive or negative are similar to women portrayals in the memes.

2.4. REVIEW OF NON-AFRICAN LITERATURE

This study also reviewed non-African literature. The studies reviewed were based on women portrayals in various social contexts depicted in books, magazines, cinemas, music, proverb, online sexism, memes, video – games, and television. In most of the studies reviewed, women continue to play second - fiddle to men with negative stereotypes just as is the case in Zambian and African literature reviewed earlier.

Davis (1990) notes that any form of media is a microcosm of the dominant forces of society. Therefore, it is likely to promote the culture of the dominant force. The Bible for instance, is a microcosm of various media expressions on women. In the Bible, women are victims of patriarchy. Jesus feeds a multitude. Five thousand in total. This number does not include women and children (Matthew 14:13 - 21). This biblical text is packed and revealing. Firstly, it unveils the portrayal of women in the media. Secondly, it shows that the downgrading of women is both biblical and historical. Lastly, its historicity confirms and conforms to the standards set by the male dominated culture.

The Evangelist, Matthew, parallels the value of women to that of children. By nature, children are helpless, dependent, homeless, directionless, visionless, naive, voiceless and more importantly, they cannot think for themselves. These are the characteristics similar to those of women as portrayed by Matthew. Matthew like other male theological and contemporary writers continues to walk the path of societal-rabblousing and downgrading of women. In their writings, they continue to canvass for support to consign women to the periphery of the community. Matthew also tries to confirm what a certain section of society thinks about women. He is just a mouthpiece of how society thinks and views women.

In another case, there is a biblical story in John 8:1 - 7 where the Pharisees and the teachers of the law bring a woman caught in adultery to Jesus with the intention of stoning her to death. However, Jesus says unto them, "He that is without sin among you, let him be the first to cast a stone at her". The woman is depicted as a prostitute. It is interesting that the man with whom the woman committed adultery with is left free. Accusatory stones are cast on the woman alone.

The two Biblical stories in Matthew and John show how the public looks at issues of gender. The angle with which the Bible views gender issues is the angle the other literature has taken in this study. The stories also illustrate how, in patriarchal societies such as the Jewish one, women continue to be mocked, insulted, condemned, and suppressed, using demeaning remarks or situations in a variety of ways for their views, way of life and specific actions. The tendency of placing the female character in either familiar surroundings (home) or in the public sphere throw light on common beliefs about the suitable context for a woman as well as persons accompanying her in these locations. The two biblical examples show unbalanced gender cases as the Jewish society showed bias against the female gender. However, this does not imply that the Bible only depicts women negatively; there are cases such as that of Mary, Ester, Ruth, and Naomi to mention but a few, who were portrayed as good women.

Jackie F. K. Lee's (2015) study *Chinese Proverbs: How are Women and Men Represented?* Examines the images of men and women represented in Chinese proverbs as found in a dictionary published in Hong Kong. Despite the absence of the under representation of women, gender inequality is evident in the stereotypical depiction of women, who are described as dependent on and submissive to men, and who are valued for their physical charm, chastity, domestic roles and ability to bear sons to continue the family line. For men, on the other hand, values are placed on their talents, friendship building and such personal attributes as bravery, modesty and kindness. Men's fondness for women is neutrally portrayed as unrestrained or romantic, reflecting the sexual objectification of women. Male supremacy is also evident in the common use of masculine generic constructions and male-firstness in Chinese proverbs.

In his conclusion, Lee states that it is commonly believed that proverbs provide advice and wisdom about personal and public matters through the social norms and beliefs presented. However, he found that not all proverbs offer good advice, as there are some that carry within them gender discrimination and stereotypes. The traditional images and stereotypes, nevertheless, do not accurately represent the status of women in Hong Kong today. The study also found the prevalence of masculine constructions and the male-first convention in Chinese proverbs.

Robyn et al (2016) in an article, *What Did He Mean by that? Humour Decreases Attributions of Sexism and Confrontation of Sexist Jokes* states that humour can actually make sexist messages more dangerous and difficult to confront than serious remarks. The study further states that although the content of the messages is the same, women are not equal to men. The humorous message decreased confrontation. The expression of sexism under the veil of humour makes it an insidious means of promoting expressions of prejudice. In addition, the study argued that sexist humour could be harmful based on sexist beliefs about the inferiority of women. Such humour portrays them through characteristics such as stupidity, illogical thinking, ignorance, or irresponsibility. Concisely, this literature suggests that gender representations are grounded in well-entrenched, historical constructions of femininity and masculinity as binary as well as hierarchical oppositions (Cirksena and Cuklanz 1992; Van Zoonen 1994). The researcher being a social media user agrees with remarks by Roby and others who believe that sexism hides under the vein of humour. In certain cases, the people that share memes use laughing emoji or acronyms LOL, sometimes kkkkkkkk to term the sexist messages as funny or to tame the readers so that they accept these remarks as mere jokes. This way, there is decreased confrontation.

Robyn, et al (2016) identified four key components of sexist humour in their article. Firstly, they state that such humour targets and ridicules women, emphasising their inferiority in comparison to men. Secondly, the targeting of women can be direct and explicit, but in many cases is implicit (i.e. uses stereotypical feminine prototypes such as 'blonde' or 'wife' without signifying explicitly that the joke deals with gender). Third, sexist humour employs traditional stereotypes in which women are portrayed as stupid, dependent, illogical, and nagging sexual objects. Finally, sexist humour not only emphasises that men and women have different features, in doing so it indicates that there is a clear hierarchy positioning women as inferior to men. This study on sexist humour conducted by Robyn, et al in 2016, brings out textual relationship with the present study as it also deals with sexist humour, gender stereotypes, ridiculing of women and objectification of women.

Tuchman (2000) in his study, *The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by Mass Media* surveyed the substantive content of mass media television, newspapers, magazines and advertising. According to findings of the study, the said forms of media largely ignore women or portray them in stereotypical roles of victims or consumer victims. The mass media symbolically annihilate women. He further notes that most mass media portrays women, if not all, in traditional roles, homemakers, and mother or if they are in the paid workforce, clerical and other pink colour jobs correspondingly. There are few if any depictions of strong female characters in positions of responsibility or authority even inside the home. Women are generally defined in terms of their relationship with men. This suggests that women are in the end dependent on men and incapable of living their own lives without men.

Advocating for academic research concerning gendered humour online, Shifman and Lemish explore the extent to which popular internet humour constructs sexist, feminist or post-feminist ideologies by means of a context analysis in *Between Feminism and Fun(ny)mism: "Analysing gender in popular internet Humour"* (2010). Although the sample indicates that men and women are mocked equally, perhaps suggesting a shift away from sexist humour, the researchers discovered that the jokes tend to reproduce stereotypical constructions of women and feminists. Shifman and Lemish's study positions internet humour as concurrently sexist and postfeminist (886). There is a theoretical relationship between the present study and Shifman and Lemish's study. Feminism creates the similarity. Fun(ny)mism is a part where some internet users who share memes with misogynistic content and mock women want readers to accept it as humour by using certain terms or emoji. In line with the same, this study is of

the view that the emoji included on the Zambian memes sampled is playing the role of taming the readers to accept the memes as amusing and not see the negatives attached to them.

Other scholars that have dealt with online jokes are Jessica Drakett, Brigette Rickett, Katy Day and Kate Milnes. Their article is entitled *Old Jokes, New Media – Online Sexism and Constructions of Gender and Internet Memes* (2018). The feminist research found that instances of online sexism and harassment are often reframed as ‘acceptable’ by constructing them as a form of humour making it similar to Roby et al’s (2016) study. The paper adopts the feminist, social constructionist approach to examine the content of popular internet memes creating a theoretical relationship with the current study. In addition, both studies are based on internet memes. This study added to more knowledge on how to analyse the memes and coming up with themes. However, the main emphasis of the study was on online sexism and gender constructions.

The Portrayal of Women in Facebook Memes (2020) is a study by Nowshin Jahan Etee where he stated that Facebook memes not only impart joy and laughter, but also sometimes some statements that convey hatred, sarcasm, viciousness, and vulgarity to women. Further, he found that some memes make indecent remarks and unpleasant comments about female bodies and the clothes worn by them in the disguise of humor. In addition, he found that Facebook memes portray women within some specific frames. However, those frames are not applicable for entire women folks. For example, he stated that not all women are very complicated to understand, they may not be jealous to other women, they may not dominate their partners, they may not present themselves as commodity or sex objects. These memes are establishing myths that are misleading and fabricated. Memes are using humor to conceal the disrespectful portrayal of women.

Nasrina Siddiqi et al (2018) in the study entitled *Analysing threads of sexism in new age humour: a content analysis of internet memes*, postulated that it is clearly evident that memes are more than simple jokes. Therefore, they should not be taken in a light-hearted fashion, as that essentially encourage and promote tolerance towards casual sexism by making it seem less harmful, derogatory or offensive. Furthermore, the recurrent creation and distribution of such memes at a global level, with open access to virtually all internet users can eventually stimulate sexist attitudes among masses. The fact that such memes are widely accepted supports Brodie’s (1996) assumption that ‘a meme that spreads successfully is often harmful’.

Thus far, studies on memes especially pertaining to women portrayals have been limited to specific locations and have not taken on the Zambian setting. As seen from the review of the related literature, the nearest parallels are studies about memes based on sexism, gender constructions and feminism (Shifman and Lemish (2010), Nayef and El-Nashar (2014), Church (2017), and Jessica et al (2018). Other studies focusing on women portrayals in other social contexts such as novels, songs, proverbs, films and comedy have shown that women are commonly under-represented, marginalised, or presented through narrow stereotypes (Chilala, 2006, Mutunda, 2016, Okunna, 1996). Davies (1985) argues that because literature ‘mirrors and recreates social, historical and economic realities’ it is one of the means by which negative attitudes and stereotypes of women are ‘perpetuated and created’. Internet memes are an interesting venue in which to explore these issues. This is because the way people consume and produce memes often shows that they relate to categories such as race, gender and class (Miltner, 2014; Phillips & Milner, 2017). Reviewing the literature from various scholars was helpful and vital to the current study as there was a relationship linking this study to other studies.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed Zambian, African and non-African literature. From the studies reviewed, women are portrayed in a stereotypical manner. It is also evident from the studies that the findings are similar in proverbs, novels songs, films, online sexism to mention but a few. Gender inequality is evident in the stereotypical depiction of women as they are associated more with negative portrayals. By contrast, men are depicted as breadwinners, full of power and authority. The studies reviewed also showed that women are portrayed in complimentary terms as helpers, good and subordinate. The current study has also highlighted the similarities and differences in terms of the textual content in the studies reviewed. The next chapter presents the types of internet memes.

CHAPTER 3

TYPES OF INTERNET MEMES

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter reviewed literature related to the present study by various scholars from Zambia, Africa and outside Africa. This chapter will present the types of internet memes used in this study. Lastly, conclusion of the chapter will be drawn.

3.1 TYPES OF INTERNET MEMES

Social media provides a veritable endless source of entertainment in form of internet memes. Internet memes are shared in a wide variety of types and formats. These are not limited to videos, twitter hashtags, image macros, animated Graphic Interface Format (GIF) emoji and emoticons. Because of these types of memes, Facebook and WhatsApp has increasingly incorporated these graphical means of communication and entertainment through shared posts. This study used four types of internet memes. These are image macros, cartoon memes, template memes and print text (word only) memes. The total number of the memes sampled is one hundred (100). Of the one hundred (100) memes, image macros, cartoons and template

memes have templates. While the print text (word only) do not have templates. An addition of eight (8) image macros were sampled to help in the analysis.

An Internet meme is thus comprised of multiple related instances; its creators take an item (text, image, or video) and change parts of it to input their own ideas, while keeping a consistent resemblance to the memetic group (Milner, 2016; Wiggins & Bowers, 2014). Memetic templates are essentially collective, as they are formulated among members of communities or groups with common cultural knowledge and affinities (Burgess, 2008). In fact, the ability to understand a meme instance often requires knowledge of cultural convention (Miltner, 2014; Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017). Individual input is required to create different instances of a meme and authors use the memetic template to express personal experiences or identities (Phillips & Milner, 2017). In short, memes allow the individual to use a collectively created template to deliver a personalised message.

3.2. IMAGE MACROS

The ideals of remixed still image internet memes can be reflected in text and image: the meme can be a phrase, a standalone image, or an image accompanied by text or expected style of text. This study has more memes in form of image macros than any other type. An image macro is quite simply “an image featuring a textual overlay” (Davison, 2012). Most of these images are simplistic, often low quality and mundane in style. They are not meant to be beautiful or particularly realistic, their focus is on the message. They are often multimodal. However, to single images, there are often “additional texts, images (.) added to enhance the meme’s contagious qualities” (Knobel & Lankshear, 2006:199).

Image macros are easily created, with a host of applications and websites that can automate the process of adding text to an image. Most image macro generators feature a selection of stock templates or characters for users to work with, allowing them to add their own text to an image, often using a particular mad-libs-style formulaic catchphrase associated with a particular ‘type’ of meme resemblance to the memetic group (Milner, 2016; Wiggins & Bowers, 2014). This dynamic locates internet memes between individual and collective creation.

Image macros have a set of stylistic rules for adding text to images. Some image macros involve adding the same text to various images, and others involve adding different text to a common image. This will be discussed in detail in the analysis. Internet memes serve as a humorous way

to have fun with context, words, images, meaning, symbols, culture and popular culture. The fact that it only needs an image of something or someone accompanied with a caption or text can generate different meanings. Internet memes also allow users to produce meanings according to the theme of the picture. However, in certain cases the user does not follow the language formula or themes but just shares to have fun with it. Many of the websites also facilitate the rating and sharing of image macros.

The main leverage for creating memes is provided by graphic editing software and the internet (generative layer). Software make the creation possible by having the necessary functions. The internet serves as a platform for sharing, where the meme can migrate, reach others and evolve. Image macros are able to thrive online because of their fecundity. Image macros use non-manipulated and manipulated images of people mostly depicting public figures or ordinary people in the society, historical figures, and celebrities. Pictures of real events or scenarios, or pictures of animals such as dogs and cats that are real or cartoon like images edited or manipulated using softwares are also a common sight. There are seventy (70) image macros out of one hundred memes in this study. Twenty five (25) out of seventy (70) memes have emoji. These communicate feelings and emotions of the sender. Below are examples:

EXAMPLES OF IMAGE MACROS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP.

Meme 1



Source WhatsApp on 2nd July, 2019.

Meme 2



Source FB on 4th March, 2019

Meme 3

Meme 4

I started fearing ladies the day my girlfriend introduced my blood brother to me as her cousin 😊



Source FB on 10th April, 2019

Baby , ati Mercy afuna six pack ya savanna , Monica naeve ati mumugulile Heinken then ine nikumwa Flying fish ..



Source Whatsapp on 5th May, 2019

Meme 5

Yowa boyfriend is over protective because he knows you're so easy to get mwana wa mai. Just a simple iphone and pizza. Imwe 🗨️



Source Whatsapp on 4th June, 2019.

Meme 6

Ba Gelo
Chimo na Mango
Iwe ulepbela ati ikapye
Kanshi bambi balelya na SALT...



Source FB 1st February, 2019.

Meme 7

Don't date a girl with a cracked phone screen cos that will be your first relationship project my brother...bye naya



Source Whatsapp on 12th May, 2019.

Meme 8

Bana chinyenga ba guy for free obvious nopowelamo virus elo iwe nau innocence wako, ubwele ukwatile sure. her parents even charge you bride price over second hand pussy



Source FB on 2nd May, 2019.

Meme 9

In order to have a Girlfriend nowadays....
My brother you must be alright
Physically, Emotionally, Mentally,
Kissically, Motorcally & Wallycally



Source FB on 4th June, 2019.

Meme 10

Once you hear people saying "His girlfriend is controlling him", just know that the relationship is going well 😊



Source Whatsapp on 5th January, 2019.

Meme 11

When you see your Mum's friend coming with hands in her chitenge just know she is here for mulomo and nothing else



Source FB on 3rd January, 2019.

Meme 12



Source Whatsapp on 3rd April, 2019.

Meme 13



Source FB on 2nd May, 2019.

Meme 14

A woman with a brain can turn a broke man to a millionaire but a beauty without brain can turn a millionaire into a beggar



Source FB on 5th August, 2019

Meme 15

there is nothing like girls
prefer Tall guys to short ones
just get money and you will be
tall in ways you can't
understand



Source: FB on 3rd February, 2019.

Meme 16

Ladies who buy their own airtime,
data, food & pay their own saloon
bills. Where do you live?



Source: FB on 4th February, 2019.

Meme 17

"If my body is the temple of
God"....."who am I to limit the number
of people who want to enter?" 😊



Source: Whatsapp on 4th February, 2019.

Meme 18

Never say all he wanted was sex
because all you offered is sex. Did
you try giving him money or your
father's land and he refused?



Source: FB on 12th July, 2019

Meme 19

I don't know why ladies are so protective about their things.
I just touched her cucumber & we almost fought but she
always uses my Vaseline but shilandapo



Meme 20

Right now there's a slay queen on top of your dad that's
making him blame pt for not feeding the family...my sister
open those legs too n feed your mom



Source FB on 10th April, 2019.

Meme 21

Ladies will find Money in the Pocket of their Husband's Clothes, They will not even tell the Husband but if its a Condom, the whole World would hear, Ladies why??



Source Whatsapp on 20th February, 2019.

Meme 23



Source: Facebook on 19th September, 2018.

Meme 25

Its month end already...wives are very humble,even when you go to the toilet U will just hear ati "babe how was yo journey? "



Source: FB on 2nd June, 2019.

Source FB on 10th July, 2019.

Meme 22



Source FB on 17th June, 2019.

Meme 24

All guys that gossip should start dressing like this



Source: Whatsapp on 29th May, 2019

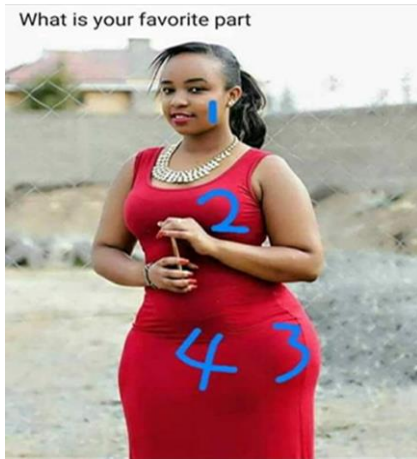
Meme 26

This is where Zambian girls learn to Jump from one man to another.



Source: FB on 14th January, 2019

Meme 27



Source: Whatsapp on 13th May, 2019.

Meme 28



Source: FB on 6th June, 2019.

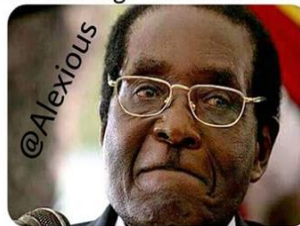
Meme 29



Source: Whatsapp on 20th August, 2018.

Meme 30

AFTER SENDING HER MONEY, I called her and her boyfriend picked up the call and said "thanks boss, we have seen the message mwana wa mai."



Source: FB on 9th June, 2019.

Meme 31



Source: WhatsApp on 24th September, 2018.

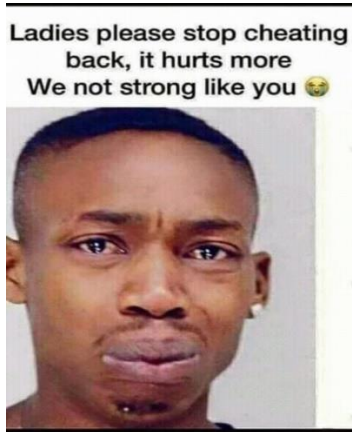
Meme 32



Source: Whatsapp on 14th August, 2018.

Meme 33

Meme 34



Source: Whatsapp 26th April, 2019



Source: Whatsapp on 9th August, 2018.

Meme 35



Source: Whatsapp on 2nd May, 2019.

Meme 36



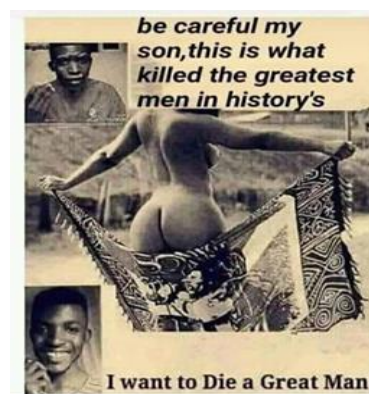
Source: FB on 17th July, 2019.

Meme 37



Source: Whatsapp on 19th November, 2018.

Meme 38



Source: Whatsapp on 5th September, 2018.

Meme 39



Source: FB on 28th February, 2019.

Meme 41



Source:Whatsapp 26th April, 2019.

Meme 43



Source: Whatsapp 19th January, 2019

Meme 40



Source: Whatsapp on 29th May, 2019

Meme 4



Source: Whatsapp 10th April, 2019.

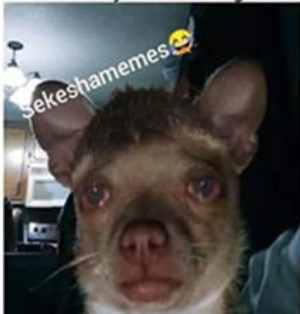
Meme 44



Source:Whatsapp 10th April, 2019.

Meme 45

When you realize she was just using
You to pasha her cheating boyfriend
And now they are back together...



Source: FB on 9th February, 2019.

Meme 47

After she told u no sex before marriage
and on wedding nyt you discover this☹️



Source: FB August 30th 2019

Meme 49



Source: FB on 20th July, 2019

Meme 46

Toxic Women destroy good
men too, but we barely talk
about it. It's all about
women...futsek man



Source: FB on 18th August, 2019.

Meme 48

You see this type of footwear at the
door and u know your gossip aunty is
around



Source: FB on 15th June, 2019.

Meme 50



Source: Whatsapp on 6th August, 2019.

Meme 51



Source FB on 2nd January, 2019

Meme 52



Source FB on 31st August, 2019.

Meme 53

It's disrespectful to ask your girl if she needs money. She's a girl, she's always broke.



Source WhatsApp on 27th August, 2019.

Meme 54

A couple had a huge fight 😡😡😡... One night... When going to bed husband says "goodnight old ugly mother of 3 😏" Wife replied "same to you father of 1 😏"



Source: FB on 3rd June, 2019.

Meme 55

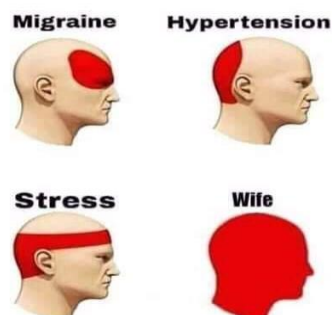
When you find out that she lied to you ati diwe spinal cord yake kashi diwe che ka line kamumatako



Source: Whatsapp on 17th January, 2019.

Meme 56

Types of Headaches



Source: FB on 19th May, 2019.

Meme 57

Meme 58



Source: Whatsapp on 31st July, 2018

"I don't date broke men" Annual General Meeting.



Source: Facebook on 9th April, 2019

Meme 59



Source: Facebook on 18th August, 2019.

Meme 60

When a woman becomes the breadwinner in the house



Source: FB on 14th February, 2019

Meme 61



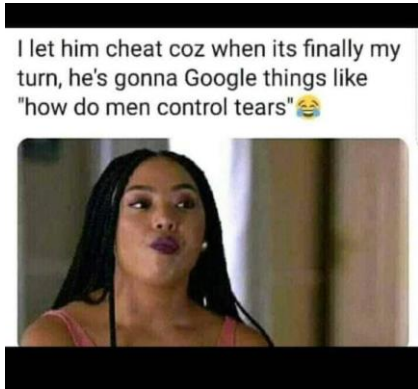
Source: FB on 12th August, 2019.

Meme 62



Source WhatsApp on 31st August, 2019

Meme 63



Source FB on 21st August, 2019.

Meme 64

So imwe ba gelo who ask every guy if he has a car. Do you drink petrol?



Source: FB on 16th May, 2019.

Meme 65



Source: FB on 11th March, 2019.

Meme 66



Source: WhatsApp on 10th February, 2019

Meme 67



Source:Whatsapp 11th March, 2019. Source:

Meme 68

When she tells you she's working the night shift but she doesn't have a job



Source:WhatsApp on 30th June, 2019.

Meme 69



Source: Facebook 18th September, 2019.

Meme 70

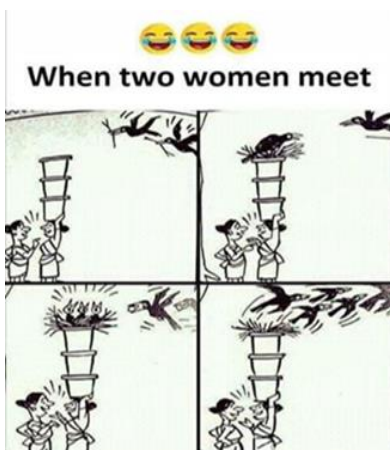


Source: WhatsApp on 21st March, 2019

3.3. CARTOON MEMES

Cartoon memes are a type of image macros that are shared in cartoon form. Templates are also used in the creation of cartoon memes. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 8th Edition* defines a cartoon as “ a humourous drawing in a magazine or newspaper often with words written below” (2010:216). Although both image macros and cartoons use pictures and text, the difference is that image macros use pictures of real events or scenarios, public figures in the society, or pictures of animals such as dogs and cats that are real. In certain cases they are edited using softwares. Cartoons on the other hand are executed drawings. However, they also have captions written or a text overlay. There are ten (10) cartoon memes out of one hundred in this study. Two (2) out of 10 memes have emoji. Examples are given below:

Meme 71



Meme 72



Source: WhatsApp on 22nd January, 2019.

Meme 73



Source: FB on 11th June, 2019.

Meme 75



Source: WhatsApp on 1st March, 2019.

Meme 77

Source: WhatsApp on 15th March, 2019.

Meme 74



Source: WhatsApp on 8th February, 2019

Meme 76



Source: WhatsApp on 4th June, 2019.

Meme 78



Source: WhatsApp on 2nd January, 2019.

Meme 79



Source: FB on 31st August, 2019.

3.4. TEMPLATE MEMES

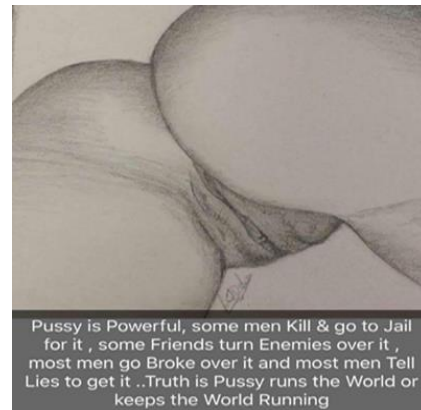
Template memes are a common sight on social media platforms Facebook and WhatsApp. These are created in the same way as image macros. However, they do not include an image or picture of a person or animal like image macros and cartoons. Just like the image macros, this type can be cut, copied and pasted. There are fifteen (15) template memes sampled in this study. Fourteen (14) out of fifteen memes have emoji. Below are examples of memes shared as template memes:

Meme 81



Source: FB on 13th March, 2019.

Meme 80



Source: WhatsApp on 19th May, 2019



Source: Whatsapp on 16th October, 2018.



Source: FB on 2nd August, 2019.

Meme 83



Source: WhatsApp on 11th March, 2019.

Meme 84



Source: FB on 31st August, 2019

Meme 85



Source: WhatsApp on 14th September, 2019.

Meme 86



Source FB 18th August, 2019.

Meme 87



Source: WhatsApp on 28th March, 2019.

Meme 88



Source: WhatsApp on 4th December, 2018.

Meme 89



Source: FB on 29th June, 2019.

Meme 90



Source: WhatsApp on 15th February, 2019.

Meme 91



Source WhatsApp 8th May, 2019.

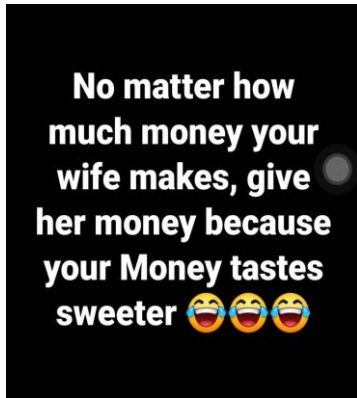
Meme 92



Source: WhatsApp on 5th February, 2019

Meme 93

Meme 94



Source: FB on 2nd July, 2019.



Source: WhatsApp on 14th February, 2019.

Meme 95



Source: WhatsApp 10th April, 2019.

3.5. PRINT TEXT MEMES

Print text (word only) is the fourth type of meme used in this study. It is ordinary text typed. It does not use a template. It is shared as mere text or word. This is the easiest to create because it does not require any form of expertise to create it. Print text can be copied, cut and shared. This type of meme is however, not as common as the other types such as image macros or template memes on social media platforms. Emoji and emoticons are also used in print text to indicate that the text is humorous or funny. The study sampled Five (5) out of one hundred (100) memes. Examples are given below:

Meme 96

“We have yet another set of army worms preparing to attack men’s wallets and bank accounts on the 14th [Valentine’s Day]. Advice from the Office of the Vice President Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit is for Men to use the strongest pesticide i.e. switch off your phones and change location”

Source: FB on 12th February, 2019.

Meme 97

No woman is perfect, just choose your own headache and start taking Panadol. 😊😊😊😊

Source: FB on 10th August, 2019.

Meme 98

Even broke guys will be calling ladies gold diggers, what gold can she dig in u when you are just an ordinary aluminium 😂😂😂😂.

Source: FB on 19th March, 2019.

Meme 99

People ask me why husbands do not share their problems with their wives.

My reply: Do you discuss malaria with mosquitoes? 😂😂😂😂

Source: WhatsApp on 21st February, 2019.

Meme 100

Child: Mummy why grandpa has no hair on his head.

Mummy: because he speaks only the truth.

Child: Now I understand why girls have long hair...kkkkkkkkkkkkkk

Source: WhatsApp on 6th November, 2019.

3.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter looks at the types of internet memes used in this study. These are image macros, cartoons memes, template memes and print text (word only). Emoticons and emoji are also a common sight on the four types of memes used in this study. The next chapter will deal with analysis of the internet memes. This is the core of the study as it looks at and gives a critically detailed analysis of the selected memes.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF INTERNET MEMES

4.0. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter covered the types of internet memes sampled in the present study. This chapter presents the analysis of the internet memes sampled from the emergent categories. The analysis is based on the research objectives.

4.1. ANALYSIS

As noted previously, this research formed part of a larger project exploring humour and how women are portrayed in the Zambian memes shared on social media platforms Facebook and WhatsApp. Through our thematic analysis of the one hundred Zambian memes shared as image macros, cartoons, template memes and print text (word), we identified two overarching themes. The first is gender stereotypes. This sees the construction of eleven emergent categories from the one hundred memes. Ninety-six (96) memes point at different qualities seen in women with negative connotations such as women as lovers of money, dependent on men, prostitutes, cheats, gossips, talkative, problems, liars, dangerous, and sexual objects. However, four (4) other sub themes have positive connotations portraying women as good, supporters, helpers and respectful.

The second theme is dominance of patriarchal messages. Seventy-nine (79) out of the one hundred (100) memes have patriarchal messages. Although it is difficult to tell the gender of the people who share the memes on Facebook and WhatsApp, these patriarchal messages imply that men play an active role in the creation and sharing of memes on social media. Most of the sexist jokes with a patriarchal message tend to demean women while projecting men in more positive light. The memes reproduced below illustrates a variety of negative images projected about women. It is as if men are speaking to women using memes as a communicative device promoting their superiority over women.

The memes in the present study fall under the category of sexist humour. As already mentioned in the previous chapters, sexist humour is humour that demeans, insults, stereotypes, victimises, or objectifies a person based on his or her gender (LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998). General sexist humour is more common than specified sexist humour. Women are subjugated across the board using general sexist humour while specified sexist humour targets specific derogative and gendered stereotypes (e.g. tall woman, the nagging mother-in-law, etc.). From a social constructionist perspective, this assertion is key to understanding why the internet meme as a form of humour leans towards the general rather than attempting to subjugate a particular character. A point to note is that some memes have more than one portrayal of women. Meme 22 for example has four portrayals. Additionally, there is a thin line between the emergent categories with women portrayals because they are related to one another. Another important aspect to note is that the memes are copied and discussed the same way they are shared on social media with either slang, colloquial language, wrong punctuations and spellings, or grammatical errors. These will be discussed in the next chapter looking at linguistic features of memes.

The following analysis presents the manner in which women are portrayed in the memes on social media particularly Facebook and WhatsApp. Throughout the sample, analysis by the researcher identified a clear reproduction of memes with constructions of negative stereotypes and gendered relations using humour. The memes have remarks on the things women are said to be.

The constructions of women as “lovers of money” discourse occurred across a variety of meme types. This is the first category to be analysed in this study. This category consists of thirty-three (33) memes out of one hundred making it the most frequently appearing category in the current analysis. It has other sub themes such as women portrayed as gold diggers, and women being materialistic merged to form one broad category “women as lovers of money”. Being the category with the highest number, five (5) memes out of thirty-three (33) were analysed. Two are image macros, followed by a cartoon meme, template meme and print text (word only).

The first to be analysed is meme 31 emanating from WhatsApp. It reads, “You say Zambian girls don’t love flowers have you tried these”. The meme shows money used in place of flowers to make a bouquet. The meme suggests that Zambian women may not love flowers but they love gifts in form of money.

Meme 51 is captioned “My ATM.” ATM is an abbreviation that stands for Automated Teller Machine. ATM allows for convenient banking. Customers are able to use Automated Teller Machines to both deposit and withdraw money from their nearest machine at any time using personalised cards. The man in the picture is being referred to as the ATM. It is interesting that the picture appears to have been taken on a wedding day. This implies that the wife does not see a ‘husband’ in the man on the first day of their marriage. Instead, she sees an ATM in him setting the tone for her motivation to get married to him. The picture seem to set the tone for how rocky or turbulent the marriage will be when the husband has no money which seem to suggest that the growth of their love in marriage will be depend on the steady supply of money in the house. Both Meme 31 and 51 hold similar portrayals about women. The first portrayal is that women are gold diggers. The second portrayal is that women are lovers of money.

Examples are given below:

Meme 31

Meme 51



Source: Whatsapp on 24th September, 2018.



Source: Whatsapp on 2nd January, 2019.

Meme 75 is a cartoon. In this meme, the woman tells the man that she wants a man who can give her 50% of his salary. The man replies, “My dear, even God collects 10%.” He further asks her a question, “Are you God’s mother”?

This meme seem to suggest that the woman in question wants to get half of a man’s earnings. She is using manipulative language and her inner power. This seem to reveal that she is not content with anything below 50%. Secondly, she is very greedy to want to get 50% of what a man has worked for. This meme suggest that women are greedy, manipulative gold diggers that are never content with what they have. This further reveals that women have an insatiable and unreasonable appetite for material and financial gain.

Meme 85 talks about a man who has lived with this woman over a period as husband and wife. The husband’s response seem to suggest that such a morning greeting from the wife is rare suggesting that it only comes out when the husband has money which further suggests that it is not even a greeting but a way of saying, she wants that money. However, the man could have wrongly judged the mere greeting in meme 85 as a way of getting to the money in the wardrobe. It is possible that the wife did not even see the money on the morning of the greeting. Nevertheless, because the man is so prejudiced about the wife, he quickly comes out to judge his wife harshly. This seems to reveal how much prejudice men have towards women.

Meme 75

Meme 85



Source: WhatsApp on 1st March, 2019.



Source: WhatsApp on 14th September, 2019.

14th February, which is Valentine's Day has been accepted worldwide has a day people are supposed to show love and affection towards one another. Couples and people in love relationships have taken it to be a day they get a present for their loved ones as a way of showing their love for them. Meme 96 portrays women as army - worms that use any opportunity to squeeze money from men. It further suggests that women have taken their responsibility on this day to give away from themselves. Instead, they have turned the day into a 'receiving' day for themselves.

Meme 96

Another example of a meme that portray woman as a gold digger or lover of money is given below:

We have yet another set of army worms preparing to attack men's wallets and bank accounts on the 14th [Valentine's Day]. Advice from the Office of the Vice President Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit is for Men to use the strongest pesticide i.e. switch off your phones and change location 😂😂😂. Source: FB on 12th February 2019.

The meme portrays women as gold diggers or lovers of money. One would argue that a Zambian has constructed this meme because the Office of the Vice President Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit that has been mentioned. Therefore, we can only understand the meme using the Zambian context. Women here are being equated to a pest more specifically destructive army worms. From the social constructionist view, this seem to suggest how ruthless and destructive women can be on men's pockets.

The memes sustain or reinforce the traditional gender stereotype of men as hard workers and breadwinners and women as beneficiaries and homemakers. It also promotes male hegemony. The face of poverty is with women as they are portrayed as incapable of providing for

themselves. The men seem to have it all, money, good jobs, houses, and other luxuries. From the social constructionist view, the language used in the five memes portraying women as lovers of money seem to play a role of marginalising women as it puts the man at the centre as a hard worker and provider while the woman is seen as peripheral, lazy and only wanting to benefit from the man's hard work. From the feminist perspective, the gender disparities that places men in higher positions in terms of power, wealth and opportunities and lower the status of women promote gender inequality, as low economic status of women is visible from the memes. While from the superiority view, superiority of men over women can be seen as money, wealth and other opportunities lies with them.

The second emergent category portrays women as dependent on men. This category is closely related to the first one portraying women as lovers of money because in both portrayals, men stand out as providers and women as receivers. This category has thirty-one (31) out of one hundred memes. Under this category, women are simultaneously criticised and mocked for being dependent on their male counterparts. Men have to support them financially as they are not self-reliant. Four memes have been analysed in this category. Two are image macros, and the other two template memes.

Meme 28 emanating from Facebook is captioned: "When you ask a girl mu club what beer you should buy for her, then she says "nigulileni chabe ka 25kg kah unga boss". Meaning, when you as a girl in the club.....she says, "just buy a 25kg of mealie meal for me, boss". This meme suggests the dependency of women on men. The woman in question does not have the capacity to provide even basic needs like mealie meal for herself. The two are said to be in a club, this venue suggest that the woman is a prostitute. Additionally, meme 53 has a caption reading, "It is disrespectful to ask your girl if she needs money. She is a girl; she's always broke". This meme is also a construct of a woman who is dependent on a man as she is referred to as being broke always. The verb "always" suggests that there is no time that this girl has money. Therefore, a person who is broke has no capacity of taking care of herself.

Meme 28

Meme 53



Source: FB on 6th June, 2019.

It's disrespectful to ask your girl if she needs money. She's a girl, she's always broke.



Source: WhatsApp on 27th August, 2019.

Further, the template meme 86 reads, “Dating a Zambian lady is like dating an orphan”. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 8th Edition* defines an orphan as “a child whose parents have died” (2010:1038). An orphan is usually helpless, and dependent on the guardian who is taking care of him or her at that particular time. A woman is compared to an orphan. By nature, children are helpless, dependent, homeless, directionless, visionless, naive, voiceless and more importantly, they cannot either fend or think for themselves. In the same vein, meme 84 also depicts the dependency syndrome of women on men whereby a woman is always waiting for a man to do everything for her. Then she is compared to a “Chemba” which must be taken out whenever it is used to dispose of the urine in it. If one does not do that, the urine will remain there until it starts smelling.

Meme 84



Source: FB on 31st August, 2019

Meme 86



Source: FB on 18th August, 2019.

The four examples given from the category of women being portrayed as dependent on men are a true reflection of ridicule and feelings of relative superiority as essential components of humour from the superiority perspective. Mockery or derision is seen from the sentiments such as “Chemba” and “orphan”. A woman is reduced to being compared to an orphan who is said to be helpless and dependent on the guardian. The memes seem to speak through the male

perspective indicating that men are a better and superior gender compared to women. Millett (1970) states that women must revolt against the power centre of culture which is male dominated by breaking down existing structures that tend to see women as passive, meek and weak. These memes place a man in the position of the head of the house, breadwinner, and hard worker drawing a boundary showing the superiority of men and the inferiority of women in society. Using the social constructionist theory, the memes build on what society thinks about women not what is obtaining on the ground. This way, society creates reality because what society comes to believe is termed as a “fact”.

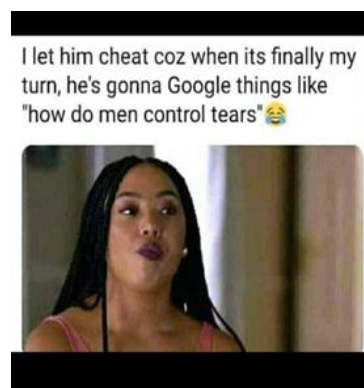
The third category of ten out of one hundred memes portray women as cheats. *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 8th Edition* defines a cheat as “somebody who is married or has a regular sexual partner to have a secret sexual relationship with somebody else” (2010:238). The first example under this category is meme 33 with a caption, “Ladies please stop cheating back, it hurts more. We are not strong like you”. This meme shows that men can cheat but women should not cheat back because men get more hurt when cheated upon, as they are not as strong as women. This relates to cultural beliefs that support the cheating of men. A Bemba proverb says, “*Ubuchende bwa mwaume tabu toba ng’anda*” (Bwembya, 2013). The literal meaning is that “a man’s infidelity does not break a home.” As seen from the proverb, if a man cheats, that will not cause a divorce between two married people, but if a woman cheats on the husband that guarantees a divorce.

Meme 33



Source: Whatsapp 26th April, 2019.

Meme 63



Source: FB on 21st August, 2019.

Meme 63 is captioned “I let him cheat coz when it’s finally my turn he’s gonna goggle things like “how do men control tears.” It is evident from the two memes that both men and women cheat. However, the memes suggest that women are stronger than men when they are cheated

upon because they can withstand the pain while the men are weak. This can be seen from the pictures. The man looks really hurt while the woman looks strong.

The third meme under this category is meme 73 a cartoon with a caption “Come on Steve, stop crying over a woman. She doesn’t love u. that’s why she’s cheating on u. have a seat let me check my sweetheart in the bedroom”. This meme suggests that both Steve’s wife and the speaker’s wife are cheating on their husbands. The interesting part about meme 73 is that the wife to the one who is telling Steve to stop crying is also cheating on him, as she is with a man in the bedroom having sex.

Meme 73



Source: FB on 11th June, 2019.

Meme 93



Source: WhatsApp on 14th February, 2019.

Meme 94 reads, “If girls can cheat on soldiers with guns and bombs, what about you *na ka laptop bag*”. The meme has two portrayals one depicting women as cheats and the other shows an element of brave women as they have the courage to cheat on soldiers who carry guns.

The memes in this category suggests that although both men and women cheat, when a woman means to cheat she can really hurt a man. There is also an act of bravery attached to women when it comes to cheating in meme 93. Drawing on the evidence from the memes sampled for this category, there is an indication that women are stronger when cheated upon than men. The memes also signify that women revenge more brutally than men when cheated upon. This is evident from meme 33 and 63 above. This also suggests that both men and women cheat as a woman cannot cheat alone.

In the fourth category, women are portrayed as prostitutes. Cheating and prostitution are closely related. Prostitution goes with the desire for money and ability to cheat on someone. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 8th Edition*, defines a prostitute as “A person who has sex for money” (2010:1178). This definition gives us reason to argue that prostitution and the love of money in women cannot be separated. In meme 13 below, a woman is portrayed as a prostitute. The meme states that the woman has slept with every man in town. In addition, the woman's image is presented in form of a dog. This is interesting because a dog cannot reason neither does it have morals of any kind. From the superiority point of view, the woman is perceived as having characteristics of a dog, having sex with any man in the same way a dog has no boundaries of who to mount.

Meme 13



Source FB on 2nd May, 2019.

Meme 32



Source: Whatsapp on 14th August, 2018.

Meme 32 reads, “I’m looking for an investor” This meme depicts a woman as a prostitute who wants to use her body for monetary gain. She is also portrayed as gold digger or lover of money. The woman is half-naked. Nude pictures of women show disrespect to women and they are an insult to womanhood.

Meme 8



Source FB on 2nd May, 2019.

Meme 76



Source: WhatsApp on 4th June, 2019.

These memes signifies that women can go to any extent to get money. Accusatory stones are thrown more on the woman than on the man in matters of morality. Meme 8 reads, “*Bana chinyenga ba guy for free obvious nopowelamo virus elo iwe nau innonce wako, ubwele ukwatile sure*. Her parents even charge you bride price over second hand pussy.” The meaning is that men have had sex with the woman and obviously infected her with the virus, then himself in his innocence he wants to marry that woman.... From the superiority view, the language used in meme 8 has negative, demeaning and offensive connotations. It is also sarcastic and promotes both hegemony and misogynistic behaviour to further the downgrade the integrity of women. These memes epitomise the entrenched patriarchy and the structural challenges that women face every day. They bear witness to unbalanced media perspective and unfair treatment between the female and male gender on Whatsapp and Facebook.

Meme 76 is a cartoon. It is also a construct of a woman portrayed as a prostitute. When asked whether she has other boyfriends, she proudly replies to the man that he is one in a million. “One in a million”, is an idiom. Idioms are fixed in structure and meaning. This meme has a double meaning. Although the idiom used should only have one meaning, implying that the man is special, unique and highly valued, in this context it may imply that the man is one of the many boyfriends that she has. The woman is a smart cheat and prostitute who uses the idiom to her advantage. A point to note is that the speakers in the four (4) memes speaks from the male perspective.

A woman who has had multiple sexual relations with men is taken for a dog. This also implies that women are not just prostitutes but they are also careless, senseless and uncivilised like dogs. Vashist (2016) states that numerous forms of media exhibit misogynistic content widely. Internet memes are not an exception. From the feminist view, derogatory expressions of such contents and misogynistic humour as in meme 8 pose a threat to the very notion of gender equality as this kind of sexist humour gives a direct boost to male chauvinism and prejudice against women.

Looking at it from the social constructionist approach, the use of derogatory language is an attempt to stigmatise women. In addition, the frequent use of demeaning language such as “*Hule*” in meme 61 can eventually lead to the ‘internalisation of oppressive language’ or what Althusser (1971) calls ‘Interpellation’. Explaining the role of language in creating disabled identity, Galvin (2003) argues that, “The language we use and the labels we identify with become so taken for granted that we eventually feel that we actually, inherently are what we

have been named”. Hence, repeated use of such words or negative and belittling phrases can lead to the internalisation of such traits in women, which in the end contaminates their own self-perception.

The fifth category had five (5) out of one hundred memes portraying women as gossips. This negative stereotype has been perceived as real by society over the years as women have continued being addressed as gossips. In the first meme, the caption reads, “All guys that gossip should start dressing like this.” The picture then shows a man wearing a dress. This implies that gossiping is the speciality of women and if a man gossips then he is as good as or as bad as a woman because gossip is a feminine trait. Meme 37 also shows women gossiping. There is no man in the picture. The caption “This is the original GOSSIP uniform” is interesting as the women are still dressed in the morning gowns. It also suggests that the women are idle or lazy – that instead of dealing with house chores when they wake up, they first think of going out to gossip.

The word gossip is written in capital letters as a way of placing emphasis on the activity. In meme 69, a woman is referred to as a gossip machine at rest. The image is appropriated judging from the woman’s lips to qualify her as a gossip. A machine has the ability to work continuously until it breaks down or is switched off. This suggests that a woman has the ability to gossip continuously. The only time she stops is when she is resting. This social construct is demeaning to women. From the social constructionist point of view, stereotypes often reflect viewers’ observation of what people do in daily life. If viewers often observe a group of people engaging in a particular activity, they are likely to believe that way. In other words, gender stereotypes like other social stereotypes are a reflection of perceivers’ constant observation (Eagly & Steffan, 2000).

Gossiping is then seen as a woman’s activity as observed by society. The word fact 100% is seen on the image macro below the laughing emoji suggesting that what is written in the caption on meme 37 is a fact that is believed to be 100% true by whoever shared it. Use of derogatory terms such as “gossip machine” to refer to women, is a way of ridiculing them.

Examples of memes portraying women as gossips are given below:

Meme 24

All guys that gossip should start dressing like this



Meme 37

This is the ORIGINAL GOSSIP uniform

'Facts



Meme 69



Source: WhatsApp on 19th Nov, 2018. Source: WhatsApp on 29th May, 2019. Source: Facebook 18th September, 2019.

These memes resonate with one of the proverbs of the Luvale people of North-western province as stated by Mutunda (2017). It says *Phwevo lya ndumba wutama lunga lyove akwate nyama, pwevo lya mwata hola mukanwa lunga lyove atunge limbo* meaning “Lion’s wife be calm so that your husband catches game; chief’s or head-man’s wife hold your mouth so that your husband builds a village.” Gossip and lies are detrimental to peace, harmony, and unity of a village. In this case, society believes that gossiping is a woman’s activity. The woman is warned as she is seen as the one who is capable of gossiping and bringing disharmony to the community. If ever a man is seen gossiping, he has female traits. The message is patriarchal.

The sixth category is closely related to the fifth category because both involve talking. In this category, women are portrayed as talkative. Talkativeness is seen as a female trait just like gossiping. In meme 39, there are five (5) birds but four (4) are said to be female and one (1) is male. Basing on this assertion, the male bird has its mouth closed while the four (4) other birds have opened their mouths wide open. This suggests that talkativeness is associated to women. It is not a male characteristic. Meme 60 also shows how talkative women can become if they are breadwinners. From the look of things, the picture suggest that the man is a victim of the woman’s talkativeness. This type of exaggerated act can bring harm to females as they are so negatively stereotyped. Further meme 70 shows a baby holding its mother’s mouth so that she does not open it. Written in capital letters, the caption reads, “MUMMY MY FATHER LOVES YOU BUT THIS IS YOUR PROBLEM AND I KNOW YOU ARE STILL TALKING INSIDE”. One would argue that the baby in the picture is not the person saying the words rather his image has been appropriated to suggest how unthoughtful, unreasonable and senseless women can be when it comes to talking. Holding the mouth also implies that women are fond of talking.

Meme 60

When a woman becomes the breadwinner in the house



Meme 70

MUMMY MY FATHER LOVES YOU BUT THIS IS YOUR PROBLEM, AND I KNOW YOU'RE STILL TALKING INSIDE



Meme 39

I'm not a bird expert



But I guess there are 4 female birds in this picture

Source: FB on 14th Feb, 2019. Source: WhatsApp on 22nd Jan, 2019. Source: FB on 28th Feb, 2019.

The seventh category portrays women as dangerous. Women are perceived as the femme fatale archetype. Barthes 1977:13 defines femme fatale as any irresistibly attractive woman, especially one who leads men into danger or disaster. Eight out of one hundred memes portray women as dangerous. They also include portrayals of women as evil, devilish, cruel, vengeful and potentially threatening. In meme 40, the woman is included on the list of the most dangerous animals. According to this meme, all the dangerous animals have an attacking system the woman inclusive. The attacking system for women has sexual connotations, suggesting that women use sex to destroy men's dreams, visions and goals. The man is distracted from reaching his life goals by women who are termed as vaginas.

Further, the vagina is perceived as a ditch. What is interesting about the ditch is that it is smaller on top but wider at the bottom. This suggests that although only one at a time can enter the vagina, it is still big enough to accommodate many men who may fall in it. This is a misconception because not every failure should be attributed to a woman. Some men fail out of their own doing. Another observation made from this meme is that lesbians are exempted from falling in this trap. This suggests that women destroy only men. This relates to findings by other scholars such as Chilala (2006) who stated that women in history such as Helen of Troy, Lady Macbeth, and Clytemnestra the schemer (Homer 151) destroyed great men and kingdoms. Other femme fatales such as Delilah and Jezebel are found in the Bible. These women are also portrayed as great witches and dangerous schemers who have the power to destroy Kingdoms.

Meme 40



Source: Whatsapp on 29th May, 2019.

Meme 74



Source: WhatsApp on 8th February, 2019.

Meme 77 and 76 also portrays women as dangerous. Meme 77 reads, “A car hooter is used to warn people that danger is coming.... that is why they use a lot of them when they are bringing a bride into your family... some of these things you don’t need a degree to understand them....” The caption on meme 76 reads, “Pussy is powerful some kill & go to Jail for it some Friends turn Enemies over it some men go Broke over it and most men Tell Lies to get it.... Truth is Pussy runs the World or keeps the World Running.” The vagina is referred to as pussy in American slang. There is a suggestion of an aspect of power and authority attributed to a woman’s vagina. Sadly, part of it says, “Friends turn Enemies for it” this can apply to the Greek story where two kingdoms were destroyed because of the fight caused by a woman called Helen of Troy.

The demonisation of women is continually reproduced as female characters are portrayed as dangerous or destroyers. Through this exaggerated and monstrous construction of undesirable femininity (McRobbie, 2008), negative stereotypes of women continue to thrive. From the feminist view, prejudice is applied as a woman is accused of being dangerous even before she settles in marriage in meme 77. A question one may ask is, “What if it is the man and not a woman that will be a danger to his spouse?” It is therefore not fair to judge the woman negatively leaving out the man because truth has not been established that the woman will be a danger to the man in the marriage.

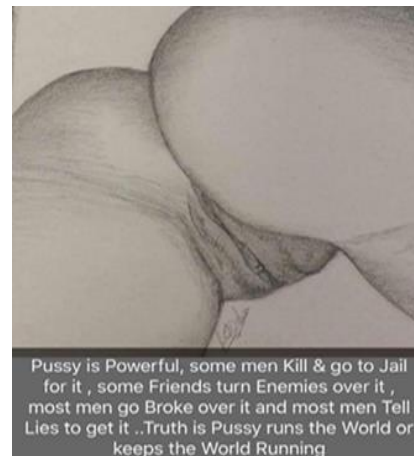
Memes 76 and 77 are below:

Meme 77



Source: Whatsapp on 16th October, 2018.

Meme 76



Source: WhatsApp on 19th May, 2019

Basing on the third aim of feminism, “To bring about change of hostile social attitudes that are derogatory, oppressive, offensive and annoying like genital mutilation and domestic gender in order to balance the imbalance and restore the lost gender symmetry”, hostile social attitudes such as using memes to display nude pictures of women is disrespectful, offensive and annoying. The description of the woman in meme 76 dents the image of a woman. However, in some cases these portrayals simply show the society’s misconception about women.

The eighth category portrays women as liars. This category consists of seven out of one hundred memes. *According to Macmillan English Dictionary New Edition*, a liar is someone who tells lies (2011: 866). Meme 35 shows an old woman drinking beer but saying that she is in church. Even in old age, women are portrayed as liars such that they can even lie about things that are considered sacred. Additionally, in meme 100 women are said to have long hair because they lie a lot. Those who do not lie have no hair. Grandpa is given as an example of someone who does not lie. Sadly, even a small child refers to women as people that lie a lot.

Meme 50 shows that the woman claims that she has never had sex. This meme seems to question the virginity claim. Two points are worth noting: one, the ‘vagina’ in the picture is OPEN, meaning the hymen is not there as evidence of virginity. There is a clear view of the picture in the background. Two, the vagina is bigger than the penis, suggesting that it has been penetrated so many times that it has even lost its tightness. Freud (1960:96 - 100) states that there are tendentious or hostile jokes that serve the purpose of doing harm. From the superiority perspective, such a meme would fall in that category of hostile jokes, as it is an example of total ridicule of a woman. The *femme fatale* image is not simply demeaning towards women;

it is a symptom of male anxiety. The anxiety is about the sexual, generative and fatal power of women (dealt with in detail by both Freud and Jung), an anxiety which is betrayed in misogynistic jokes. Below are the examples of the memes:

Meme 35



Source: Whatsapp on 2nd May, 2019

Meme 50



Source: Whatsapp on 6th August, 2019.

Meme 100

Child: Mummy why grandpa has no hair on his head.

Mummy: because he speaks only the truth.

Child: Now I understand why girls have long hair...kkkkkkkkkkkkkk

Source: WhatsApp on 6th November, 2019.

Meme 72



Source: WhatsApp on 15th March, 2019.

In the cartoon meme 72, the image of a woman as a liar is constructed. The woman is seen telling the man on the phone that she is on the bed about to sleep when she is in the club. She is exposed of her lies because the man is also in the club right behind her. Memes such as these have been catalysts in propagating negative stereotypes of women. From the feminist perspective, women suffer a severe loss of dignity and respect as they are portrayed negatively while men are portrayed positively. This gender imbalance in terms of the images created leads to female denigration.

Communications through social media platforms Facebook and Whatsapp have equally adopted the male writing tradition, generally perpetuating the negative stereotypes projected about women in memes consciously or unconsciously. Hence, the portrayal of women in the memes is perpetuated by the negative connotations and only attaches positive connotations when treating women as sexually appealing objects. Women are portrayed as sexual objects to be admired, owned and used by men in the ninth category. In addition, the tendency to describe the anatomical parts of the female characters in sensual terms as Chilala (2006) puts it is also common in Zambian memes on social media. Lemish (2008) states that “A woman has long been regarded as a sexual being who can only be evaluated on the basis of her appearance”. Men the world over have traditionally viewed women as sex objects that are there for their sexual gratification. This comes out clearly even in everyday language where men talk of women as sex objects. Abubakar and Jimoh (2014) reported that women were generally portrayed in the movies as “sex objects and objects of erotic gaze for men”. In the same, meme 27 has a caption, “What is your favourite part?” 1, 2, 3, 4. 1 is for the cheeks, 2 for the breasts, 3 for the hips and 4 for the vagina. The woman’s body is fragmented. The woman is displayed and evaluated based on her appearance like an object for sale. This category has six out of one hundred memes.

The woman is being referred to as “*Katundu*” meaning luggage in meme 23. The caption reads, “Please call the Petauke guy that the *katundu* is ready.” The picture shows that the woman is very drunk. This meme also portrays women as careless. Nigeria (2013) states that media has the capacity to play a primary role in the creation of realities, public opinion and maintenance of society. From this incident, the term *Katundu* has been used with sexual connotations in Zambia. This is because it is associated to this incidence. From the social constructionist view, this is a purely Zambian constructed joke which cannot be found anywhere else in the world, or which could never be constructed by a non-Zambian. It is a joke only to Zambian eyes and others can only grasp it when the backstory is given and the term *Katundu* is explained. In the

meme, the woman is displayed as if she is an object to be enjoyed. The caption also gives the same suggestion. Exposure to memes such as 23 may eradicate any possibility of positive body image and self-respect in women.

Meme 27



Source: WhatsApp on 13th May, 2019.

Meme 23



Source: FB on 19th September, 2018.

Sexist humour tends to build on sexual objectification of women (Bergman 1986). From the feminist view, memes such as 23 places women as victims of patriarchy: the tendency by men to condemn women, to cast accusatory stones at them, while ignoring the wrongs committed by men. Importantly, women are more prone to be the target of aggressive humour and the object of sexist humour than men (Cantor & Zillmann, 1973). Based on the foregoing that the utmost aim of feminism is to stand up against male-dominance and power as well as free the women folk from all forms of societal ills buttressed by perpetrators of the vice.

Meme 88 speaks of marriage being a sweet thing because the woman cooks for the husband, and then she is expected to serve the sexual desires of her husband. The memes reads, "...then you eat the person who has cooked" (implying sex). In this meme, a woman is portrayed as a thing to be enjoyed by men just like in meme 23. The man carries the tag of a hard worker and provider who comes home to a wife whose job is to cook food for him. The woman is presented in complimentary terms as a homemaker or caretaker. This tends to serve the interests of men as they sustain or reinforce the traditional gender stereotypes. Such memes work together to construct the ideal woman's place as in the home, while references to domesticity and incompatibility with employment can be read constructing women as lazy, unfit for work

outside the home. It positions domesticity as an ‘easy’ job and presenting a ‘no-win’ situation for women.

Meme 88



Source: WhatsApp on 4th December, 2018.

Meme 52



Source: WhatsApp 12th Aug 2019

It is not just in memes, this sexual objectification of women finds its expression in songs. An example is “Love farmer” a song by a group called “The Third” have lyrics saying “Body yako ni munda wanga iwe” the woman is referred to as a farm to be tilted, and watered. It has sexual connotations. It is full of insults. This song shows that society low in terms of gender equality as it reduces women to a mere thing that can be used at any time. It demeans women. This tendency is transferred to memes as well.

Meme 52 reads “*Kwa George*”. A man is seen sucking the woman’s breast. On the other hand, the woman seems to enjoy the act as she is captured with a smile on her face. The meme suggest that the woman is serving the interest of the man who seems to be enjoying himself. A song by Bruce Simbwalanga known as B1 released a song in 2019 entitled “*Kwa George*”, the song inspires the sense of love in places we least expect. She is praised as referred to as an angel, the sun to mention but a few. This meme was created based on this song. Therefore, it is purely Zambian.

In the tenth category, women are portrayed as problems. A problem is a thing that is difficult to deal with or to understand (*Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 8th Edition*, 2010:1167). Five (5) out of one hundred memes portray women as problems.

The four memes portray women as problematic. Meme 12 is captioned, “The pastor Ask them to Bring Their Problems to Church so this Man Brought his Wife”. The woman is a problematic in this case and the man tries to help himself by finding a solution to the problem. The cause

of problems to a man just like mosquitoes cause malaria in people is a woman as framed in meme 99. In addition, meme 56 and 96 have similar connotations: a woman is like headache to a man. Therefore, the man requires medication because of the headache. The headache caused by a woman is portrayed as the worst compared to other types of headaches as suggested in meme 56. This negative characteristic is associated with women while men are portrayed as victims who suffer at the hands of the women. Sometimes women are accused of being the source of the problems and other negative things men face. Hence, to every problem a solution can be found. Either spiritual solution by taking the wife to church as seen in meme 12 or find healing using medication as seen in the other examples such as meme 96.

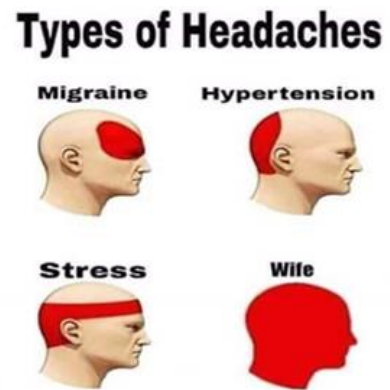
Below are examples given:

Meme 12



Source Whatsapp on 3rd April, 2019.

Meme 56



Source: FB on 19th May, 2019.

Meme 99

People ask me why husbands do not share their problems with their wives.

My reply: Do you discuss malaria with mosquitoes? 😄😄😄😄

Source: WhatsApp on 21st February, 2019.

Meme 96

No woman is perfect, just choose your own headache and start taking Panadol 😂😂😂😂.

Source: FB on 10th August, 2019.

Categories that could not come up with memes amounting to five were merged with other categories to form one major category called “Others”. This category had memes portraying women as naïve, dramatic, difficult to understand, protective, inferior, manipulators, tempters, avengers, visionless, toxic, failures, unforgiving to mention but a few. From this category, the researcher analysed four memes portraying women as inferior, manipulators, failures and pretenders.

The first one to be analysed is meme 82. The template reads, “The look she gives you when you tell her to come on top shows that Zambia is not ready for a female president”. This emanates from a sexual position. Does it mean women prefer to be under the man during sexual intercourse? This meme suggests that the woman is not ready to ride the man because it means she has to work harder compared to when she is under the man. When she is below him, he will do the hard work while she just lies there and RECEIVES. In this meme, the woman is portrayed as being lazy and not wanting to do hard work. With similar connotations is meme 4, which depicts a man as a hard work and the woman as a beneficiary. In the same way, the memes also suggest that women are not ready for any form of responsibility and are not ready to take up challenging leadership positions such as presidency. There is also an element of inferiority complex that meme 82 attaches to women. The meme does not have an image, however, from researcher’s perspective; the look on the woman’s face may have been that of fear, doubt or lack of confidence as the emojis used have those meanings.

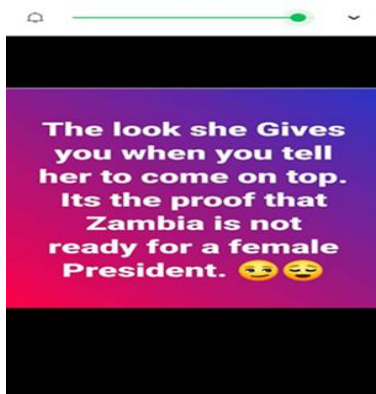
Men are always portrayed as good leaders, breadwinners, having power and authority. Perhaps this explains why in Zambia for example, few women are in leadership positions especially political ones because women are undermined and treated as peripheral. Meme 82 depicts senior or powerful roles in workspaces as something undesirable or unsuitable for women. It discourages women from taking up influential leadership positions. The implication is that men usually use these stereotypes as grounds to legitimise their authority over women. From the superiority viewpoint, this presentation is intimidating to women because the active construction of a woman in management is derogated and disrespected, presumably by other people who feel that they can do better than her. The idea of the inferiority of women in short means that men or most men are of the opinion that they are better beings than women whom they label as less human.

Meme 79 portrays a woman as a failure. Using this religious construct of a woman as a failure, a woman is seen as someone who cannot succeed in doing anything constructive. Genesis 3:

12 reads, “Then the man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the fruit, and I ate.” The blaming game started. The man fails to take responsibility by accounting for his mistakes. Instead, he claims to have sinned because of the woman. Hence, this suggests that right from the biblical creation of the world, the woman is a temper and a failure. The two memes suggest that women are failures. This assertion however, contradicts the feminist aim of advocating for sameness in levels of power, wealth and influence. Women like men have the ability to perform any task effectively. Memes such as this work to firmly (re)locate women within domestic spaces, reproducing gendered dynamics of dominance and subordination.

Below are meme 82 and 79:

Meme 82



Source: FB on 2nd August, 2019.

Meme 79



Source: FB on 31st August, 2019.

Next is meme 29 that portrays women as pretenders. This meme shows a double character of the woman when she is at home and when she is in public. When the woman is at home, she is portrayed as vicious, aggressive and unfriendly but when she is in public, she wears a different face of being humble, calm and friendly.



Source: Whatsapp on 20th August, 2018.

This meme signifies that women are not always who people think they are. They are pretenders. Pictures speak louder than words. This portrayal can be seen from the two pictures where a dog symbolises a woman.

Meme 10 is the last meme with negative connotations analysed under the category of “Others”. It portrays women as manipulators. Meme 10 has a caption reading, “Once you hear people saying, “His girlfriend is controlling him”, just know that the relationship is going well”. This meme constructs women as being manipulative. Women are seen as always wanting to be in control and abusive to a man. When a woman controls a man, he will be hypnotised. The selective approach to equality expressed through this meme highlights the viewpoint that females are not sufferers but are manipulators who actively decide when to play “victim” and when to be in power according to their own changing rules and suitability. These memes communicate the idea that women strive for equal rights in domains where men are given privileges but not willing to leave their own prerogatives they enjoy only because of their gender identity. Below is an example of a meme portraying a woman as a manipulator:

Meme 10



Source: FB on 6th June, 2019.

Although ninety-six out of one hundred (100) memes portray women negatively as lovers of money, dependent on men, cheats, talkative, failures, prostitutes, liars, naive and manipulative to mention but a few, memes with positive images of women were available. Four (4) out of one hundred (100) memes were sampled in the study. In these memes, women are viewed as good, helpful, bringing out the best in men, and supportive.

The first meme in the category with positive portrayals places a woman on a good platform. Meme 89 reads, “Some women are not for sex. Some women come to heal, repair, uplift, upgrade, restore, and bring out the best in men.” This meme explains how helpful women can be to men. It shows that women play a positive role in men’s lives. What a woman does to a man finally brings out the best in him. Meme 44 states that every woman is a wife material. The problem is that some materials end up in the hands of wrong tailors. The wrong tailors being referred to are men. This meme does not condemn women however, it creates a balance suggesting that women are good but sometimes they are married to wrong or bad men. Additionally, it suggests that men can also be bad or wrong. Therefore, the blame or accusatory fingers is not pointed at the woman in this meme.

Memes 44, 89 and 41 promote a positive image of women as it shows that they also have the ability not just to excel as individuals but also to help others such as men to excel in levels of power, wealth and influence. In addition, they are core partners with men in development

Meme 43



Source: Whatsapp 19th January, 2019

Meme 44



Source: Whatsapp 10th April, 2019

Meme 89



Source: FB on 29th June, 2019.

Meme 41



Source: Whatsapp 26th April, 2019.

The significance of these memes is to show that women are good people who can also be helpful to men. They should not always be labelled evil, useless and senseless. The language used in these memes builds the image of a woman as she is praised for being a helper and for having the power to restore, heal, upgrade, uplift and bring out the best in men. The woman is seen to play a central role in a man's life.

It has been proposed that social networking sites serve as arenas for young people to construct identities (or aspects thereof) through digital artefacts (Manago, 2013). Given that the internet memes sampled in our research were taken from sites where sharing through social media was encouraged and facilitated, this is something we argue is central to the analysis. The memes analysed are being used to simultaneously construct and police identities. The representations of women in the image macro, cartoon, template memes and print text sampled work problematically, deriving humour from issues such as creating negative stereotypes of women. Troubling for our analysis is the reminder that memes can function as powerful persuasive devices, transmitting loaded messages in their content under the guise of humour or jokes (Shifman, 2013).

There is a pressing need for feminists to continue explorations of misogynistic abuse perpetuated in and through technology. As Shifman & Maapil Varsano (2007) point out, sexist jokes that depreciate women through general, indirect stereotypes are often regarded as "clean" jokes suitable for all audiences without any censorship: cleanliness is only a socially accepted screen that hides the inherent contradictions of these texts. These are the most widespread ones on the internet, helping to disseminate the stereotypes even further. This is exactly what memes about women are: they do not convey any clearly inappropriate or aggressive views sometimes, but at the same time, they do embed sexist stereotypes (sometimes of both sexes) that familiarise the listeners to those stereotypes in a permissive context.

4.2. CONCLUSION

This chapter looked at the analysis of emergent categories of women portrayals in internet memes sampled as image macros, cartoons, template memes and print text (word). The analysis has demonstrated that although the intention of sharing memes on social media is to entertain people through creation of humour, they end entrenching gender roles and stereotypes. The analysis established that the internet memes treat males and females differently. The differences are seen in the categories that have been discussed above. These categories are not

exhaustive and they are interwoven. The imagery that is used in these memes is heavily tilted in favour of the males who are shown as dominant and superior, which makes them 'different' from their female counterparts. The females on the other hand are portrayed negatively and in a manner that does not make women and girls appreciate their uniqueness as well as the positive contributions that they can make for the betterment of other people's lives. Women were portrayed as lovers of money, dependent on men, cheats, prostitutes, dangerous, gossips, liars, sexual objects, and problematic.

The memes present males positively and as breadwinners and providers. The category with the highest number of memes suggested that women have unreasonable and have insatiable appetite for money. They engage in activities such as prostitution. As a result, they are dependent on men for money and other luxuries. However, on the positive side, women are portrayed as helpful, supportive and good. These positive portrayals suggested that women are partners in development and that they help men to excel in life. In summary, women were characterised more with negative connotations and images than men. The next chapter will discuss the characteristics and the style used in the creation of internet memes.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the characteristics, qualities and linguistic features of internet memes that make them different from the other content produced and shared by internet users. Since this study is interested in Zambian memes, what makes a meme to be Zambian or to be determined, as one shared by a Zambian will also be discussed.

5.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERNET MEMES

Hitherto, it can be strongly argued that there is hardly an internet user who has not stumbled upon an internet meme of one type or the other. Each day there are countless memes being generated on various social networks. “Memes are viewed, shared, imitated, remixed, iterated, and distributed as a response to their appearance on the meme scape, a portmanteau of meme and landscape to imply the virtual, mental, and physical realms that produce, reproduce, and consume internet memes” (Bowers and Wiggins 2015:1893).

Internet memes have characteristics that make them unique and different from the other social media content shared by internet users. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 8th Edition*, the word characteristic is defined as “a typical feature or quality that something or somebody has” (2010:247). As Knobel & Lankshear (2005) have stressed, that the ludic and timely quality of a meme ensures its contagiousness, fecundity, and longevity. The three remain the definitive set of characteristics, and comprise fidelity, fecundity and longevity. On the other hand, Shifman (2012) found that memes she examined had six common features: a focus on ordinary people, flawed masculinity, humour, simplicity, repetitiveness and whimsical content. In addition, Decker-Maurere (2012) argued that common characteristics of memes such as font, linguistic style, and intertextuality allowed users to build an online identity based on what they liked or understood from memes. This study had similar findings with Dawkins's account of three characteristics of successful memes advanced in 1976, Shifman and Decker-Maurere's. These will provide a useful starting point for this study

of online memes. However, other characteristics of memes will be added to the list according to the findings of the study.

5.1.1 FIDELITY

Fidelity refers to the qualities of a meme that enables it to be readily copied and passed from mind to mind as a relatively intact idea. It has very little to do with truth and memes are often successful because they are memorable, rather than because they are important or useful (Blackmore 1999:57). One of the most obvious reasons for the vast popularity of memes is the simplicity with which they are produced and shared (Börzsei, 2013). The form of a meme is usually very straightforward and requires little technical expertise. A typical manifestation of an internet meme is the image macro, an original or manipulated still image, usually from popular culture, equipped with superimposed captions as seen from the seventy (70) and the other thirty (30) examples used in the study in chapter 3. Memes depend on internet users to emerge, spread, thrive and transform (Dynel, 2016). Templates are used in their creation making it easy for people to cut, paste and share with others. Someone who wishes to alter or manipulate a meme can also do so. However, a person can pass on or share a meme with another person exactly the way the first person authored it.

5.1.2. FECUNDITY

Fecundity refers to the rate at which an idea or pattern is copied and spread. In other words, the more quickly a meme spreads, the more likely it will capture robust and sustained attention, replicated and distributed (Brodie 1996:38). Internet memes such as image macros, cartoons and template memes are shared on templates that are easily copied, cut or pasted making it easy for them to be passed from one person to another. This way the idea is passed and spread. In addition, susceptibility is an important dimension of meme fecundity, although not an element dealt with specifically by Dawkins. Raivio (2016) defines susceptibility as the ‘timing’ or ‘location’ of a meme with respect to people’s openness propensity to be infected by vulnerability to it, the meme’s relevance to current events, its relation to extant successful memes, and the interests and values of the affinity space in which the meme is unleashed.

When defining susceptibility, some of the aspects coming out are ‘timing’ or ‘location’ of a meme and its relevance to current events. The timing may refer to the time taken for the meme to be released or shared and the location refers to whether the conditions for spread are favourable. The meme’s relevance to current events becomes a catalyst for attracting people’s attention to reading and sharing it. Hence, such a meme spreads out faster. An example is the creation of meme number 20 in response to the hunger situation that was caused by poor rainfall patterns in Zambia in the 2018 / 2019 planting season. Poor maize harvests that followed escalated the price of mealie meal. This caused a lot of talk on media platforms to have mealie prices dropped that had risen from K75 in July to K125 by August 2019 in Lusaka. Even though the image used in the meme is that of the former President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, it is evident, the meme was produced in Zambia going by the attached caption where one of Zambia’s dialect, Nyanja was used.

Meme 28



Source: FB on 6th August 2019.

5.1.3. LONGEVITY

Longevity is also a key characteristic of a successful meme. The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 8th Edition* defines longevity as “Long life; the fact of lasting a long time” (2010:877). The more people talk about a particular person or event; the more memes are created based on that person or event. This also will state its longevity. The longer a meme survives, the more it can be copied and passed on to new minds, exponentially ensuring its ongoing transmission. Longevity assumes that optimal conditions for a meme’s replication and innovation are in place. It was observed that the people who create memes take advantage of what is happening around them socially, economically and politically. This becomes a catalyst that helps a meme to survive on social media for a long period and be transferred to other

people. Ninety-six (96) of the memes in this study generally portray women in the positive or negative without necessarily alluding to the trending news or referring to the actual events that had taken place in Zambia. Memes based on events that have taken place survive long because people talk about that particular event. The moment they stop, internet users also stop creating memes based on that idea.

Memes 28, 20 and 23 are good examples of memes based on events that took place. Memes 28 and 20 are related because they are based on the hunger situation in Zambia caused by the poor rainfall patterns and the bad economic situation the country was undergoing in the year 2019. Meme 23 is based on the Petauke man and the Katundu joke. Other examples of trending news that made headlines and attracted the creation of new memes by internet users in January, 2020 is the gassing issue and the purchase of one of the most expensive cars called a Bugatti by Frank Buyanga of Zimbabwean nationality in February, 2020. Both memes have the same image of a girl and the label @patrickrasycomics. This is an item under discussion later in this chapter. Below are examples of memes emanating from these events sourced from Facebook:

Meme 101

I thought today was the day when people post a picture of BAE, what's happened? you are afraid of gassers??



Source: Facebook 14th February, 2020.

Meme 102

so you seized the Bugatti, and now you have released it... NSONI BWA??



Source: Facebook 28th February, 2020.

5.1.4. HUMOR

When discussing the characteristics of internet memes, humour cannot be excluded. Although Dawkins did not include it on his list of characteristics of memes. Humour is considered one of the most generic elements of internet memes. This study is of the view that humour makes memes viral and spread easily. Thus, memes have to be “playfully serious” in order to become popular. If this aspect of humour is taken away from the memes, they will cease to be interesting and amusing. This quality of humour can be seen in the memes sampled in this study. Having studied internet memes, Knobel and Lankshear describe the humour in them as “quirky”,

“offbeat”, “bizarrely funny” and “acerbically ironic” (2007: 232). According to Driessen (2001), the most notable universal topics for joking are sex, gender, age, language, politics, ethnicity, and religion. Among the universal topics listed by Driessen, this study focused on gender, specifically the area of female portrayals. However, political and religious frames are also prevalent. These are not definite topics substantiated by empirical methods, but they do seem to agree with the previous research on humour quite extensively (189).

Although humour can be verbal or visual, visual humour is the dominant type, or at least most of the instances are image-based, a feature that applies to internet memes in particular. Visual language in general is considered universal as it travels more easily across different cultures (Snyder, 2001). Snyder’s view agrees with the researcher’s finding that visual humour is the dominant type as the majority of the memes sampled in the study are image macros can be viewed by readers. Additionally, the written elements are predominantly in English or Zambian languages.

5.4 COMMODIFICATION OF CELEBRITIES

Comic commodification of celebrities has been associated with static and text centred memes as well (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). Shifman suggests that the underlined incongruity often used to ridicule powerful institutions, may be a type of “subversive deconstruction”, a way of exposing the artificiality of strong symbols such as political leaders and religious practices. At the same time, incongruous texts can however exhibit a play with genres with no conscious critical edge to them (2007: 205). Images of people with celebrity status are manipulated for humorous effects. According to Shifman, this practice might be seen as ordinary people’s way of gaining “symbolic power” over celebrities by making them the target of scornful laughter. There is also the possibility that poking fun at celebrities acts as an indicator of their importance to the public (2007: 205).

Basing on the observation from this study, the idea of using the image of a celebrity is largely manipulative – that is, to attract attention, just like a title of a newspaper or novel may influence people to buy it. As a result, the meme will also use this quality to spread quickly and because of that it is more likely going to “capture robust and sustained attention, and replicated and distributed” (Brodie 1996:38). Otherwise, most of what is attributed to the celebrities was never

actually uttered by them. Football fans for example may get interested in the meme featuring Cristiano Ronaldo’s image.

Below are images of political leaders such as President of Zambia Edgar Chagwa Lungu, meme 53, former Presidents of South African Jacob Zuma in meme 10, late former President of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe in meme 30, and Julius Malema in meme 9. Pictures of celebrities such as Nollywood actor Yul Edochie in meme 44 and Cristiano Ronaldo, a world football icon in meme 19 to mention but a few have also been used in this study. Among the memes with celebrity images, it appears that Mugabe memes are the most popular in Zambia, followed perhaps by Julius Malema or Jacob Zuma. This is because Julius Malema possesses similar attributes the late Robert Mugabe possessed of being outlandish in speech and showing unconventional behaviour at public gatherings. In addition, their sense of humour during meetings has also contributed to meme creators using their images in memes. @Alexious memes a platform or page where only memes are shared on Facebook is famous for using Robert Mugabe’s image in the memes.

Meme 53

It's disrespectful to ask your girl if she needs money. She's a girl, she's always broke.



Meme 9

In order to have a Girlfriend nowadays... My brother you must be alright Physically, Emotionally, Mentally, Kissically, Motorcally & Walletically



Meme 30

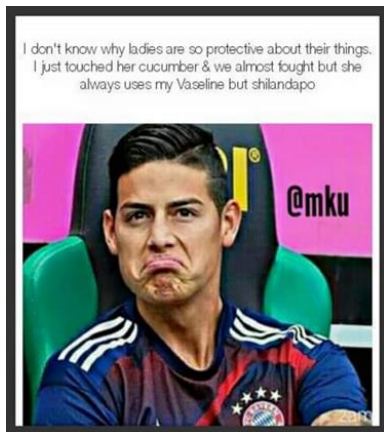
AFTER SENDING HER MONEY, I called her and her boyfriend picked up the call and said "thanks boss, we have seen the message mwana wa mai."



Source: WhatsApp on 27th August, 2019. Source: FB on 4th June, 2019. Source: FB on 9th June 2019

Since the political leaders have a large number of followers who love, adore or even hate them, using their images may be one way of spreading the meme to many people. Their followers may also be interested in finding out what they may be up to the moment they spot their image on social media.

Meme 19



Source: FB on 10th April, 2019.

Meme 10



Source WhatsApp on 5th Jan, 2019.

Meme 44



Source: WhatsApp 10th April 2019.

5.5 USE OF ANIMALS IN THE CREATION OF INTERNET MEMES

This study agrees with Shifman who states that animals have become a prominent source of humour during the digital era (2007: 201-202). The tendency of using images of animals in the creation of image macros is common on social media. The animals used are dogs, cats, monkeys, chameleons and cartoon like frogs. Of these animals, dogs are the most commonly used. In the present study, six (6) memes have images of a dog, two (2) have images of cartoon like frogs, one (1) is a cartoon like chameleon and the last one has an image of a cat.

Perhaps one would wonder why these animals are used in meme creation. Five of the memes suggest that the images of dogs represent a man. Perhaps, as the saying goes “All men are dogs”, makes the picture on Meme 45 appropriate, as the dog appears to have a human face. This in a way creates a funny and more interesting meme as such a sight captures the attention of the readers. Memes also have to be “playfully serious” in order to become popular. So seeing a man cry over being used by a woman is quite amusing, as men are also known to be brave and strong. This may however, contradict meme 33 where a man speaks on behalf of other men as not being strong when cheated upon.

There is a tendency of using cartoon like animals such as frogs and chameleons. These serve a purpose. The cartoon like frog is a famous American TV character called Kermit. As the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary Eleventh Edition* defines a cartoon as a drawing executed in an exaggerated style for humorous or satirical manner (2004), the cartoon-like images are

meant to make the meme more humorous and satirical. This way, it goes viral. From this discussion, one would conclude that the funnier the image, the more interesting and contagious the meme becomes.

The use of the cat image is also meant to make the meme funny. The picture is appropriated to match with the message on the caption. Examples are given below:

Meme 59



Meme 5



Meme 45



Source: FB on 18th August 2019. Source: WhatsApp on 4th June 2019. Source: FB on 9th Feb 2019.

5.6. LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF INTERNET MEMES

5.6.1. LANGUAGE USED IN INTERNET MEMES

Alongside the technical simplicity with which memes are created, another significant factor in their popularity and global reach is the English language, which with a good reason can be called the lingua franca of internet memes (Börzei, 2013). It is thus not surprising that the majority of the previous studies have predominantly concentrated on English memes. In addition to the traditional varieties such as standard (spoken and written) social, regional and ethnic dialects of English, memes exhibit varieties that have originated in the electronically mediated platforms. English, having become the lingua franca of the internet, often appears as the main language of humorous texts, which further supports globalisation. Due to the increasing access to internet that has skyrocketed in other cultural and linguistic spaces translations, remixes (Knobel & Lankshear 2008) and local adaptations of global internet humour are more frequent.

The fact that English (and African-American English in particular) is the *lingua franca* of the memes may have something to do with the idea that much of this hatred and fear of women has a modern, western, urban rather than a traditional, African, pre-modern origin – in other words, that it has been imported, like digital technology, into Zambia.

The language of a meme is regarded as standard when there are no considerable deviations from the educated varieties of English. The language variety of a meme is considered non-standard if it contains vulgar expressions or any features that are not present in a standard dictionary of English. In assessing the standard of a feature, this study mainly relied on *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 8th Edition* (2010) and *Cambridge Dictionary online*. Thus, from the late 2000s onwards, online meme culture has witnessed a continuous increase of more localised internet memes (Börzsei 2013). Most of the memes used in this study are written in English language while some are a combination of English language and Zambian languages. Few are written in Zambian languages only. However, the trend to write meme captions in Zambian languages is becoming more common. The common Zambian languages used in the Zambian memes are Bemba and Nyanja.

Meme 14

A woman with a brain can turn a broke man to a millionaire but a beauty without brain can turn a millionaire into a beggar



Meme 55

When you find out that she lied to you ati diwe spinal cord yake kashi diwe che ka line kamumatako



Meme 6



Source FB on 5th August 2019. Source: Whatsapp on 17th January 2019. Source FB 1st February 2019

From the examples given above, Standard or formal English is used in meme 14 while a combination of English language and Nyanja is used in meme 55. Meme 6 has its words written in Bemba except for the word “SALT”.

5.6.2 REGISTER

A register is a language variety used for a particular purpose or in a particular social setting (Crystal, 1991). In the faceted classification scheme, Herring gives examples of specialised discourses such as academic and medical discourses, but mentions that unmarked registers and

ordinary everyday conversation can also be identified (Herring, 2007: 21). However, there were no discernible specialised registers in the samples from this study, most of the language was fairly conversational and casual in tone.

5.6.3 NON-STANDARD VARIETIES AND FEATURES.

A total of 41 memes or 41% exhibited non-standard features. Other notable varieties of language used by internet users are Net speak and mock archaic English. However, mock archaic English memes have not been sampled in this study. This is because it is old-fashioned English and most of the young internet users involved in the creation of memes do not use it. For example, words such as “Thou art” to mean, “You are” are used in archaic English. Net speak (or internet slang) is a general term for the different manifestations of language on the internet. Net speak is a hypernym for a variety of slangs that have mainly originated in digital platforms such as mobile phones and online chat rooms (Crystal, 2011).

In certain cases, the English language used in the memes is not standard or formal but colloquial with a lot of slang. Using slang in memes makes them more interesting and fecund compared to those where conventional language is used. Slang is the catalyst that speeds up the meme’s contagious quality. A good example is a template meme 95, which reads “Never heard a female say, I had a good man but I f*cked up” Yall never do anything wrong huh? In this meme, the phrasal word fucked up means to mess up. In the word fuck a star is used where “u” is supposed to be. This may be a way of reducing its vulgarity. Other markers of dialect were the deviant spellings “Yall” for “you all” and honey spelt as “hunny”.

The grammar used in the memes is mostly simple but contains curse words such as fuck, which are considered non-standard since they are marked as offensive or informal in most dictionaries. The language in the meme can also be said to be sarcastic. Sarcasm is overt and intentional, used by the speaker as a form of verbal aggression against another person or entity (Haiman, 1998). The language in meme 8 is also sarcastic and misogynistic. Use of words such as “Bana chinyenga.....” is not friendly but offensive and hateful. This study considered these memes sarcastic in tone as they involve intentional mockery that has a clear target.

Meme 95



Source: WhatsApp 10th April, 2019.

Meme 8



Source FB on 2nd May, 2019.

Meme 2 and 33 exhibit features usually associated with African American Vernacular English (AAVE), such as the lack of copula verb (Rickford, 1999). Examples of these features are “They Be Like” and “We not strong like you” in meme 33. The two sentences in Meme 2 are not just wrongly punctuated by having each word beginning with a capital letter but also lacks a copula verb. The copula verbs missing are “Will” in meme 2 and “Are” in meme 33.

Meme 2



Source FB on 4th March, 2019

Meme 33



Whatsapp 26th April, 2019.

Text speak is one of the sub varieties of Net speak often used in memes. Text speak developed through short message services (sms) used in cell phone text messaging, where the technical affordances such as the limited number of characters prompted the development of linguistic strategies like clippings (“bro”), acronyms (“BRB”), contractions (“pls”) and letter homophones (“u”, “r”) (Procházka 2014: 67). “Bro” means brother, “BRB” means “Be Right Back”, “Pls” is “Please”. Other acronyms used by internet users are “LOL” to mean “Laugh Out Loud”. BRB and LOL represent what has actually been developed as a conventional means of communication. In addition, there is an internet language has been acceptable by internet users that has been locally generated such as *kkkkkkkkkkkk* or *kikikikiki* in meme 100. NSS

(*na seka sana*) a Bemba phrase translated as “I laughed a lot” is sometimes used though none has been sampled in the study.

Text speak has been widely criticised for corrupting the language of especially young people. Most of the language categorised as Net speak contains elements of the sub variety Text speak that is known for its extensive use of clippings, acronyms, contractions and letter homophones (Procházka, 2014). The “ur” is a letter homophone, a digital writing practice characterised by the replacement of Latinate letters (having a character of Latin) with combinations of American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters. However, David Crystal (2011) argues that the moral panic surrounding the new digitally originated language varieties is overproportioned, and that actually, using strategies such as shortening requires a developed set of language skills. Below are examples of text speak in internet memes:

Meme 47

After she told u no sex before marriage and on wedding nyt you discover this☺



Source: FB August 30th 2019.

Meme 78



Source: FB on 13th March, 2019.

In meme 47, a letter homophone “u” is used instead of “you” and “nyt” instead of “night” applying linguistic clipping technique of the word. In meme 78 contractions are used. I’ve is used instead of its standard form “I have” and letter homophones “u” to mean “you” and “ur” instead of “your”. Use of acronyms such as PF to stand for Patriotic Front in meme 20 and letter homophone “n” to mean “and” were observed. In print text (word) such as in meme 100 *kkkkkkkk* is used to mean funny or more laughter. Apte (1985) defines this kind of exaggerated use of incorrect vocabulary and grammar as accent humour. Another thing to note is that the breasts on meme 47 appear to be computer-generated (photo shopped), this is to appropriate the meme to suit the caption.

5.6.4 PUNCTUATIONS

There are occasional issues with punctuation, but the language of the standard variety used in the memes is fluent. Most of the memes sampled have punctuation problems. There is inconsistency in the use of commas, full stops and capital letters, which have been exemplified by examples 11, 12, 5, 15. Between the words Chitenge and just in meme 11, no punctuation mark is used. The sentence also lacks a full stop at the end. Meme 12 has words such as Ask, Bring, Their, Problems, So, Man, Brought and Wife which are verbs and common nouns but they have been capitalised. In meme 15, the first word of the sentence has not been capitalised. No comma has been used in the sentence. The only word that has been capitalised is “Tall”. However, it should not have been capitalised because it is not a proper noun. The word “Tall” may have been capitalised to create emphasis. The end of the sentence does not have a full stop. From the finding, punctuation rules have not been followed in the memes sampled.

Meme 11



Source: FB on 3rd January, 2019.

Meme 12



Source: Whatsapp on 3rd April, 2019.

Meme15

there is nothing like girls
prefer Tall guys to short ones
just get money and you will be
tall in ways you can't
understand



Source: FB on 4th March, 2019.

Meme 5

Yowa boyfriend is over protective
because he knows you're so easy to
get mwana wa mai.
Just a simple iphone and pizza.
Imwe 🍕



Source: Whatsapp on 4th June, 2019

The language used in the memes is varied, consisting of fluent Standard English as well as slang, internet slang and creative varieties. This study consolidates the position held by linguists such as David Crystal (2011) that the digital age has not ruined the language skills of the young, but on the contrary, engaging and creative content sharing platforms such as Classical Art Meme that can potentially even encourage internet users' linguistic creativity. Classical Art Memes is a Facebook page that describes itself as an entertainment website.

5.6.5. USE OF DIRECT SPEECH

Direct speech is one of the linguistic techniques used in the creation of memes. In many cases, this is done in dialogue form. Some memes where this technique is used are well punctuated while others are wrongly punctuated. Dialogue and direct speech are used in the three memes given as examples. Meme 87 has been well punctuated while memes 85 and 100 have omitted the inverted commas. It was also observed that the direct speech is used mostly in template and print text (word only).

Meme 85



Source: WhatsApp on 14th September, 2019.

Meme 87



Source: WhatsApp on 28th March, 2019.

Meme 100

Child: Mummy why grandpa has no hair on his head.

Mummy: because he speaks only the truth.

Child: Now I understand why girls have long hair...*kkkkkkkkkkkkkk*

Source: WhatsApp on 6th November 2019.

5.6.7. GESTURES AND FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

A gesture is a specific bodily movement that reinforces a verbal message or convey a particular thought or emotion. Use of gestures are a common sight in internet memes. Gestures activate image specific information about the concept to be denoted. The proposal advanced by McNeill (1992) states that listeners combine information from speech and gestures to arrive at an enhanced understanding of the interlocutor's meaning. A speaker's gesture can suggest very precisely the meaning to an audience. The gestures in memes are purposeful, they reflect, clarify and support what is being said. In addition, gestures show emphasis and vitality to the spoken word. Facial expressions similarly, are often the key determinant to the meaning behind a message. Distinct feelings such as surprise, fear, happiness, confusion, disgust, interest, disbelief, anger, and sadness can be observed from a speaker's facial expression. Below are examples of memes showing distinct feelings of surprise, disgust and disbelief.

Meme 64

So imwe ba gelo who ask every guy if he has a car. Do you drink petrol?



Source: FB on 16th May, 2019.

Meme 8

Bana chinyenga ba guy for free obvious nopowelamo virus elo iwe nau innocence wako, ubwele ukwatile sure. her parents even charge you bride price over second hand pussy



Source FB on 2nd May, 2019.

Gestures are common in image macros. Meme 8 suggests that the gesture being used seems to ask the other man to think deeply and reason. “*Bana chinyenga ba guy...nopowelamo virus... elo iwe nau innocence wako, ubwele ukwatile...*” this is translated as “Many guys have had sex with her and maybe even infected her with the virus. But in your innocence you want to marry her”. Having looked at the translation, it suggests that the decision he wants to take of marrying a woman who seems to have a background of prostitution does not seem to make sense. Hence, the facial expression and the sign indicated by the speaker pointing his figure towards to his head, as if to ask the other man to “reason”. The facial expression resonates with the sign used. It also communicates surprise, disgust and disbelief.

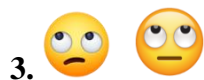
The facial expression of the man on meme 64 with a caption “So *imwe ba gelo...*” meaning “So you girls who ask every guy if he has a car do you drink petrol?” looks puzzled, disgusted and surprised. Many of the internet memes use a language of gestures to make emphasis and communicate effectively. Therefore, meme creators and editors take the pictures with facial expressions or gestures out of their original context and appropriate them. Thirty-four (34) out of one hundred (100) memes have images of people using gestures either facial or using hands.

5.6.8 USE OF EMOTICONS AND EMOJIS TO EXPRESS EMOTIONS

Emotions are central to the operation of memes. As Miltner (2016) noted, part of what makes a meme propagate is its ability to resonate with individuals on both the personal and societal levels. Similarly, Milner (2014) claimed that participants perform emotions through memetic formats and use them to add context to their messages, especially when the content is negative or difficult. Milner (2016) discovered that memes often deal with social success and failure. In this, they follow the “logic of lulz,” (laughs or laughing) which exonerates any form of negativity as long as it is entertaining (Milner, 2013). The use of emoticons and emojis is common in memes to communicate the feelings of the sender. The emoticons are a precursor of emoji. Both show whether a text is serious or funny, whether one is disappointed, angry or frustrated. On social media, emoji and emoticons are commonly used especially in image macros, template memes and print text (word only). Forty-five (45) out of one hundred (100) memes have emoji. Emoji are more common than emoticons. Twenty-five are image macros, fourteen (14) are template memes and two (2) cartoon memes while four (4) are print word. Examples of emoji used on memes in this study and their meanings are given below:



Crying faces



Rolling eyes - Boredom, frustration or disapproval.



Angry faces



Pouting faces



Disappointed face



Smiling face with glasses – Slang sense of cool confidence or carefree attitude.



Loud crying face - More intense laughter.

Of all the emojis given as examples in this study, emoji 9, the loud crying face showing more intense laughter is the most commonly used in the Zambian memes sampled in this study.

Below are examples:

Meme 87



Source: WhatsApp on 28th March, 2019.

Meme 54



Source: FB on 20th July, 2019.

Grinning face



Sadness, fear, anxiety








Amused, proud, silly.

Meme 49



Source: FB on 20th July, 2019.

Meme 87 has emoji called rolling eyes that has the following meanings - boredom, frustration or disapproval. In this case, the meaning could be frustration and disapproval. The other emoji means disappointed and finally there is intense laughter represented by the emoji loud crying face. Meme 54 reads, “A couple had a huge fight    ...One night... when going to bed.... Husband says “good night old ugly mother of 3 ” wife replied, “Same to you father of 1 .

” The emoji used mean that when the fight started both the man and the woman were angry, and then they both became very angry as is evident from the red pouting face. When the husband passed the comment, he was still very angry but when the wife gave her reply, she felt

good, cool, confidence or had a carefree attitude, as she also knew that she had cheated on the husband, as he was not the father of the other two children.

Meme 49 has two emoji meaning amused, proud, and silly. These imply that the sender suggests that a woman sees her husband like a dog when he has no money. Hence, such a sight is amusing. Emotive use of language is also common such as the one used in meme 3 with a caption that reads, “I started fearing girls the day my girlfriend introduced my blood brother to me as her cousin.” Emotive words such as fear, revenge, wickedness and hurt are used. Other examples where people are using gestures are memes 3, 4,9,10, 17, 16, 18 and many more.

5.7. MEN AS VICTIMS

Seventy-five percent of the memes in this study suggest that men are victims of the negative behaviour exhibited by women. However, men victimise women in some cases. Even in such cases, women are still regarded as evil, cruel or as having a devilish character. Further, they are viewed as a negative influence causing failure in men to achieve their goals. Meme 62 for example, reads, “*waya ku church, instead of coming back a better and repentant person wabwelako ubwamba bulefwaya ukupolika*” meaning “when you go to church instead of coming back a better person you come back with a penis that wants to bust”. The man complains that the women in the praise team dress in a provocative manner causing him to have an erection. Therefore, the woman is regarded as a source of temptation.

In the same way, there are cases where a man may rape a woman and position himself as a victim who committed such an offence because the woman tempted him. The blame game is initiated here. The man in meme 74 a religious construct blames the woman for having been the cause of sin, which made God chase Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Adam also attributed his sin to Eve in Genesis 3:12. Then the man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” The man does not take full responsibility for his actions. He blames the woman. In the same way, the man who has an erection in church blames the women for causing the temptation. The outcome is that people may pity and sympathise with the man as he is seen as a victim. Examples are given below:

Meme 79



Source: FB on 31st August, 2019.

Meme 62



Source: WhatsApp on 31st August, 2019

5.8. ALLUSION

Scholars have defined allusions in many ways. Landy (1992, cited in Chilala, 2018: 207) defines allusion as “A reference to some piece of art or literature, or of some well-known person, event, or story. He further states that if we do not catch the reference, then we will miss the point of the allusion” (441). In addition, Roberts and Jacobs (2007:2105) state that allusion is unacknowledged references and quotations that authors make while assuming that readers will recognise the original sources and relate their meanings to the new context (Cited in Chilala, 2018 :207). Further, Abrams (1981:8) defines allusion as reference, explicit or indirect, to a person, place or event, or to another literary work or passage.

Meme 20 alludes to the hike in mealie meal prices. Ordinary people blamed the government ruled by the Patriotic Front government (PF) of downgrading the country due to their poor economic policies as evidenced in plummeted living conditions of ordinary Zambians especially in the year 2019. Different definitions of a ‘joke’ given by various scholars state that a joke only works within the cultural context in which it is produced. It is only a person who is a Zambian or one living in Zambia that can understand this meme as she or he may know what is happening in Zambia politically, economically and socially.

Meme 20



Source FB on 10th July 2019.

Meme 23



Source: Facebook on 19th September 2018.

Meme 28 also has a similar meaning as meme 20 as it also alludes to blaming the Patriotic Front for hunger experienced by families in Zambia in the year 2019. Another meme that falls under this category is 23. The meme is based on the power of allusion as it alludes to an earlier incident, which only Zambians are aware of and understand. This is a purely Zambian constructed joke which cannot be found anywhere else in the world, or which could never be constructed by a non-Zambian. It is a joke only to Zambian eyes and others can only grasp it when the backstory is given and the term “*Katundu*” is explained. This meme has been created and shared arising from an incident where a Petauke man raped a woman repeatedly while taking a video of her. The man was seen saying, “*Katundu* very nice, not very big. I have eaten all night but failed to finish, you can come and join me”. Meme 74 is also an example of allusion as it alludes to the story in Genesis 3:12.

5.9. INTERTEXTUALITY

According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 8th Edition, intertextuality can be defined as, “the relationship between texts, especially literary texts” (2010:788). This term has acquired an important position together with the rise and development of internet culture. In humour research, it has traditionally been used in the context of a humorous text referring to another earlier text, as in parody (Ross 1998). The reference(s) may shape the meaning depending on the availability of the reference frames of the audience.

Intertextuality has been argued to be an essential element of parody (Berger 1995: 73; Hutcheon 2000). Intertextuality may occur in conversation when a joke or a part of it is used to strengthen, embellish, or underline the message (Oring 2003; Laineste 2015). It may also occur between humorous texts, where one joke refers to (many) previous others (Graham 2009: 83). Below are examples from Genesis 3:12 in the Bible. In order for the two memes to be created other texts were used.

Meme 79



Source: FB on 31st August, 2019.

Meme 66



Source: WhatsApp on 10th February, 2019.

The two memes are an example of intertextuality as they have been created out of another text. The original text where the two have been created is the Christian Bible. Therefore, there is a relationship between Genesis 2 and the memes. When humour travels across borders and between nations and cultures, it acquires new interpretations – not just through translation but also through adjusting the text to the target culture, at the same time retaining a connection with the source. If the text becomes popular, this is an indication that the adaptation was successful. A meme can be completely self-contained, but behind a major share of memes, there is an intricate nexus of obscure cross-references.

5.10. APPROPRIATION

Appropriation is another element used in the creation of memes especially those that involve images like cartoons and image macros. People that create these memes act like photo editors. The images chosen have an impact when used because pictures speak louder than words. They ensure that the images used are related to the text in the caption. Therefore, images are picked on account that they make the message in the meme more meaningful. For example, the image

of a snake in meme 66 is appropriate as according to the Bible, Eve was enticed by the devil in form of a snake to eat the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3.

Meme 37



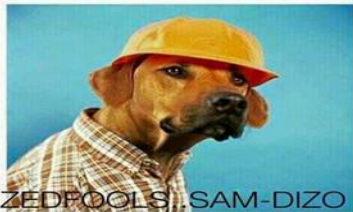
Source: Whatsapp on 29th May, 2019

Pictures are taken in a very different context but a suiting caption is used to make it appropriate. If it is not matching with the caption, it is manipulated so that it becomes meaningful when used with the matching caption. For example, looking at meme 37 it can be argued that a woman did not take the picture but more likely, a man took it. The question to ask is, what were the women talking about? Why did they get together? It is possible, for instance, that the picture was taken at a funeral, at a family gathering, at a camp meeting or gathering for women but the person who created the meme appropriated it or weaponised it against women by adding a caption showing that the women in the picture were gossiping.

Some images used in memes have been manipulated to suit the message the meme is trying to communicate. Sometimes they are manipulated to make the meme more amusing and meaningful. In most of the manipulated templates, there is usually some element of modern culture or technology incorporated into the original piece of art. For example, the dog in meme 21 is wearing a shirt and a helmet. It is a well-known fact that dogs do not dress like this neither are they allowed to sleep in beds as in meme 49 above. This is one of the ways in which images are manipulated to make them funny and appropriate. Sometimes photo shopping is done to make the images more appropriate for the creation of the memes. To photo shop is to alter an image digitally. The *Oxford Advance learner's Dictionary 8th Edition* defines photo shop as "to change a picture or photograph using a computer (2010:1100). Both pictures have been photo shopped. The picture of the dog was just cut from another source and pasted on the bed, which is the original background to suit the message being communicated through the meme.

Meme 21

Ladies will find Money in the Pocket of their Husband's Clothes, They will not even tell the Husband but if its a Condom, the whole World would hear, Ladies why??



Source Whatsapp on 20th February, 2019.

Meme 49



Source: FB on 20th July, 2019.

5.11. CODE SWITCHING

The *Oxford Advance learner's Dictionary 8th Edition* defines code switching as “the practice of changing between languages when you are speaking “(2010:273). Although this applies in speaking, it can also apply in writing. There is a tendency of using more than one language in the formation of memes. In many cases English language and Bemba, that is a Zambian language or English language and Nyanja are used. Examples are given below:

Meme 55

When you find out that she lied to you ati diwe spinal cord yake kashi diwe che ka line kamumatako



Meme 84

Ladies don't always wait for Men to take you out monga ndiwe chemba. Take him out as well. Men I'm i communicating???

Meme 4

Baby , ati Mercy afuna six pack ya savanna , Monica naeve ati mumugulile Heinken then ine nikumwa Flying fish ..



Source: WhatsApp on 17th January, 2019. Source: FB on 31st August, 2019. Source: WhatsApp on 5th May, 2019.

In the memes 4, 55 and 84 above, two (2) languages have been used. These are English language and Nyanja. The speakers started by using English language but later switched to Nyanja. People who create memes have made code switching a common trend on social media. Memes are also zambianised through code switching.

5.12. DETERMINANCY

It is difficult to determine the gender of the person who has posted a particular meme. However, seventy-nine out of one hundred memes have patriarchal messages. Determinacy of a meme being Zambian or having traces of being authored or shared by a Zambian is easier. However, there are still some cases where a meme has originated elsewhere and just adopted by a Zambian. The first thing evident from the memes is the language or languages used in the captions of the image macros, template memes or print text. In some memes, Zambian languages such as Bemba, Nyanja or Lozi are used.

Secondly, although most of the memes are written in English language, group names such as Zed Twalipena, Zammemes, Zambian Jokes and many more are included on the memes to show that they are Zambian. This can be seen from the examples given; Zed is a short form used for Zambia, and Twalipena is a Bemba word for 'We are mad'. Zammemes means Zambian memes. Therefore, a meme does not have to have an image of a Zambian or have its text overlay written in a Zambian language in order to be qualified as a Zambian meme. The label on the meme or the page name is enough to tell whether it is Zambian or not.

Thirdly, some memes may have Zambia connotations. Examples of such memes are given below:

Meme 86



Source FB 18th August, 2019.

Meme 14

A woman with a brain can turn a broke man to a millionaire but a beauty without brain can turn a millionaire into a beggar



Source FB on 5th August, 2019.

Meme 96

“We have yet another set of army worms preparing to attack men’s wallets and bank accounts on the 14th [Valentine’s Day]. Advice from the Office of the Vice President Disaster

Management and Mitigation Unit is for Men to use the strongest pesticide i.e. switch off your phones and change location”.

Source: FB on 12th February, 2019.

Meme 6



Source FB 1st February 2019.

Meme 86



Source FB 18th August, 2019.

Memes 86 and 96 have Zambian connotations. The flag of Zambia on meme 86 is evidence that the meme is Zambian or has been zambianised. The researcher is justified to classify meme 96 as a purely Zambian joke because of the reference to the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit under the Office of the Vice President. Zambians are aware that the Office of the Vice President was and is still passionate about eradicating armyworms because they are quite destructive in maize fields and wreak havoc on agricultural products. They are a hated pest in Zambia except in this case the “army worms” are women intending to “devour” men’s wallets on Valentine’s Day. Meme 14 has a *Zed Twalipena* label showing an element of being shared by a Zambian. In addition, meme 6 is written in Bemba a Zambian language. It is captioned, “*Ba gelo chimo na mango iwe ulembela ati ikapye kanshi bambi balelya na SALT*” meaning girls are like mangoes while you are waiting for them to ripen others will be eating them raw with salt. The only English language word here is salt.

5.13. USE OF SAME IMAGE OR TEXT TO CREATE DIFFERENT MEMES

The internet memes in form of image macros have a set of stylistic rules for adding text to images. Some image macros involve adding the same text to various images, and others involve adding different text to a common image. Examples are given below:

Meme 17

"If my body is the temple of God"....."who am I to limit the number of people who want to enter?" 😊



Source Whatsapp on 4th February, 2019.

Meme 67

Ok so I cheated but I came back with the pussy. So what's all this drama for?



Source: WhatsApp 11th March, 2019.

The same image is used to create the two memes. In meme 17, the woman is portrayed as a prostitute and in meme 67, she is portrayed as a cheat. The captions have different messages even if the image is the same. Other differences can be noted. Meme 17 has an emoji while the other meme does not have. Meme 67 has a name or label "Alimeme" which the other one does not have. It is therefore possible that despite using the same image the people that shared meme 67 or meme 17 edited or manipulated it by adding their own text to the caption.

Meme 65 like the three other memes 101, 102 and 103 uses the same image but different messages and captions. Meme 65 does not have a label showing the page name "patrickrasycomics" while the other two memes have included the label patrickrasycomics. Emoji are used on meme 65 but not on meme 101 and 103. The caption was manipulated but the image remains the same. It must be noted here that an image of the girl child has been used to project the messages. In a way, the image resonates with the message in the memes. The gesture the girl is making may be the reason why the person who shared the meme.

It can be argued that she is too young to utter the words attributed to her. However, the use of a young girl in delivering such messages may not be appropriate, as it is abuse of some kind. It is evident that meme 102 and 103 were authored by the same person as both have the label patrickrasycomics and the word RASY. Although meme 101 and 104 look the same as the other meme with the girl's image, they are slightly different, as they do not have the word RASY on the meme. The image of the girl in the memes below is a common sight on Facebook.

Meme 103

People will pop up in your inbox like "hey, you are cute"
You think I don't know!??



Meme 101

I thought today was the day
when people post a picture of
BAE, what's happened? you are
afraid of gassers?!



Meme 65

If women don't cheat, who
do men cheat with? 🤔🤔🤔



Source: FB on 24th January 2020. Source: FB 14th February, 2020. Source: FB on 11th March, 2019.

Meme 26 has a similar image and message with meme 104. However, meme 26 has been zambianised by including the word “Zambian” in the caption. It also includes a cup and saucer with a label which meme 105 does not have.

Meme 26

*This is where Zambian girls learn to
Jump from one man to another.*



Source: FB on 14th January, 2019.

Meme 104

This was where girls learnt
how to jump from one man to
another



Source: WhatsApp on 14th May 2019.

Meme 85 is in template form. However, the other meme with the same message is in form of an image macro. There are slight differences on the text on meme 85 to the text on the other meme. The difference is as follows: the use of the term “Good day” instead of “Good morning”. The inclusion of words such as adorable, handsome and wonderful on the first meme, as well as the clipped word pls, also changes the sentence “That money you saw in the wardrobe is not mine” to “Pls the money in the drawer doesn’t belong to me, it belongs to the office”. Word drawer is used in the other meme instead of wardrobe and an addition of “it doesn’t belong to me it belongs to the office”.

Meme 105



Source: WhatsApp on 31st January 2019.

Meme 85



Source: on 14th September 2019.

The two memes 6 and 106 below have similar connotations. However, one is written in English language while the other one is in Bemba, a Zambian language. One would argue that meme 107 could be the original and then some Zambian simply adapted it using Bemba. This assertion from the researcher is born out of the conviction that the person in the picture is a famous Nigerian actor Pete Edochie. Since the joke was written in the English language it points to a Nigerian as having authored the meme.

Meme 6



Source FB 1st February, 2019.

Meme 106



Source: FB on 12th April, 2019.

In the last examples, we have three (3) different images used to create image macros but the message has similar connotations. However, there were a few differences observed such as the changes in the text making the caption. It is therefore, observed that different memes can be made out of one image by manipulating the text used in the caption or using the same text with few or no changes on different images. The image macro may be altered by adding emoji or including a label on the image.

Meme 107



Source: FB on 2nd March 2019.

Meme 49



Source: FB on 20th July 2019.

Meme 108



Source: FB on 23rd August 2019.

5.14. CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the characteristics and other features of internet memes. The common characteristics of the internet memes discussed were fidelity, longevity, fecundity and humour. Comic commodification of celebrities, political and religious leaders was one feature also discussed. It was observed that these public figures were used to capture the attention of the people on social media. The other aspects discussed was linguistic features of internet memes such as net speak and text speak one of the sub varieties of Net speak are often used. Technical affordability such as the limited number of characters prompted the development of linguistic strategies of Text speak such as clipping, constrictions, letter homophones, and acronyms. In certain memes, slang was used. Punctuation, use of direct speech, use of emoticons and emojis to express emotions, allusion, appropriation, intertextuality, code switching and indeterminacy and determinacy of the author in relation to the meme's origin were also discussed. The next chapter deals with the conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

6.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a summary of the findings emanating from the analyses of the memes under study and draws conclusions in relation to the objectives that the research set out to pursue. This research focused on the portrayal of women in Zambian memes on social media platforms particularly WhatsApp and Facebook. Its aim was to analyse how women are portrayed in Zambian memes and examine the significance of the portrayals of women in Zambian memes. Finally, it sought to analyse the role language plays in Zambian memes on social media platforms Facebook and WhatsApp.

6.1. SUMMARY FINDINGS

The findings are based on the objectives of the study. Before outlining the findings, it is imperative to revisit the objectives of the study. The study started out with three objectives as shown below.

6.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- i. To analyse how women are portrayed in Zambian memes shared on social media platforms particularly Facebook and WhatsApp.
- ii. To examine the significance of the portrayal of women in Zambian memes shared on Facebook and WhatsApp platforms.
- iii. Analyse the role language plays in the portrayal of women in Zambian memes shared on social media platforms Facebook and WhatsApp.

6.2.1 **Objective One:** To analyse how women are portrayed in Zambian memes shared on social media platforms particularly Facebook and WhatsApp.

There were more memes portraying women negatively compared to the positive ones. Ninety-six (96) out of one hundred (100) memes had negative portrayals of women while four (4) were positive portrayals. In addition, eleven (11) emergent categories of women portrayals came out. The category with positive portrayals had four (4) memes. The criteria used to qualify a category for analysis only when it has five (5) memes was not applied to the positive portrayals because of the limited number of memes portraying women positively. From the finding, it is evident that women are associated more with negative images than positive ones. It is also important to note that some memes had more than one (1) portrayal of women. This study also observed that there is a thin line between the emergent categories as they are interrelated. For example, one cannot talk about women loving money leaving out aspects of women depending on men and prostitution.

The detailed findings for Objective One were as follows:

6.2.1.1 Negative Portrayals

- i. The biggest category was that portraying women as lovers of money. Two other portrayals where women were regarded as gold diggers and materialistic were merged to this category to come up with one. It had 33 memes.
- ii. Women were portrayed as dependent on men in thirty-one (31) memes while men were portrayed as the providers of the money and other material things women seek.
- iii. Femme fatale archetype in women was another image that came out with ten (10) memes. Women are portrayed as dangerous and destructive. This category included other images of women portrayed as evil and wicked.
- iv. Portrayal of women as cheats also had ten (10) memes.
- v. The image of women as prostitutes using their bodies in exchange for money came out with ten (10) memes.
- vi. Women as sex objects was one of the categories with nine (9) memes. Objectification of females is done alongside fragmentation of the female anatomic parts.
- vii. Women were also portrayed as problematic in seven (7) memes.
- viii. The other category with six (6) memes portrayed women as liars.

- ix. Women were portrayed as gossips in six (6) memes.
- x. Women were portrayed as talkative in five (5) memes.

Another category called “others” consisted of negative women portrayals that had memes less than five. In this category, women were portrayed as naive, vengeful, irresponsible, ungrateful, complicated, users, boring, failures, pretenders, secretive to mention but a few.

6.2.1.2. Positive Portrayals

The **Eleventh** category consisted of positive women portrayals. It was difficult to come up with memes portraying women in the positive, as they were scarce on Facebook and WhatsApp. Therefore, any positive portrayal of women found was sampled. Four (4) memes out of one hundred (100) had positive portrayals of women. These did not have to be five (5) to qualify as a category. The following were the findings on memes with positive portrayals of women:

- i. On the positive side, women were portrayed as people who can heal, upgrade, uplift, restore, repair and bring out the best in men in one (1) meme.
- ii. One (1) meme portrayed women as good.
- iii. One (1) meme portrayed women as supportive.
- iv. One (1) meme portrayed women as helpers.

6.2.2 Objective Two: To examine the significance of the portrayal of women in Zambian memes shared on Facebook and WhatsApp platforms.

- i. The most common perception of women is that they are gold diggers or lovers of money while men are the providers. Women are manipulative gold diggers with an insatiable and unreasonable appetite for material and financial gain.
- ii. The memes serve the interests of men as they sustain or reinforce the traditional gender stereotypes of men as hard workers and breadwinners and women as beneficiaries and homemakers. The face of poverty is with women. The sum total of a man is that he has it all and social reality is that men have better jobs, cars, and money.

- iii. Women devour men's pockets through any means possible, even through evil scheming or trickery or in exchange with their bodies through prostitution.
- iv. For the other categories where women were portrayed as prostitutes, talkative, dangerous, gossips, materialistic and many more, men were viewed as victims.
- v. Gossiping is a feminine trait.
- vi. Women are seen as a danger and hindrance to men, stopping them from progressing as they destroy their goals or visions using sex.
- vii. Women are not prepared to do hard work or challenging work, as they are lazy.
- viii. Women are the source of the problems and other negative things men face.
- ix. Both men and women cheat but women revenge more brutally than men when cheated upon.
- x. Women are more talkative than men. Like gossiping, it is seen as a female trait.
- xi. Females are not sufferers but are manipulators who actively decide when to play "victim" and when to be in power according to their own changing rules and suitability. Women are not always who people think they are. They are pretenders.

On the positive side, the memes signify the following:

- i. Women are core partners with men in development.
- ii. Women with brains are good as they can be helpful to men while those without brains can destroy men.

6.2.3 Objective Three: Analyse the role language plays in the portrayal of women in Zambian memes shared on social media platforms Facebook and WhatsApp.

This research agrees with a statement from Shifman (2013) which says memes can function as powerful pervasive devices, transmitting loaded messages in their content under the guise of humour or jokes. The findings for the third objective were as follows:


- i. Language used in portraying women as lovers of money play a role of marginalising them as it puts the man at the centre as a hard worker and provider while the woman is viewed as peripheral, lazy and only wanting to benefit from the man's hard work.

- ii. In memes portraying women as dependent on men, language is seen playing the role of marginalising them by comparing them to a “*Chemba*”, an “orphan”.
- iii. There is use of inappropriate or aggressive views of embed sexist stereotypes to challenge women by trying to make them feel guilty and unworthy in memes portraying women as cheats, prostitutes, liars.
- iv. Demeaning and offensive phrases such as “*Hule*” to mean prostitute play a role of stigmatising women. Sarcastic language such as “*Bana chinyenga ba* guy for free.....” promotes misogyny.
- v. Sexual objectification places women as victims of patriarchy viewed as an object to be used and enjoyed by men. Women are praised when regarded as sexually appealing through male focalisation.
- vi. Derogatory language where repeated use of negative phrases such as pussy and vagina to refer to women belittles women.
- vii. There is some form of exaggeration in some memes serving the purpose of trying to promote demonisation of women. Female characters are portrayed as dangerous and destroyers. Through this exaggerated and monstrous construction of undesirable femininity, negative stereotypes of women referring to them as dangerous or destroyers of men lowers their dignity.
- viii. Nouns such as “gossip machines” are used to refer to women as a way of ridiculing them.
- ix. Demeaning remarks are used to label women as liars and talkative.
- x. Emoji and emoticons are a form of language used to communicate the emotions and feelings attached to each meme.
- xi. A language of gestures and facial expressions activates image specific information about the concept to be denoted and suggest very precise meaning to an audience. The gestures in memes are purposeful; they reflect, clarify and support what is being said. Facial expressions are often the key determinant of the meaning behind a message.
- xii. Patriarchal messages are manipulated and used to disparage and promote violence against women.
- xiii. The language used in the memes portraying women in the positive builds the image of a woman as she is praised for being a helper and for having the power to restore, heal, upgrade, uplift and bring out the best in men.
- xiv. The language in memes is “playfully serious” in order to make them popular.


- xv. Code switching is done to zambianise the memes.
- xvi. Using colloquial language with a lot of slang, and African American Vernacular English (AAVE) such as leaving out copula verbs in memes makes them more interesting and fecund compared to those where convectional language is used. Slang is the catalyst that speeds up the meme's contagious quality.
- xvii. Allusions are used to show the relationship between the new context in which the meme is shared and its original source.

The table below summarises the findings of the study in the three research objectives:

6. 3. TABLE OF SUMMARIES



S/N	EMERGENT CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PORTRAYAL	THE ROLE LANGUAGE PLAYS IN THE MEME	EXAMPLES
i.	Lovers of money	36	Women are manipulative gold diggers with an insatiable and unreasonable appetite for material and financial gain.	Marginalising women seeing them as peripheral and beneficiaries only	Meme 78 Him: I've touched u almost everywhere but u are not responding...what is the most sensitive part of your body??? Her: My palm !! When it touches money, it becomes very active.
ii.	Dependent on men	30	Men are hard workers and breadwinners. They are also providers as they have it all while women are beneficiaries and home makers.	Marginalising women comparing them to a "Chemba", an "Orphan" or the devil.	Meme 86 Dating a Zambian  girl is like looking after an orphan.
iii.	Cheats	12	Both men and women cheat but women are stronger than men	Use of inappropriate or aggressive views of embed	Meme 93

			when cheated upon and revenge brutally.	sexist stereotypes to challenge women by trying to make them feel guilty and unworthy	If women can cheat on soldiers with gun, who are you <i>iwe naka</i> laptop bag? 😂😂😂
iv.	Prostitutes	10	Women devour men's pockets in exchange with their bodies through prostitution.	Demeaning and offensive phrases such as " <i>Hule</i> " to stigmatise women and Sarcastic language promotes misogyny.	Meme 8 " <i>Bana chinyenga</i> ba guy for free obvious nopowelamo virus elo iwe nau innocence wako, ubwele ukwatile sure. her parents even charge you bride price over second hand pussy"
v.	Sex objects	10	Women are objects to objects to be admired, owned and used by men.	Places women as victims of patriarchy. Only praised when women are regarded as sexually appealing through male focalisation	Meme 88 Marriage is a sweet thing. You come home... you find food cooked and you eat the food then you eat the person who has cooked. 😂😂😂
vi.	Dangerous	9	Women are a danger and hindrance to men. They destroy men's lives, goals and visions.	Exaggeration in some memes serving the purpose of trying to promote demonisation of women.	Meme 81 A car hooter is used to warn people that danger is coming – that is why they use a lot of them when they

					are bringing a bride into the family.... Some of these things you don't need a degree to understand them.... 
vii.	Problematic	5	Women are the source of the problems and other negative things men face.	Accusatory stones thrown at women.	Meme 99 People ask me why husbands do not share their problems with their wives. My reply: Do you discuss malaria with mosquitoes?
viii.	Gossips	5	Gossiping is a feminine trait.	Use of derogatory terms such as "gossip machine".	Meme 69 Gossip machine at rest.
ix.	Liars	6	Women lie more than men. Even in old age old women lie but old men speak only the truth	Mockery or derision.	Meme 100 Child: Mummy why grandpa has no hair on his head. Mummy: Because he speaks only the truth. Child: Now I understand why girls have long hair...kkkkkkkkkk

x.	Talkative	5	Being talkative is a feminine trait.	Mockery or derision.	Meme 70 Mummy my father loves you but this is your problem, and I know you are still talking inside.
xi.	Helpers	1	They can help men achieve their goals in life	Praise	Meme 41 I asked a millionaire how he did it he said, “Forget about the girls and focus on one woman she’ll help you achieve everything.
	Supportive	1	Partners in development	Praise.	Meme 14 A woman with brains can turn a beggar into a millionaire but a beauty without brains can turn a millionaire into a beggar.
	Good	1	Play a central role in a man’s life.	Praise.	Meme 44 Every woman is a wife material. The problem is that some materials fall in the hands of wrong tailors. Is my volume ok?
	Bring out the good in men	1	Play a central role in a man’s life.	Praise.	Meme 89

					Some women are not for sex only. Some women heal, repair, uplift, upgrade, restore and bring out the best in men.
xii.	Others - revengers, brave, manipulative, protective, boring, failures, pretenders.	12	Women brutally revenge. Women can do anything for money. Women are failures. Women are not who people think they are. They pretend a lot.	Demeaning, mockery, marginalising and offensive language is used to disparage and subdue women.	Meme 79 It is a man's duty to feed a woman coz the last time a woman fed the man we all got chased from the garden of Eden. 🌲🍎🌴 Meme 10 Once you hear that his girlfriend is controlling him just know that the relationship is going on well. 🤔
xiii.	Code switching	17	To zambianise the meme	to zambianise the meme	Meme 55 When you find out ati she lied to you that ndiwe spinal cord yake, kanshi ndiwe che ka line kamumatako.
xiv.	Colloquial language, slang, and	38	Makes memes interesting and fecund compared to those where convectional language is used.	Makes memes interesting and fecund compared to	Meme 95

	African American Vernacular English			those where convectional language is used.	“Never heard a female say, I had a good man but I f*cked up” Yall never do anything wrong huh?
xv.	Allusion	10	Used to show the relationship between the new context in which the meme is shared and its original source.	Used to show the relationship between the new context in which the meme is shared and its original source.	Meme 23 Please call the Petauke guy that the Katundu is ready.
xvi.	Use of Emoji	34	Communicates the emotions and feelings attached to each meme.	Communicates the emotions and feelings attached to each meme.	 Meme 49
xvii.	Gestures	45		Purposeful; they reflect, clarify and support what is being said	 Meme 17

6.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter is a summary of the whole research. It gives a brief synopsis and investigates if the research managed to fulfil its objectives and answer the research questions. First, the study succeeded in bringing out the eleven emergent categories in which women are portrayed in Zambian memes on social media platforms Facebook and WhatsApp. The memes contain humour, as well as reflecting universal emotions, social message, cultural message and many more. Finally, the analysis led us to the revelation that the language used in the Zambian memes is not only ordinary but it plays the role of belittling, demeaning, mocking, marginalising, disparaging and ridiculing the female gender. The superiority of men over women is emphasised through patriarchal messages in the memes. In few instances, the language used build women by praising them. In conclusion, this study agrees with Harris (2001) who states that the internet has the potential to be used as a place where women can find a platform for resisting and challenging dominant discourses. The representations of women in the sampled memes work problematically, both reproducing constructions of women and femininity, and deriving humour from issues such as gender stereotyping. Therefore, it is important to find ways to address and combat these negative vices.

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