



## Nurturing reading cultures and literacies in post-pandemic ecosystems

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### **Book clubs as rehabilitation centres: A case of Sepedi proverb “a man is a sheep he cries inwardly”.**

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# Introduction

- This presentation present ways in which health care institutions together with The National Library of South Africa can include reading as one of the practices to assist men to speak up through book club meetings. Reading can be used as a tool to save lives.
- In most cases, reading or promotion of reading is usually directed to learners or tertiary students.
- The term “book club” according to Holman et al (2018) refers to groups of people who gather to discuss a shared text. This implies that the book club can be an opportunity for men to enhance their reading skills.
- There is a famous proverb in Sepedi which says “*monna ke nku o llela teng*” (a man is a sheep he cries inwardly).
- This proverb has muted men to a point where they would opt for suicide rather than seeking help. Most of the times, men take these decision because society expect them to face hardships head on and still remain strong throughout their lives.
- In line with the objectives and themes of this summit, reading can be enhanced by encouraging men to join book clubs with their fellow counterparts. By doing so, a reading culture will be instilled and men will speak up rather than keeping everything to themselves in order to fulfil the societal standards of what a real man is.
- Sharing books with life related topics such as anxiety, abuse or depression will allow them to be free to discuss what they have read amongst themselves and to also share personal experiences.

# Literature Review

- In many reading club structures, the emphasis is on reading Petrich (2015). In other words, book clubs can serve as a safe environment which allows men to participate in discussions and voice opinions related to their world.
- Similarly, Thobejane, Mogorosi and Luthada (2018) finds that the societal masculinity expectation is that if a man is in pain, he is not allowed to show his agony or cry since they are expected to cry inwardly.
- This means that men are not expected to show emotions except portraying themselves as strong because if they show emotions, they will be deemed weak or even worse be told that they are not men enough.
- In addition, Holman et al. (2018) study reveal that book clubs can serve as a creative approach to engage men struggling with anxiety or depression.

# Theoretical Framework

- This research is underpinned by the Behaviourist theory by Watson (1913).
- The theory states that behaviours are learned through interaction with the environment through a process called conditioning. The society and the environment can condition how people live, what is accepted and what is not.
- Thus, behaviour is simply a response to environment stimuli.
- Consequently, this research evaluates how the external events prompted by the Sepedi proverb *monna ke nku o llela teng* affects men and how they deal with societal issues including incapacibilities of speaking up.

# Methodology

- This presentation adopts a qualitative research approach. It uses secondary data accessed through desktop and previous scholarly works to collect data.
- Warfield (2010) alludes that in qualitative approach, data collection and analyses include elements of interpretation. This approach allows the researcher to fuse findings with the objectives of the research.
- The research relied on purposive sampling to choose data based on the objectives.
- Secondary analysis of data was conducted for the current study. The design was descriptive because the study focuses on describing life experiences of men influenced by the Sepedi proverb “*monna ke nku o llela teng*”.

# Findings

- The research finds that reading can be one weapon men can use to cope with different realities of life especially when incidences are shared with other people.
- The findings disclosed that most men who experienced abuse or hardships at home, workplace, society or in their relationships were open to talk about their experiences after reading a relatable story in a book during book club meetings.
- The findings also indicated the improvement men revealed about speaking up, developing interest in reading, sharing life hardships and giving each other advices on how to cope or solve the issues.
- Book clubs serves as a creative approach to engage men who are struggling with depression or anxiety mainly caused by the implication of the proverb mentioned earlier to develop a trusting and therapeutic relationship.
- When these men meet with the librarians or health care workers to give feedback about the books they have read, they were given an opportunity to give a synopsis of how the book is helping them cope.
- It has also been noted that apart from helping these people cope with their harsh realities by using books, these book clubs or mobile libraries helped them to improve their reading and social skills.
- When young girls and boys see their brothers, uncles, fathers taking reading seriously, they are motivated to join them and start reading.

# Limitations of the research

- Lack of reading culture amongst men may affect the outcomes of the research.
- Men still finds it hard to speak up and share their challenges with their fellow men.
- Time: the research was carried out in a short span of time; the researcher could not widen the study.
- The analysis could have been more accurate if the data was to be collected through physical interviews.

# Conclusion

- In conclusion, this research has exposed that the Sepedi proverb “*monna ke nku o llela teng*” has made a huge contribution in influencing most men to hesitate to visit health care facilities regularly even if it is just for a simple consultation.
- Men who attend book clubs in order to heal from past traumas have shown to be interested in recruiting their fellow men to join the book clubs and their communication skills have improved a lot.



# Recommendations

- This research recommends that local clinics and South African libraries should have at least one book club which targets men.
- Promotion of reading culture among young men in groups or families to encourage them to voice out their feelings at a young age.
- It is recommended that The National Library of South Africa work together with health facilities to donate books.
- Men should implement reading culture amongst themselves and their family members.

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