

**GENDER AND HUMOUR: COMPLEXITIES OF WOMEN'S IMAGE
POLITICS IN SHONA HUMOROUS NARRATIVES**

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DECLARATION

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A. Masowa

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DEDICATION

To God, the Almighty, for the gift of life, intelligence and the ability to laugh.

ABSTRACT

Humour represents an ideal site for understanding how everyday social dynamics influence ideology and the social structure (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013:4). This research is an examination of how gender is expressed in Shona humour. Particular emphasis is paid to how women are presented in Shona humorous narratives. Though ‘what a person does in a jest is usually not accorded the same weight of responsibility as what he does seriously, humour provides a means to test the openness, accessibility, and riskiness of sensitive issues’ (Lang & Lee, 2010:47). This study examines how women in particular, are reflected in Shona humour. Humour provides a ‘safe’ climate for expressing ‘system-justifying’ beliefs, (Ford *et al.* 2013), and this study is an exploration of the Shona beliefs about women and the reinforcement of gender norms as expressed in Shona humour. The study derives impetus from the fact that while images of women have been studied in literary and lexicographic works in Shona in particular, aspects of humour and how it presents women remain largely under-studied, as humour studies as a discipline, despite its long history the world over, is still at its infancy in Zimbabwe. From a corpus of jokes that were circulated on the social media, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, the study examines how women are presented in Shona humour. The research made use of the Superiority Theory of humour, Incongruity and Feminism to argue that Shona humour expresses oppressive and unjust gender relations. While the humorous Shona narratives demonstrate a complex portrayal of women, generally, Shona humour expresses, ratifies and reinforces repressive norms and restrictive stereotypes about women. Women are presented as immoral, malicious and intellectually, socially and emotionally inferior to men. The study therefore argues that humour facilitates the process of promoting gender stereotypes as well as fostering gender discrimination in Shona.

NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS

All translations of jokes, originally appearing in Shona, are done by the author.

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The classification of humour in English, for example, may not be the same as the typologies of humour that are found in another language, say Shona. Shona humour is part of the broad class of Shona art. Shona art, just like any other African oral art form, is functional. It is always in the service of the society that gives rise to it. In Shona, humour appears in various forms which are *nyambo*, *jee/muchohwe*, *kunemera/utukwa*, *kutsvinyirana/kuwanzirana* as well as *chiroora* and *chisahwira*. All these manifestations of humour in Shona are meant to induce laughter, though the difference is on the participants and the content of humour. Below is a detailed examination of the various forms of humour in Shona.....

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context and Statement of Purpose

This research critically examines the image politics of gender in Shona humour, particularly focusing on the images of women in Shona society. The study focuses on how the Shona utilise jokes to formulate and present images of women. This study was motivated by the overabundance of humour that pokes fun at women's actions as well as the female experiences in general. Studies have been carried out on how humour can be used as a therapeutic remedy, yet the phenomenon has seldom been recognised for its potential in entrenching and perpetuating gender stereotypes, at least in the Shona situation. Humour, then, is an under-studied vehicle of meaning in human social behaviour (Francis *et al.*, 1999:155). In the current study, the researcher examines how humour can be used to determine the gender matrix in Shona.

The study is an examination of images of women in selected Shona humour. Focus is limited to Shona, which is one of the major indigenous languages in Zimbabwe and the researcher's mother tongue. The research was also motivated by the fact that, despite its abundant use, humour is an ignored genre that has not received adequate scrutiny in academic study – particularly in comprehending how it can be used to understand gender relations in society, at least in the Shona

context. The current study, therefore, seeks to fill in this academic lacuna by analysing how humour can be used to examine the way(s) women are presented in speech/oral art forms.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher focuses on the butt or punch line which, in this case, is the woman, and the possible implications of such images in society at large. Although the researcher acknowledges the value of the originator of humour in the kind of images that one would create, that aspect has been left out as it is another area that warrants further research separate from the current thrust. The researcher also left out the originator of the joke since, from the source of data that the researcher used, one cannot ascertain who the originator is/was. Another important factor is that, for all oral art forms, Shona has no authorship; so trying to ascertain who the originator is is quite difficult, if not impossible.

Lang & Lee (2010:46) postulate that humour is complex and multifaceted. It manifests itself as jokes, pun, funny stories, laughter, banter, teasing, wit and humorous behaviours like playing the fool. Humour may also take the form of satire, sarcasm, ironic remarks and ridicules. The concept of humour will be dealt with in detail in Chapter Two. This study makes use of humorous Shona narratives to do an exegesis of how women are presented. Humour reveals far more than mere utterance of words or exhibition of specific behaviours because embedded within it are deep-seated attitudes, biases and prejudices (Lang & Lee, 2010:46). It is, therefore, important to carry out a research on how humour reflects gender politics because there is more to humour than just making the listener laugh. The deconstruction of the images of women in Shona humorous narratives is done through a content analysis of the selected jokes.

1.2 Aims of the Study

The study is an extensive exploration of how women are reflected in Shona humour. In that regard, the study seeks to answer the following questions: What are the patterns of Shona humour? How are women presented in humour? What are the most salient personal or physical attributes of women mentioned in the jokes? What social meanings about women can one derive from the jokes? Thus, the study answers the question; What are the implications of such views about women in the development and emancipation of the female figure? These questions are phrased in the form of study objectives as follows:

- i) to examine the content of Shona humour on gender.
- ii) to analyse the kinds of images of women that are created or portrayed in selected jokes.
- iii) to examine the social meanings deriving from humour.

1.3 Rationale and Significance of Study

Humour represents an ideal site for understanding how everyday social dynamics influence ideology and the social structure (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013:4). This means that humour plays an important part in constructing the gender order. While a small amount of literature has acknowledged the importance of humour, most concentrate on the theory and philosophy of humour rather than the social implications of it, (Morris, 2006:3). Humour can be a lens through

which people understand gender in Shona in particular. Unfortunately, for Shona, there is a noticeable lack of research dedicated to the study of cultural and gender-specific humour because humour studies, despite its long history the world over, is still at its infancy in Zimbabwe in particular. The study of humour in Shona language has not been accorded adequate scholarly scrutiny.

Humour, as a field of study, is relatively new in Zimbabwe. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, little so far has been written in the Shona context on how humour can be used to describe the gender matrix and the stereotypes that are associated with women, yet a lot has been written on the presentation of women in written literature and music. This study was, therefore, worth undertaking as it examines how Shona speakers perceive and portray women through humour. The study seeks to make a contribution to the body of humour knowledge through examining how gender, in particular women, are presented in Shona humorous narratives.

A leading gender and language researcher, Cameron (2007:16) notes that;

one legitimate goal for language and gender scholarship is political: to contribute to the wider struggle against unjust and oppressive gender relations, by revealing and challenging the ideological propositions which support and naturalize those relations.

An argument is made in this study that Shona humour reflects unjust and oppressive gender relations. For that reason, the study exposes and challenges those oppressive and unjust stereotypes about women.

Feminist linguists continue to contribute to social transformation through research which focuses on effective ways of contesting the repressive norms and restrictive stereotypes reified and reinforced by linguistic usages in a range of contexts, including the internet, the media, and in legal settings (Lillian, 2007; Winter & Pauwels, 2007). Previous research has concentrated on men and women's perceptions of sexist humour, (c.f. LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998; Thomae & Viki; 2013, Strain *et al.*, 2015; Mallet *et al.*, 2016). While such kind of research is very critical in as far as understating how people view women in particular, the current study focuses on the presentation of women in Shona as expressed in Shona humorous narratives in order to get an appreciation of how in particular Shona society regard women. It is the current researcher's assumption that what is expressed in a people's humour is a reflection of a people's beliefs and feelings and therefore an examination of how women are portrayed in Shona humorous narratives is worth undertaking. It is from such kind of study that one can expose and contest the repressive and restrictive stereotypes about women.

Laineste *et al.* (2012:39) have this to say about jokes:

Jokes that are told about women allow[s] us to access the stereotypical roles and situations that are inherent in jokes, which in turn carry significant cultural and sociological insight into the representation and its background.

Though jokes are global, they are a culturally specific phenomenon that represents their surroundings, and a study of jokes offers insights into the people telling these jokes. From the

humorous narratives that were analysed in this research, the researcher got to understand how the Shona people view and stereotype women in particular.

For the reason of understanding how the Shona represent women in humour, the researcher chose to focus on humorous narratives which are also referred to as jokes because jokes are, 'abundant, easy to approach and have a long history in humour research', (Laineste *et al.* 2012:39). Jokes are also a popular genre and they are exceedingly so on the internet. Therefore, jokes are an ideal platform of understanding how the Shona in particular present women in humour.

Nevo & Nevo (2001:144) note that each culture has its own set of values, norms, and unwritten rules of what is appropriate in humour, and these largely determine its content, target, and style. Kosonen (2014:3) is for the idea that humour cannot be separated from the group of people in which it is used, or from the individuals who participate. From the studies that have been carried out on how women are presented in other languages, one cannot make generalizations that across cultures women are presented in the same fashion because cultures differ. It is from this realization that the present research examines how Shona culture in particular perceives and depicts women as it is given expression in its humour.

According to Lang & Lee (2010:47);

humour in its various manifestations provides a useful channel for covert communication. Since what a person does in a jest is usually not accorded the same

weight of responsibility as what he does seriously, humour provides a means to test the openness, accessibility and riskiness of sensitive issues.

This study makes use of humour to examine the Shona notion of gender through examining how women in particular are presented in humorous narratives. Francis *et al.* (1999:155) note that “one of the difficulties in conducting a study of humour is in convincing one’s audience to take the subject seriously...Yet the presence of humour in even the gravest situations gives us a clue to its crucial role in facilitating interaction”. As is suggested by Francis *et al.* (1999), humour can be used to express and achieve a variety of interactional goals. Shifman & Lemish (2011:254) state that rather than light-hearted entertainment, jokes are important arenas in which sensitive and troubling issues are processed and negotiated. In this research, therefore, the current researcher uses humour as a lens through which people can get to understand how the Shona people express their perception of women since gender is one of the sensitive and troubling issues in Shona society.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Data gathering techniques

Data for this study was gathered through desk research. Most of the data for this research was collected from the internet. Shifman (2007:187) argues that, ‘in the present era, the internet has become a major actor in the production and distribution of humour’. Countless websites are

devoted to humour, and an enormous traffic of emails containing humorous messages daily congest PC terminals all over the world. Shifman & Lemish (2010:870) note that;

in a relatively short period of time that it has existed, the internet has become a major player in the production and distribution of humour, in general, and humour about gender, in particular. Since comic texts draw on prevalent ideologies, stereotypes, and cultural codes, analyses of humour offer a unique perspective for understanding contemporary perceptions and stereotypes of highly charged issues such as gender and sexuality.

The research analyses the presentation of women in humorous narratives that were circulated on social media to try and explain the Shona people's perceptions and stereotypes about women. Dewing (2010) defines social media as the wide range of internet-based and mobile services that allow users to participate in online exchanges, contribute user-created content, or join online communities. Since there is a vast range of social media platforms, for the purpose of this study, focus is directed to Facebook and WhatsApp as sources of data. While massive numbers of internet users seem to be involved in circulating and reading gendered humour online, academic research to date has overlooked this phenomenon, (Shifman & Lemish, 2010:870). Shona as a language is also fast growing in terms of the production and circulation of humour on the internet. Therefore, due to the enormity of humour on the internet, the researcher sampled and created a corpus of jokes that were circulated via WhatsApp and Facebook.

A targeted sampling method was used to obtain gender specific Shona humorous narratives.

Material was selected using 2 methods:

- 1). A power search was conducted using an internet database to search for and select Shona humour from Facebook using the key word *nyambo dzeChiShona* (Shona humour), and the following links were found; *ZimBest Shona and English Jokes*, *Nyambo DzeZhira* and *Nyambo dzinosetsa pamwe nekuvaka Zimbabwe*, and;
- 2). Humorous narratives circulated via WhatsApp were recommended by a six-member research group who worked as research assistants for the present researcher.
- 3). The researcher also made use of intuition to complement the data that was selected from online sources. As a native speaker of Shona, the researcher selected some humorous Shona narratives from her joke repertoire.

Loads of humorous narratives were gathered, but for the purposes of this study, only vignettes with the words *mukadzi/vakadzi* (a woman/women), *musikana/vasikana* (a girl/girls), *murume/varume* (a man/men) and *mukomana/vakomana* (a boy/boys), *gogo/sekuru* (grandmother/grandfather) were selected. The researcher only used neutral terms to search for the narratives and left out stereotypical terms because she wanted the selected narratives to reveal the gender perspectives of the society represented. This targeted sampling method was designed to locate humorous narratives with women as the butt of the jokes and this sampling procedure yielded 85 humorous narratives. It was found out that some of the jokes that were circulated on WhatsApp were the same as those posted on Facebook, which is why the number of selected jokes was not so enormous.

1.4.2 Data analysis techniques

The qualitative research method was used to analyse the depiction of gender in Shona humour.

Nieuwenhuis (2007:6) states that:

qualitative data is usually based on the interpretative philosophy that is aimed at examining meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data...the best is achieved through a process of inductive analysis of qualitative data where the main purpose is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by a more structured theoretical orientation.

From the raw data that was gathered for this research, the researcher coded the selected jokes, identified the themes and developed categories and then tested the selected theories against the data. The researcher did a qualitative content analysis of the selected jokes. Hsieh & Shannon (2005:1278) state that qualitative content analysis is one of the numerous research methods used to analyse text data. They go on to argue that the goal of content analysis is, “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study.” In this research therefore, the present researcher makes use of selected jokes to understand how the Shona people in particular represent women in their humour.

Nieuwenhuis (2007a) mentions that content analysis is particularly well suited to the study of communications and to answering the classic question of communications research: “Who says what, to whom, why, how and with what effect? Nieuwenhuis (2007b) goes on to say that, “as a qualitative analytical method, content analysis is a deductive and iterative process of looking at

data from different angles with a view to identify keys in the text that will help us to understand and interpret the raw data”. This study answers the questions how are women presented in Shona humour, why and with what effect?

A content analysis was performed to collect gender specific commentary and facilitate the development of a categorization scheme. Each vignette was coded and categorised according to the target or the butt of the joke. A content analysis of the selected jokes made it possible for the researcher to categorise the humorous narratives.

Coding categories for the analysis included topics such as infidelity, sexuality, cruelty, prostitution, malice, witchcraft, materialism, illogical thinking, stupidity, irresponsibility, ignorance, emotionality and beautification and these were grouped into three major categories.

It should be noted that these categories are characteristic of Shona humour, though this does not mean that these are the only topics that shape Shona humour. Most of the characteristics indicated above are portrayed in sexist humour, where it can be argued that patriarchal values influence the content of sexist humour, and in turn, sexist humour supports patriarchal notions, (Bemiller & Schneider, 2010:466).

The following categories were identified from the data that was gathered for this research:

1. Women and sex – women as sex objects; women as sex obsessed/nymphomaniacs; old women as sexually repelling; women as morally decadent.
2. Devaluation of women's personal characteristics – women as materialistic and self-centred; women as talkative and domineering; women as rumour-mongers, stupid, irrational, incompetent and compulsively jealous beings.
3. Women and malevolence – women as carriers of diseases; married women as sources of men's problems; old women as witches; mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law as jealous of each other; women as unforgiving; as well as jokes that support violence against women.

The jokes that were selected for this research include jokes in 'pure' Shona language and those that code-mix Shona and English. Some of the jokes also made use of street lingo where slang was used. Code-mixing of Shona and English is mainly caused by the fact that English has for long been the sole official language of Zimbabwe and is the medium of instruction in the education sector. Most of the people who use the internet and social media platforms are able to read and write and they have at least some knowledge of English. Generally, code-mixing is how most of the educated elite speak, consciously or unconsciously (c.f Mashiri, 2002; Veit-Wild, 2009) and this trend is present in humour.

The Superiority Theory of Humour, Feminism and Incongruity were used to analyse data in order to come up with logical conclusions for this study. These above mentioned theories are explained in detail in Chapter 3.

1.5 Organisation of Study

Chapter One provides the basic introduction of the research. It particularly provides the context and statement of purpose, area of investigation, the aims of the study, the rationale and significance of study and the methodology.

Chapter Two defines humour. It outlines the concept of humour and its various types. The chapter also focuses on the classification of humour in general and the different types of Shona humour in particular and lastly the chapter further outlines the functions of humour.

Chapter Three defines gender and reviews literature and it also outlines the theoretical background to the study. The study adopts the Superiority Theory of Humour, Feminism and Incongruity as theories for analyzing data.

It is in Chapters Four, Five and Six that the analysis and discussion of data is done. Chapter Seven provides the findings, conclusion and recommendations arising from the research. Suggestions for further research on humour are also given in this chapter.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter paves the way for the study. It marks the scope of the research and its major aims. The study is meant to examine how the Shona people view and present women through humour. This has been motivated by the fact that nothing much has been done in analysing how humour can be used to study gender in Shona. The next chapter focuses on the definition of humour and gender in general. It also outlines the various types and functions of humour, which will facilitate in delineating the current study against the background of what has been studied earlier.

CHAPTER TWO

DEFINING HUMOUR

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is limited to the definition of key terms in this study, which are humour and gender. It focuses on the definition of humour in general, and it also gives the researcher's own interpretation of humour. The chapter discusses the various types of humour in language in general, and special attention is paid to the various types of humour that are found in Shona, since humour is also determined by culture. There are certain forms of humour that are peculiar to Shona which are not found in other languages/cultures. Besides analysing the different types of humour, the chapter also discusses the different functions of humour. From the discussion below, it is evident that humour, as an art form, is not produced for art's sake, but the different types of humour have different functions.

2.2 The Concept of Humour

Humour is one of the most amazing and fuzzy aspects of human behaviour and, despite its common occurrence, it is still not clearly defined (Ritchie, 2003; Attardo, 2001). McCreddie

(2008:3) argues that humour is a complex phenomenon incorporating cognitive, emotional, behavioural, physiological and social aspects. Because of its complexity, defining humour has not been an easy task. Various theorists acknowledge the difficulty associated with humour. Cooper (2005:766) states that humour is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon. Therefore, the construct of humour, like emotion, does not readily lend itself to a single, generalised definition (Chapman & Foot, 1976).

The definitions that have been put forward focus on either the speaker intention or audience interpretation. Holmes (2000b:163) defines humour as utterances which are identified by the analyst on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic, and discursal clues, as intended by the speakers to be amusing and perceived to be amusing by at least some participants.

Humour can be verbal or non-verbal. It can be in the form of actions or physical expressions, or even pictorial illustrations that induce laughter. Humour is produced in the physical context of face-to-face interaction and, in that case, it may be quite difficult to judge it on the basis of its paralinguistic and prosodic features.

In the context of internet humour, participants make up for paralinguistic and prosodic features by using textual cues, including, according to Knight (2008:483), “emoticons or punctuation for facial expressions or prosodic signs”. Because this research is relying mainly on the internet as its main source of data, the researcher cannot exclusively judge humour or classify it on the basis of paralinguistic, and prosodic features because “internet messages thus explicitly convey

information that may be implicit in aural conversation”, (Knight, 2008:483). What matters most in humour then are the discursual features and the content of the messages that are meant to be amusing.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines humour as “quality of action, speech, or writing which excites amusement”, which is “the faculty of perceiving what is ludicrous or amusing, or of expressing it in speech, writing, or other composition; jocose imagination or treatment of a subject”. Bergmann (1986:65) argues that, “I use humour to denote episodes-situations, objects, words, statements and stories that are funny and that are produced with the intention that they be funny.” On the same note, Wilson (2008:4) submits that humour refers to “quality of action, speech, or writing, which excites amusement, oddity, jocularly, facetiousness, comicality, fun.” McCreddie (2008:24) defines humour as a broad process that can be split into social, cognitive-perceptual, emotional and behavioural (e.g. laughter) aspects. Alternatively, it can also be used to refer to some kind of stimulus such as a joke or cartoon (Martin, 2001). McCreddie (2008:24) gives a collection of definitions on the different aspects from different scholars as follows:

-a *social* phenomenon, principally occurring in social situations (Martin & Kuiper, 1999) or as play (Apter, 1991);

-a *cognitive perceptual process*, involving mental processing of information e.g. word play or incongruity (Koestler, 1964);

-an *emotion*; perception of humour may invoke a positive emotional response. Martin (2006) suggests ‘mirth’ is the emotion best associated and most specific to humour while other suggestions include cheerfulness.

- a behaviour vis-à-vis *laughter*; considered to be the physical expression or appreciation of humour. A *vocal-behavioural* pattern that is easily recognized, (Provine & Yong, 1991).

This collection of definitions is very important in defining humour since there is no consensus on what exactly humour is.

Bardon (2005:1) states that humour is a general term that (in its usual sense) refers either to something intended to cause amusement or to whatever quality that makes something amusing. Archakis *et al.* (2011:313) argue that humour is based on the deviation from what is considered to be the norm, i.e. a widespread assumption or a valid convention inside a group. They argue that the main criterion for the characterisation of an utterance as humorous is its congruous content. While this definition is true, it is not always the case in Shona humour that everything that is considered humorous is congruous. Sometimes humour in Shona may be based on truth but the manner in which the expression, story or narrative is conveyed is what invokes humour.

Of particular note is the fact that all the definitions given above subscribe to the fact that humour is defined either on the basis of the butt, that is the main focus or who is made fun of, or it depends on the audience’s interpretation. Freud (1905/1976) observes that humour, which he

calls spoken jokes, is a 'social process' involving three 'persons' – the teller of the joke, the person the joke is about, and the person who is hearing the joke.

Lundberg (1969)'s scheme realises four elements of humour:

- 1) the initiator – that is, the individual who initiates the joke;
- 2) the target – that is, the individual or group towards whom the joke is directed;
- 3) the focus – that is, the person who is the "butt" of the joke; and
- 4) the publics – that is, those persons in addition to the initiator and the target who can see and/or hear the joke.

Nilsen (1994:930) states that with humorous incidents or jokes, there are at least four characteristics that need to be looked at:

- 1) the subject; 2) the tone; 3) the intent; and 4) the situation, including the teller and the audience.

It is this 'second person', the 'focus'/'butt' or 'the subject' that we will be chiefly concerned with in this study, that is – in this case, the female character.

McCreddie (2008:25) notes that humour and laughter are often taken to mean one and the same thing, whereas they are two (potentially) distinct aspects of a phenomenon. Nonetheless, both exist on a broad spectrum incorporating many facets from stimulus (or no stimulus) through

emotion, social, cognitive-perceptual and behavioural aspects: the latter taken to mean (in research terms at least), almost exclusively, laughter. Mulkay (1988) and Archakis & Tsakona (2005, 2006) cited in Archakis *et.al.* (2011:313) are of the opinion that laughter constitutes a secondary criterion in order to characterise a piece of discourse as humorous. The laughter can come from a speaker while producing his/her own utterance, or from the audience as a reaction to what is being said. Lynch (2002:424) avers that jokes and humour, in general, play an important part in determining who we are and how we think of ourselves and as a result, how we interact with others. A sense of humour has been an essential part of humankind and society throughout the ages.

Kotthoff (2000:64) declares that laughter is the contextualisation cue for humour par excellence. While it is true that humour and laughter work hand in glove, there can be humour without laughter, just as much as we may have laughter without humour. This is particularly true of Shona because not all types of humour invoke laughter. There are cases where humour's major purpose is not necessarily to make the audience laugh but to actually express something serious. So we cannot base our definition of humour on whether it invokes laughter or not. In this case, then, it can be noted that humour involves a lot of aspects which have already been listed above.

In this study humour is, therefore, defined as any statement or story that is funny, and is produced with the intention of making the listener(s) laugh – though we may also have humour without laughter. The statement or story that is intended to be humorous may or may not necessarily be true. In Shona, humour appears in various forms which are *jee*, *muchohwe*,

kutsvinya, *kuwanza*, *kunemera*, *nyambo* and *kusetsa*, all of which shall be explained later. Most of these manifestations of humour in Shona are meant to induce laughter, though the difference is on the participants and the content of humour.

The researcher has settled for the humorous narratives, as they are long enough to describe situations or events where women (and men) are used as characters. These forms of humorous narratives in Shona are referred to as *jee*, *muchohwe* or *kusetsa*, though in the discussion of the various types of humour other forms like *nyambo*, *utukwa*, *kutsvinya*, *kuwanza* and *kunemera* are also analysed. The next section will now focus on the different types of humour.

2.3 Types of Humour

Humour can be classified into different types. Weiberger & Gulas (1992:39) assert that humour can be categorised into two different dimensions, “content and/or technique”. Wilson (2008:5) classifies humour into forms such as anecdotes, narrative jokes, one-liners, slapstick, impressions, satire and comic monologues. Weiberger & Gulas (1992:39) allude that all humour is commonly placed in one of the three classifications: aggressive, sexual, or nonsense. Perry (2001:104) offers that humour can be hostile or aggressive, sexual, incongruous or nonsensical in style. Weiberger & Gulas (1992), as well as Perry (2001)’s classification of humour is plausible but, in the case of Shona, there are other forms that cannot fit into these categories. For example *kunemera* that is done by family friends/*madzisahwira*, *kusetsa* which is done by daughters-in-

law/*varoora* or close friend/*sahwira* at a funeral can neither be aggressive, sexual nor nonsensical. This, therefore, calls for another classification or categorisation of humour that caters for Shona humour. The current researcher, therefore, categorises humour into sexual, aggressive, nonsensical, euphemistic, didactic and sadistic humour.

The concept of humour is, thus, diverse and it depends on language and culture. Whether it is sexual, nonsensical, aggressive, euphemistic, didactic or sadistic, humour can be in the form of narratives, impressions, puns, one-liners, etc. This section analyses the various types of humour that are found in different languages, but more emphasis is placed on humour in Shona and the taxonomy is on the basis of content. I will first classify humour on the basis of topic or content and then categorise it in terms of technique.

2.3.1 Sexual Humour

Brunner & Costello (2002) use the term sexual humour to refer to humour that relates to issues of either gender or sexuality. This kind of humour is also referred to as dirty humour or obscene humour. Normally, this kind of humour is not used for information exchange but is “part of a more general behaviour pattern referred to as ‘acting grown up’”, (Gunther 2003:46). Sexual humour addresses sexual issues, issues that are considered taboo to talk about in public or amongst people of a restricted relationship. Because of its content, sexual humour cannot be told freely and thoughtlessly in the company of people whom one is not very close to or in the

company of the opposite sex. The internet has, thus, fostered the creation and circulation of sexual humour as one does not lose face because of anonymity that is typically associated with it. According to Gunther (2003:47), sexual humour enables people to address tabooed areas without risk of losing face. Taboo words or taboo issues represent a class of emotionally arousing references with respect to body products, sexual acts, ethnic or racial insults, profanity, vulgarity, slang and scatology (Jay *et al.*, 2008). Shona is not an exception when it comes to sexual humour. In most cases, sexual humour is found amongst people of the same sex and even among young adults. An example of sexual humour in Shona is given below:

1. *Mumwe mukomana akasangana nemusikana aive nemazizamu mahombe ndokubva amuchiva. Akabva afunga kumunyenga, akati nhasi ndinoayamwa chete mazizamu iwayo. Uyuwo musikana akaonawo mukomana uyu ndokubva amuchiva nekuti bhurugwa rake ranga rakazvimba pamberi akati ndiye chaiye mukomana andinoda uyu. Akabva atozviona achirara nemukomana uya. Mukomana akapfimba musikana, musikana ndokubvuma. Vakaenda kuhotera vakatenga zvokudya. Vapedza vakabva vati ngatiitei zvatafambira. Mukomana akabvisira musikana hembe, akaona aah, inga haana mazamu, anga akapfekera maorenji. Uyuwo musikana achibvisira mukomana bhurugwa, akaona inga haisi mboro, zibhanana raanga akaisa mubhurugwa. Vose vakaona kuti vanyengedzana ndobva vagara zvavo pamubhedha, musikana achidya bhanana, mukomanawo achidya maorenji.*

[A certain young man met a young lady with a big bust and he became infatuated. Lustfully, he thought of courting the young woman, because he wanted to suck her breasts and make love to her. Similarly, the young lady saw the guy and loved him at first sight because she saw the guy's privates protruding in his trousers. She said to herself, "This is the right guy that I would love to sleep with". The guy proposed love to the young lady and without any objection, the lady accepted the proposal. Without wasting time, they went to a hotel and they booked a room for themselves and ordered some food. After having their food, they now wanted to make love. The guy took off the young lady's clothes and was surprised to see that what he thought were big breasts were actually fake. They were essentially two large oranges that were put in the lady's bra. The lady undressed the young man and was surprised to see that what she thought was a large penis was actually a very big banana that was stashed in the guy's underwear. They were both surprised and realised they had fallen for each other's deception. Because they had

tricked each other, they simply sat on the bed; the young man ate the oranges while the young lady treated herself to the banana.]

Among the Shona people, normally this kind of humour cannot be told to people of the opposite sex or to people of a restricted relationship, for example between in-laws because Shona considers sex and sex related issues as taboo.

2.3.2 Aggressive Humour

Ozyesil *et al.* (2013:35) define aggressive humour as the tendency to use humour for the purpose of criticising or manipulating others – as in sarcasm, teasing and ridicule, and relates to the tendency to express humour without regard for its potential impact on others. DiCiocco (2012:96) states that aggressive humour incorporates teasing, sarcasm and ridicule to demean and degrade. Mendiburo-Seguel *et al.* (2015) posit that aggressive humour is related to sarcasm, ridicule, irony and the use of humour as a form of manipulation, with tacit threats in the guise of ridicule. Martin *et al.* (2003:54) propose that the objective in using aggressive humour is to say funny things that are likely to hurt and alienate others. DiCiocco (2010:342) is of the opinion that aggressive humour is engaged to elevate oneself and/or damage another by destructively employed social knowledge. It can be used for expressing assertiveness and hostility. Irony is a conduit of expressing aggressive humour.

Laineste (2013:3), however, notes that what is an act of aggression to one party may be mere mirth for another...the reactions to a statement that was intended humorously or was expressed through humorous means may be unexpected to the initiator and can even result in actual physical violence. Instances of aggressive humour are found in *kutsvinyira*/insults between ethnic groups, which can be called ethnic humour. For example, a Shona speaker can humorously mock a person of Malawian or Mozambican origin on the basis of their lack of formal education or on the way they speak and this may actually result in physical violence or verbal altercations.

2.3.3 Nonsensical Humour

This kind of humour is also referred to as surreal humour. It is that kind of humour that thrives on nonsense. In most cases there is no argument in the humour. Nonsensical humour does not aim at insulting anyone, for it does not contain any form of aggression, neither does it show traces of irony or sarcasm but is it just nonsense. The person who creates nonsense humour derives fun from making the audience laugh through making use of messages that seem to convey no meaning. These, in Shona, are simply referred to as *mafanisi* (from funnies)/*kusetsa*. One can create nonsensical humour through making use of meaningless words or telling a story that lacks sense. For example:

2. *Nhau dzichiverengwa naToropito:*

Zvanzi bhazi rekwaTenda kuNyanga ratsika svosve ndokuwira mugomba renhodo. Izvi zvaonekwa nerimwe bofu raive rakadongorera nepahwindo rebhasikoro. Mutauri wenyaya iyi ndechimwe chimumumu chinogara kuGlenview.

[Here is the news read by Toropito:

It has been reported that in Nyanga, a bus belonging to the Tenda Bus Company ran over an ant and fell into a *nhodo*¹ hole. This was witnessed by one blind man who was peeping through the windscreen of his bicycle. The reporter of this story is a dumb man who stays in Glenview.]

Humour, in the above example, is derived from the story that lacks sense because of the impossible and improbable events that are narrated. The nonsensical narrative is meant to just amuse the listeners and make them laugh. Nonsense humour is more amusing if it is accompanied by prosodic and paralinguistic features of tone, speed of voice as well as action.

2.3.4 Euphemistic Humour

This refers to humour that is meant to make a soft confrontation in an otherwise dire situation. It brings about the truth, which would be very difficult to express in an ordinary situation or in a more direct manner. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines euphemism as “a mild or pleasant word or phrase that is used instead of one that is unpleasant or offensive”. The term is also defined as the substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend or suggest something unpleasant.

¹*Nhodo* is a traditional children’s game which resembles jacks. It is played with several small stones, called *vana* (children), which are placed in a small hole dug in the ground. A larger stone, called *mubhoga/mudodo*, is then tossed in the air as the player attempts to scoop a certain number of *vana* out of the hole, then catch the *mubhoga/mudodo* before it hits the ground.

In Shona, euphemistic humour is referred to as *kunemera* or *utukwa*. This kind of humour is euphemistic because whilst the concerned parties might be expressing deep facts as well as their disgruntlement, they still want to do it in a dignified way that is not aggressive. The relationship between *tete* and *muroora* (sisters-in-law), *babamukuru namainini* (brother-in-law and his sister-in-law), *sekuru nemuzukuru* (an uncle and his nephew) or *mbuya nemuzukuru* (a grandmother and her niece) is close and the parties are, therefore, not supposed to confront each other or exchange harsh words. In that case, then, if one of them wants to convey something serious (which may actually offend the other), Shona permits them to do so in a jocular manner and, consequently, they make use of *kunemera* or *utukwa*. The confrontation of *utukwa* is soft and hidden and yet it expresses critical matters. Comments may be on physical features or on behaviour. This kind of humour is not meant to express hostility or aggression like what aggressive humour does, and the concerned parties are not supposed to take offense. An example of *kunemera* in Shona is given below:

3. *Mainini: Babamukuru munongotora tora zvinhu zvevanhu saka makazomera mazihobi anenge egudo anokurambisai nevasikana.*
Babamukuru: Aah, ko imi nekusviba kwenyu ikoko dai tisisu takatozokudaiwo maizoonekwawo naani?

[Sister-in-law: Hey brother-in-law, you just take other people's things willy-nilly; no wonder you developed a big forehead like that of a baboon and that is what makes women not to love you.

Brother-in-law: Aah, what about you? As dark as you are! If it were not for the likes of us who loved you, who else on this earth would have seen you?]

In the above example, *mainini* (sister-in-law) is commenting on her *babamukuru* (brother-in-law)'s behaviour of thievery but she is doing it in a jocular manner by using a light word *kungotora-tora* (taking willy-nilly) instead of using a more direct word, *kuba* (stealing) and also mentioning *babamukuru's mahobi* (brother-in-law's big forehead) which he might not even have. In the same vein, *babamukuru* is also expressing his *mainini's* ugliness or unattractiveness but in a jocular manner. This is not aggressive but it is euphemistic in nature. *Babamukuru* is not supposed to take offense or fight his *mainini* but is expected to correct his bad behaviour and reform.

2.3.5 Sadistic Humour

This is the kind of humour that thrives on making fun out of other people's injury, illness or misfortunes. According to the Oxford Online dictionary, sadism is "the tendency to derive pleasure, especially sexual gratification, from inflicting pain, suffering or humiliation of others". In the context of humour, sadistic humour thrives on making fun of those in pain, trouble or in any kind of misfortune. This kind of humour is mainly meant to discourage bad behaviour and to castigate vice in an indirect way. Sadistic humour is used by people of common solidarity or between mutual friends but never in the presence of somebody who might have the features or things that are made fun of in the humour. An example is the Shona joke that follows:

4. *Mumwe murume airwara neAids ainge akaberekwa nemukadzi wakevachibva kuchipatara. Murume uya akadonhedza bhutsu yake, zvikanzi nemumwewo mukomana*

aitevera mumashure, “Ambuya mwana adonhedza bhutsu.” Zvikanzi nemurume uye anga akaberekwa, “Mupfanha ndokuburukira”.

[A certain man who was ailing with AIDS was carried on the back by his wife on their way from the clinic. The ailing man dropped his shoe and a young man who was following behind them called to say: “Ma’am, your baby has dropped his shoe.” With anger, the ailing man whimpered from his wife’s back, “Young man, I’ll get down here and come after you.”]

This is a good example of sadistic humour since joy is derived from laughing at the ailing man who has become emaciated because of the pandemic and threatening to beat up the other man who mistakes him for a baby. Naturally and culturally, people are not supposed to make fun out of another person’s troubles, as the Shona people say “*Seka urema wafa*”, but in this kind of humour, laughter is derived from poking fun at the sick man and his vain threats to the man who had mistaken him for a baby. One wonders how the ailing man, who cannot even walk on his own, could afford to get down and beat the young man, and this induces mirth in the reader.

2.3.6 Didactic humour

Typically, art in Shona, particularly, is not art for art’s sake; it is meant to teach. Similarly, humour as one of the oral art forms is also didactic. Didactic humour is meant to teach. It is shared among people of all age groups as people live to learn, and learn every day, as the Shona people say *Kudzidza hakuperi* (learning is a life-long process). Didactic humour is meant to discourage bad character traits by presenting the butt (in this case somebody with ill manners), in a nasty predicament. An example of didactic humour is given below:

5. *Vamwe mai vainge vakaroorwa paguru ramambo. Mai ava ndivo vakabva vaita nyachide waMambo nekuti vaimiramira chaizvo kuti vadiwe. Vaiti kana mumwe mukadzi akabika zvinonaka, kana Mambo akabvunza kuti ndiani abika izvi, ivo vaibva vakurumidza kuti, “Ndini Murambwi”, Mambo obva avapa nyama yechimukuyu. Saka vamwe vakadzi vakagumbuka nazvo, ndobva mumwe wavo ati nhasi toda kumborovesa nyachide naMambo, ndobva adzura mumba netsvina yake. Mambo apinda mumba ndobva anzwa mumba muchinhuhwa tsvina yemunhu, ndobva aona madziro akadzurwa netsvina ndobva amira achidaidzira achiti, “Ndiani adzura mumba mangu?” nyachide ndobva akurumidza kudavira achiti, “Ndini Murambwi”. Mambo akabva angотора chamboko ndokutanga kuzvambura nyachide vaya ndobva avadzinga pamusha.*

[A certain woman was married to a polygamous king. This woman was too enthusiastic and overzealous and wanted to get all the favours, love and attention from the King, much to the displeasure of her co-wives. Consequently, the woman became the King's favourite wife. Now, when other co-wives prepared good food for the King, this favourite wife would claim to be the one who would have prepared it as, whenever the king enquired after the cook, the woman would quickly say, “It's me Murambwi!” Now, one of the co-wives plotted against this favourite wife and wanted her to be beaten by the King. So she secretly smeared her excreta all over within the King's hut. When the King got into his room, he smelled the human waste and noticed that the walls and the floor were smeared with excreta. As usual, the King asked as to who had smeared the walls and floor of his hut and quickly the favourite wife says; “It's me, Murambwi!” and without saying much, the King took his sjambok and lashed the woman thoroughly before chasing her away to her people.]

In Shona, polygamy is acceptable and, traditionally, a king was supposed to have many wives – which was a sign of his wealth. Now, the above narrative is didactic in the sense that it teaches women not to be too enthusiastic and overzealous in polygamous marriages and learn to correlate well with their co-wives.

2.4 Classification of Humour on the Basis of Technique

As has already been highlighted, humour can be classified on the basis of its content or its technique. By technique, the researcher means the form of humour. Below is the classification of humour on the basis of technique. Perry (2001:104) offers that humour can be hostile or aggressive, sexual, incongruous or nonsensical in style. Although some types of Shona humour fit into these categories, there are other forms of humour which the researcher has found to be peculiar to Shona. The researcher's model of classification is based on context, because Shona humour is mainly based on what Luque (2010:397) calls 'plays on ideas' (humour related to context), than on plays on words (humour related to language and structure). Below is a classification of Shona humour which is based on context.

2.4.1 Joke

Dynel (2009:1284-85) remarks that the (canned) joke is commonly considered the prototypical form of verbal humour, produced orally in conversations or published in collections. Dynel further states that this kind of humour is defined in terms of its constituent parts. Sherzer (1985:216) defines a joke as "a discourse unit consisting of two parts, the set up and the punch line." Jokes, which can also be called canned jokes are described by Attardo *et al.* (2011) as a short narrative with a punch line. Attardo & Chabanne (1992) argue that "the set-up is normally built of a narrative or/and a dialogue while the punchline is the final portion of text, which

engenders surprise and leads to incongruity with the set up”. Jokes can be subcategorised into narrative jokes and question and answer jokes. Narrative jokes take the form of a story while question and answer jokes are jokes in which the punch line takes the form of an answer to a question. Jokes can be sexual, aggressive, incongruous or nonsensical in style. This kind of humour is what is referred to as *kusetsa* (to make laugh) in Shona. What needs to be noted here is that in Shona, in particular, *kusetsa* is shared between people of common standing. In Shona, *kusetsa* can be on any topic that can make people laugh and in most cases if it is done amongst same sex groups, the topics for the *kusetsa* genre are on sex or sex related issues. This research mainly focuses on narrative jokes and their various categories because of their heuristic advantages over other humour forms such as puns and slapstick.

2.4.2 Witticism

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines witticism as a clever or funny remark. It can also be referred to as a one-line or a wisecrack. Long & Graesser (1998) are of the view that “witticisms are context-bound, but occur spontaneously – usually in non-humorous conversational environment, in contrast to canned jokes, which constitute integral parts per se, dissociated from the whole discourse”.

In their form, witticisms resemble one-liners but the difference is that witticisms convey meanings besides facilitating humour; they are inherently clever, while one-liners are produced

within a humorous frame and rarely communicate meanings outside it. Witticisms may either be “formed on the spur of the moment or, once verbalised, gain a permanent status in an individual speaker’s idiolect or in the language of a social group, particularly if they are used by respected members of a peer group or appear in media discourse targeted at broad audiences”, (Norrick, 2003).

Witticisms can be classified according to semantic phenomena or stylistic figures on which they operate. The difference between witticism and a joke is that a joke is a narrative largely, but not entirely, separate from the rest of the conversation, which contains a punch line, usually at the end of the text. The punch line builds on and exploits the narrative (usually called the “set up” of the joke). Conversely, the conversational witticism is not part of a separate narrative, but rather a comical “one-liner”. The humorous part of a joke text is referred to as “punch line” whilst that of a conversational witticism is referred to as “jab line”. Canned jokes are narrative in nature. They have a punch line which comes at the end of the narrative and they are introduced by negotiating sequence. Whereas witticism/conversational humour is non-narrative, it contains a jab line because humour is found anywhere in the sentence and it is also not introduced.

2.4.4 Anecdote

An anecdote is a story which the speaker perceives to be amusing. Dynel (2009:1285) states that an anecdote is not necessarily drawn out but must impart information. It is further stated that an

anecdote will most often be about experiences or actions of either the speaker or someone they are acquainted with. This kind of humour is more or less like *nyambo* (funny stories) in Shona, though in a *nyambo* the story may not necessarily be about the speaker's experiences and the stories in *nyambo* are not always true. *Nyambo* will be discussed in detail below.

2.4.5 Insult

An insult is a remark that puts someone down or ascribes a negative characteristic to them. Evaldson (2005:772) avers that insults are pejorative comments about a person's behaviour, possession or appearance. Dynel (2009:1284-1285) classifies insults into two distinct types. One is jocular abuse in which the speaker jokingly insults a member of the audience and the other is when someone absent is insulted. In the case of an insult that targets a person who is absent, the insult, according to Dynel (2009), is likely to be genuine and the humour stems from the unexpectedness of the statement – which in most circumstances would be unacceptable. For insult that targets someone who is present, the insult would be jocular and it highlights similarities and serves to maintain solidarity. Goodwin (1990) argues that insults are different from irony in that they include an explicit characterization of the recipient or violator as defective in some socially relevant way. In Shona, humour of this nature may not necessarily stereotype but it insults somebody in terms of facial appearance, or behavioural weakness. Insults can also be in the form of *kutsvinya/kutsvinyira* or *kuwanza/kuwanzira*. Whilst

kutsvinya/kutsvinyira or *kuwanza/kuwanzira* is meant to amuse the listener(s), sometimes it may be offensive to the targeted person because there may be some elements of truth in the insult.

2.4.6 Irony

Haverkate (1999:77) defines irony basing on one of two criteria: saying the opposite of what you mean or saying something different from what you mean. On the same note, Dynel (2009:1284-1285) argues that if the speaker does not mean their words to be taken literally and in, saying them, is implying the opposite or something with a markedly different meaning, then it is classified as irony. Knowledge of the speakers and the context will be important in identifying irony. It would be very difficult for one to tell that a kind of humour is irony when they do not have an idea of the context or of the speaker.

Attardo (2001:169) puts forward that “naturally, in context, an ironical sentence will acquire (inferentially) a meaning that is minimally different and, in fact, in most cases opposed to that which the sentence would have in a ‘neutral’ context.” Hutchby (2001b:131) advances that a classically ironical proposition is the one that is designed to imply precisely the opposite of what it states. On that note, Dews *et al.* (1995:348) are of the view that the element of surprise that is yielded by the disparity between what is said and what is meant may trigger humour. In irony, therefore, humour comes from the disparity in what is said and what is implied.

Barbe (1995) claims that irony as humour can be used as a tool for politeness because, though it may be aggressive in nature, it is less damaging of face than overt aggression. An example of irony in Shona is when somebody says to a colleague, “*Ende wakagerwa zvakanaka*” (You have a nice haircut) when in fact he means the haircut is not appealing. The colleagues may just laugh it out. Irony in Shona is referred to as *chibhende*.

2.4.7 Lexemes

Lexemes are the shortest humorous chunks. Dynel (2009:1286) defines lexemes as “lexical units used in discourse for a humorous effect, whose semantic import is usually germane to the whole utterance, often non-humorous as such”. Dynel further mentions that the humorous potential of lexemes resides in their novelty, unprecedented juxtapositions (incongruity) of their constituents and the new semantic meaning they carry. It is further stated thus: “even if borrowed from popular media discourse, lexemes are widely repeated in appropriate conversational contexts; they are unlikely to be officially conventionalised and listed in dictionaries as lexical items and, thus, always retaining the quality of exceptionality”, (Dynel, 2009:1286).

Most humorous lexemes can be conceptualised as neologisms. Those are new words indispensable for naming new inventions and discoveries. Speakers will also incorporate new words in their idiolects, the sole reason being the novelty of expression and humour.

2.4.8 Self-deprecating humour

Self-deprecating humour is also referred to as self-mockery, self-directed humour or self-denigrating humour (cf. Crawford, 1995; Kotthoff, 2000; Norrick, 1993). This is a situation when the speaker directs humour at him/herself. Self-deprecating humour can be defined as a special kind of humour which draws on a person's or an in-group's perceived social, behavioural or psychological shortcomings with a non-serious intention.

Lampert & Ervin-Tripp (2006) state that self-denigrating humour is more self-teasing than a self-putdown, inasmuch as the speaker does not genuinely aim to disparage him/herself. Dynel (2009:1295) notes that the humorousness of a genuine auto-critical comment on the speaker's part, e.g. admitting to a mistake/failure (which transpires/may transpire), will have a cushioning effect. Self-deprecation produced in an awkward situation is a manifestation of the speaker's intelligence and composure, as he/she seems not to have lost his/her bearing. Norrick (1993) is of the opinion that in applying the technique of self-deprecation, the speaker displays his/her positive self-image and, in particular, one of the virtues in contemporary societies, i.e. the ability to laugh at one's inabilities or problems. In this case therefore, the butt of the joke in self-denigrating humour is oneself.

Hopton *et al.* (2013:6) note that self-deprecating humour deliberately targets the person who is telling the joke and is a form of affiliative humour. Martin *et al.* (2003:53) define affiliative humour as humour that is non-hostile, tolerant humour that is affirming of oneself and others.

Hopton *et al.* (2013:6) claim that there is a distinction between self-denigrating and self-disparaging/self-defeating humour. They state that in self-disparaging humour, there is an element of emotional neediness, avoidance and low self-esteem with a purpose to ingratiate oneself or gain approval. It expresses a depressive and negative view of the self, whereas self-deprecating humour conveys an honest and humble look at oneself. Self-denigrating/self-deprecating humour, therefore, has the person who says it as the butt.

2.5 Humour in Shona

The classification of humour in English, for example, may not be the same as the typologies of humour that are found in another language, say Shona. Shona humour is part of the broad class of Shona art. Shona art, just like any other African oral art form, is functional. It is always in the service of the society that gives rise to it. In Shona, humour appears in various forms which are *nyambo*, *jee/muchohwe*, *kunemera/utukwa*, *kutsvinyirana/kuwanzirana* as well as *chiroora* and *chisahwira*. All these manifestations of humour in Shona are meant to induce laughter, though the difference is on the participants and the content of humour. Below is a detailed examination of the various forms of humour in Shona.

2.5.1 Nyambo

In Shona, there is a genre of humour that is referred to as *nyambo*. The researcher could not equate this type of humour to the categories of humour that are written in published sources on humour. *Duramazwi Guru rechiShona* (DGRC) defines *nyambo* as follows: “*nyambo inyaya inosetsa, inotaurwa vanhu vachifara zvavo*”, (*Nyambo* is a funny story that is said while people are just having a light moment). *Nyambo* is made up of stories that may seem real but there would be some exaggerations that would be meant to teach, ridicule or poke fun.

In most cases, *nyambo* are created for the sake of entertainment. *Nyambo* can be done between people of common solidarity. In no way among the Shona people can *nyambo* be created and produced in the presence of one’s *vanyarikani* (in-laws). Among the Shona, *vanyarikani* are not licensed to share humour or poke fun at each other because of the restrained relationship which stresses that they have to maintain their social distance. If a person shares jokes with their *vanyarikani*, he/she would be regarded as *munhu asina hunhu/akafumuka* (one who lacks manners). *Nyambo* may have elements of nonsense, though there are also elements of didacticism since Shona art is not art for art’s sake. An example of *nyambo* is given below:

6. *Mumwe murume akaenda kumusha kwavatezvara vake kunoroora. Akaperekedzwa nemunyai wake. Vakapihwa kudywa kwemanheru mukuwasha ndokubva aramba kudywa nekuda kwekunyara. Sezvinei, dzimba dzepamusha apa dzaive dzakafanana, ukuwo yanga iri nguva yekukohwa. Mukwasha akarumwa nenzara ndokumutsa munyai wake kuti vanoba chibage mumunda. Munyai akaramba. Mukwasha akamuka ndokunoba chibage mumunda. Pakudzoka akasvikopinda mumba maive makarara ambuya.*

Akasvikokuchidza moto ndokufurura chibage. Ambuya vakapepuka ndokusimudza musoro kuti vaone kuti chii chiri kuitika. Mukwasha akati, “Rara ipapo! Usatombosimudza zvako kamusoro kako ikako. Ndakuti handei tinotora chibage ukaramba. Manje kana chaibva handisi kutombokupa!” Ambuya vakabva vati, “Ko zvaita seiko nhai mukwasha?” Mukwasha akabva asiya chibage chiya ndokubva angonyangarika murima imomo akananga kumusha kwake.

[A certain man went to his in-laws to pay bride price for his wife. He was accompanied by his intermediary². They were offered supper and, because of coyness, the son-in-law did not eat to his satisfaction³. They went to bed. As fate would have it, the huts at that homestead were alike and, incidentally, it was harvest season. The son-in-law became very hungry and he could not resist the hunger anymore. He decided to connive with his intermediary to go outside and steal some maize cobs from the field so that they could roast and help themselves, but the intermediary objected and so the son-in-law went alone. On his return, since the huts were identical, the son-in-law accidentally went into the hut where his mother-in-law was sleeping. He rekindled the fire and prepared the cobs for roasting. The mother-in-law got up and raised her head to see what was taking place, to which the son-in-law quipped: “You idiot, stay put! Don’t even raise your empty head. I asked you to go and steal some maize cobs with me and you refused; now you are raising your head to see what I am doing. Don’t ever think I will offer you any, not even a single grain”. The mother-in-law softly said, “What’s happening, my son-in-law?” The son-in-law was shocked and, without wasting time, he left the maize cobs and disappeared in the dark, never to be seen again.]

Humour is derived from the utterance that the *mukwasha* (son-in-law) makes to his *ambuya* (mother-in-law) in ignorance. In Shona, it is taboo to speak arrogantly, mock or scorn one’s in-laws, particular in-laws from one’s wife’s side. The narrative is not a true story but it is meant to amuse and to teach a lesson that people should be open and free to their in-laws and, whenever one did not have enough food to fill his stomach, one should never be tempted to steal. Humour is part of the Shona didactic system because it also moralizes.

² It is the custom in Shona that if a man wants to marry, he goes with an intermediary who would negotiate the bride price and plead with the in-laws on behalf of the suitor.

³ It is the custom in Shona that if a man is coming to his in-laws for the first time, when he is offered some food, he is not supposed to eat it all no matter how hungry he might be, as eating suggests that the man is gluttonous.

Below is another example of *nyambo*, which one can never share with his/her *vanyarikani*, superiors at work or with an elderly person.

7. *Vamwe varume vakashanya nzvimbo yavaisaziva ndokusvibirwa, ndokukumbira pokurara pane musha wasabhuku. Sabhuku ndokuti, “Ndinokupai pokurara asi imba yandakupayi yakabatana neyevanasikana vangu, uye door ravo harivhari, saka musazopindire vana vangu. Mukaita misikanzwa hameno henyu asi ndakuyambirai.” Vangoti rareyi varume ava vakamutsana ndokutora wake-wake pamhandara dziya vari vatatu. Vangopedzerana nevanasikana vaye, varume vakadzokera muimba yavo ndokuronga kuchienda runy'anhiriri. Vasati vamuka mumwe nomumwe akatanga kunzwa dumbu rake kuoma nekuzvimba kuita semukadzi ane mimba yemapatya vachifufutirwa vachingoburitsa mhengo yainhuhwa samare. Vakafunga kureurura. Baba vakati, “Hazvinetse; huyai mumwe nomumwe musina kupfeka muchipinda muhozi”. Baba ndokuti: “Mumwe nomumwe wenyu ngaabude aende mugomo Manzidzechikapakapa, auye nemuchero waanenge atanga kusangana nawo, ouya nayo michero yacho kuno.” Vakatanga kuenda mugomo iro raive kure kwazvo. Vakavika panguva dzakasiyana, baba ndokuti kune wokutanga aive auya nenyii “Kotama wakandifongorera wakaburitsa musoro wakaringa nzira ichabva nevamwe vako, ndichadaidza musikana wawakarara naye, ndiye achakurapa, asi haabvumirwe kusunga chiso kana kuseka. Mukangosekaseka chete simba remushonga rinofumuka wodzokerazve Manzidzechikapakapa”. Murume wokutanga akati “Zvakanakai Baba”. Musikana wokutanga ainzi Respinah akadaidzwa ndokuuya. Akatanga kundonyera nyii kumukosho kwemuchinda uya one by one akangonyarara, asingasungi chiso kana kuseka. Nyii idzi dzaive dzakawanda chaizvo. Ashingirira murume uya, akazoono vamwe vake vachibva mumwe akagukuchira matamba 16, mumwe mugoro wemazhanje muT-shirt, muchinda ndokubatwa nesetswa akabva anzi “Wafumura gwenzi rachiremba” . Ndookusiwa akadaro. Vamwe vake vakazosvikonzi vadye zvavakanga vauya nazvo zvambotanga zvakwizirwa mubhurugwa rewavakaputsa umhandara.*

[Some men visited a foreign place and it became dark before they reached their destination, so they asked for a place to sleep at the village head's home. The village head said to the men, "I will provide you with accommodation, but the room is next to my daughters' bedroom which does not have any door. So make sure you won't be tempted to sleep with my daughters because you will get yourself into big trouble. I have warned you!" As soon as they went to bed, the three men shared amongst themselves the man's three daughters and had sex. After they had sex with the girls, the men then went to sleep in their room and planned to leave very early, before the man woke up. Before they could leave, they each felt excruciating pain in their tummies and they noticed that their tummies were swollen and akin to a heavily pregnant woman carrying twins – and they were passing a very malodorous gas. So, the men decided to confess before the village head. The head asked each one of them to come into the granary, naked and then said to

the men, “You go to Manzidzechikapakapa mountain and each one of you is supposed to pick whatever fruits you see first and bring the fruits here.” The mountain was very far away, and the men came back at different intervals. The head said to the first man who had brought with him some *nyii* fruits, “I want you to bend down facing outside, looking at the way your colleagues will come. I shall call the girl whom you had sex with, and she is the one who is going to heal you. She is not supposed to screw her face or laugh. If you laugh, the medicine will not work, and I will ask you to go back to Manzidzechikapakapa mountain.” The man agreed. Then the head called in his daughter, Respinah, to come. She started inserting the *nyii* fruits into the man’s asshole, one by one, without screwing her face or laughing. The man endured the pain in silence, then after a while he noticed his other colleagues coming. One of them was carrying 16 *matamba* fruits, and the other one had almost a bucketful of *mazhanje* stashed in his T-shirt. The first man burst into laughter *(*mazhanje* and *matamba* are much bigger than *nyii*) and the village head said, “You have caused the medicine man’s medicine to lose its power!” So he asked the daughter to stop. The other two men were then asked to eat what they had brought but the fruits were first of all rubbed into the girls’genitals.]

Though the above *nyambo* is not based on truth, it is, however, loaded with life lessons. The *nyambo* teaches that people should not betray others’ trust and engage in casual sex. The men in the above *nyambo* suffered the consequences because they had betrayed the village head’s trust, and they had failed to keep the promise that they would not have sex with the village head’s daughters.

2.5.2 *Jee/muchohwe*

In Shona, there is a type of humour that is referred to as *jee*. According to Gombe (1986:72), *jee* or *muchohwe* is by and among mutual friends (*shamwari/madzisahwira*). In this case, the purpose of *jee* is just to poke fun at each other with the intention of correcting vice in a light and jocular manner. *Jee* is normally done during work parties which, in Shona, are referred to as

jakwara, nhimbe, hoka or *humwe*. This is when a group of people gather at an individual's homestead to help him/her thresh sorghum or millet harvest or to weed the fields.

At the *jakwara*, anyone would jocularly express his/her views about a particular individual who would also be present, without mentioning names. Issues expressed in *jee* would generally be true. Though *jee* is also performed by close friends who are not *vanyarikani*, in the context of *nhimbe* or *jakwara*, anyone is a potential participant in the exchange and creation of this kind of humour. In that case, though anyone is a potential participant in the exchange of *jee*, one cannot say *jee* to his/her in-law (*vanyarikani*) or to somebody else who is distant. No one is supposed to take offense since no names are mentioned. In that case, if somebody feels offended, he/she can just express their opinion in a light and jocular manner, but the retaliation is not supposed to be direct. An example of *jee/chihwerure* at a *nhimbe* is given below:

8. *Vamwe varume vanofamba vakadzibatira mumaoko vachingotora madzimai evamwe.*

[Lit. some men of this community move around carrying their weapons (penises) in their hands and they sleep around with other people's wives (some men of this community are filthy womanisers).]

9. *Ukaona munhu uchingoramba uchibereka vasikana vega vega zvinoreva kuti vari kukurirwa simba nevakadzi pabonde. Misana yavo yakadhambiswa nemahure kudhorobha kwavaimbosevenza.*

(If someone continues to bear girl children, it is because they are being overpowered by their wives in bed. Their backs were damaged by prostitutes whom they used to have sex with when they once worked in the city).

In example 8, the speaker is targeting a promiscuous man who beds married women in the community. The speaker does not mention any name but the concerned party would know for himself and is expected to correct his bad behaviour. Those present would laugh at the statement and they would as well know the targeted person. In *jee* number 9, the speaker is mocking men with daughters only because boy children are considered more important than girls among the Shona people. For a man to bear girls only, Shona people believe that it is a sign of very low sexual prowess for the man and it is also a subject of ridicule. In Shona, there is the saying “*Chihwerure hachiendi kumba*” (People should not fight over the jokes after the work party). Thus, no one should take offence when *jee* is targeted at them.

Jee can also be between people who have a close relationship which does not allow them to exchange harsh words or insults or to confront each other. *Varamu*, (a man and his wife’s sister(s)/a woman and her husband’s brother(s)): for example *babamukuru* (a woman’s sister’s husband) and *mainini* (a man’s wife’s younger sister); *maiguru* (a man’s brother’s wife) and *babamunini* (a woman’s husband’s younger brother); *tete* (a woman’s husband’s sister) and *muroora* (a woman’s brother’s wife); *mbuya nemuzukuru* (grandmother and grandchild) can do *jee*. For instance, *babamukuru* may say to his *mainini*:

10. “*Mainini, chimbondiyamwisaiwo mukaka wenyu uyu. Wasisi wenyu wakanguri wasvava kare kare.*”
(Sister-in-law, may I kindly suck your breasts because your sister’s have since withered up.)

The kind of *jee* is meant to tease the wife's sister and the wife is not supposed to take any offense because, among the Shona people, it is acceptable for in-laws to play in such a manner.

Jee can never be between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law or a son-in-law and a mother-in-law/father-in-law. Shona culture does not allow these people to have a jocular relationship where they can freely talk or share jokes. Rather, there should be some social distance and it is this distance that gives such relationships dignity, respect and decency. In that case, *jee* is based on facts and truth, and it is meant to express disgruntlement and displeasure. The targeted part would have the choice to respond in a similar fashion, but would also be expected to revise his/her behaviour and reform.

2.5.3 *Kunemera/Utukwa* as Humour

In Shona humour and in Shona registers, there is what is referred to as *kunemera* – which is a type of speech and behaviour between a man and his sister's children and, indeed, with all relations with whom one can relax and speak freely (Hodza, 1975:x). *Chizukuru* as a form of *kunemera/utukwa* can also be found between *mbuya* (aunt), and *muzukuru* (nephew). In this kind of relationship, the *mbuya* (aunt) is expected to engage in a joking relationship with her *muzukuru* (nephew). This includes making pointed and critical remarks about his appearance, and after marriage, that of his wife, but the comments or remarks may not be objective (Hodza, 1975:xi).

Chizukuru as a form of *kunemera* is meant to entertain and the targeted person is supposed to take it lightly with laughter as good humour. For example, *mbuya* may say to her *muzukuru*;

11. “*Mazimhuno anenge datya ratsikwa nebhazi*” (Your nose is flat and wide like a frog that has been run over by a bus).

In some cases, since *mbuya* is licensed to insult her *muzukuru*, the insults, which are referred to as *utukwa/kunemera*, can also be used for correction and promotion of harmonious relations, for example in bringing a *muzukuru* to his senses in his behaviour with his father (Hodza, 1975:xii). These can be equated with banter, though in Shona the banter can be done by *sekuru nemuzukuru* as well as *ambuya nemuzukuru*.

Kunemera is also allowed between *shamwari* (mutual friends) where they are both licensed to express and poke each other without taking offense. *Kunemera* between *shamwari* or *sahwiras* is not supposed to be done in the presence of other people, or in the presence of *vanyarikani*, especially if the banter is based on facts, in order to avoid humiliation. In the context of *kunemera* that is done by *shamwari*, topics on personal characteristics are also mentioned and the friend is supposed to correct his/her behaviour. If he/she ignores the *kunemera* banter, then that would be immaturity on his/her part.

2.5.4 *Kutsvinyirana/Kuwanzirana*

In Shona, humour is created regardless of gender or age of the participants. Whilst *kunemera*, *kutsvinya*, *jee* or *muchohwe* is done by grown-ups, there is also a type of humour that can be produced by both the young ones/by children and by adults. This kind of humour is referred to as *kutsvinyirana* or *kuwanzirana* (mocking/insulting each other).

Among children, *kutsvinyirana* is done to teach the young ones to control their emotions and how to react to insults. The kind of insult is not based on facts or the physical appearance of a person but is meant to outwit each other to prove how creative one is in insulting others. This type of humour *kutsvinyirana/kuwanzirana* is done in groups of solidarity or between siblings during play. The intention would be to make the members of the group laugh at the one who is made fun of. If she/he feels that she/he is lost in terms of finding an equally offending insult, she/he may cry and the members of that group would laugh or jeer at him/her. In order to avoid that kind of embarrassment, the children who would be exchanging insults have to make sure that they are creative or bold enough to fight back in a similar manner or to be sturdy enough to control their emotions so as to avoid crying. In a group of children, they would pair and insult each other while the others laugh. Examples of *kutsvinyirana* are given below.

12. Child A: *Rurimi runenge patapata rahwindi*. (Your tongue is like a *hwindi* (tout)'s *patapata*/slipper).

Child B: *Dumbu rinenge bhegi ren'anga*. (Your tummy is like a witch doctor's bag).

The insults may be based on one's foolishness, ugliness or other physical features but never on the reproductive organs because one's reproduction is a very sensitive and taboo issue among the Shona people of Zimbabwe.

Among adults, *kutsvinyirana/kuwanzirana* is done especially among men or between same sex groups where participants verbally tease and, to some extent, insult each other on anything. This is done as pastime and sometimes the truth would be hinted so as to correct some vice. However, in *kutsvinyirana* participants are not expected to take offence though if overdone it may result in verbal altercations or even physical fights.

2.5.5 *Chiroora* and *Chisahwira* as Forms of Humour

In Shona, *varoora* (daughters-in-law) are expected to entertain mourners during a funeral and this is referred to as *chiroora*. *Sahwira* (mutual friend) is also expected to do the same as a way of making the funeral rites light and to lessen the burden of grief. The *sahwira*'s stunts at a funeral are referred to as *chisahwira*.

At a funeral, for example a funeral of a male person who was promiscuous and eventually succumbed to HIV-related illness, *varoora* (daughters-in-law) can mime an episode of hooking up with prostitutes and how the deceased finally got ill. This is meant to make people laugh and relieve the feelings of grief. This kind of humour combines both words and actions.

The *sahwira* can as well say and perform some similar episodes and the utterances and performances are based on truth. The relatives of the deceased are not supposed to take offense. For example, at a funeral of a prostitute, her mutual friend(s) may display some condoms, family planning pills and other paraphernalia that the deceased used to use in her trade. They may also freely say for example, “*Ende Rosy ranga riri hure chairo. Regai azorore, basa rake akabata neunyanzvi akapedza.*” (Rosy was a damn bitch: Let her rest in peace, she professionally did her part to completion.) Recently, in Harare for example, prostitutes have been reported to give free sex and perform sexually suggestive dances at funerals of their co-prostitutes. This is also a form of *chisahwira*, whose purpose is to mimic what the deceased used to do before their demise.

It is, therefore, clear that Shona shares some types of humour with other languages though there are other forms that are peculiar to Shona. The next section focuses on the functions of humour.

2.6 Functions of Humour

Humour has a plethora of functions. Humour is deemed to be therapeutic by way of alleviating psychological and emotional as well as physical distress through its stimulation of hormones (e.g. endorphins) that relieve pain, and improves cardiovascular performance. This stimulation of hormones leads to improved blood circulation, thereby lowering the risk of suffering from

hypertension – ultimately reducing stress and improving one’s sense of wellbeing, (Rickman & Waybright, 2006).

It can be argued, however, that the primary motive in the joker’s mind is many more things other than just bringing about therapy to the hearer. Indeed, one of the foremost objectives is to induce laughter, but in addition to the therapeutic purposes, the joker will most often do so for ridiculing a subject, provoking, establishing rapport and covering an awkward moment, among numerous other reasons.

This research argues that humour goes beyond making people healthy. Humour expresses a people’s worldview. Raskin (1985:2) has categorised humour as a universal human trait. He proffers that:

Responding to humour is part of human behaviour, ability or competence, other parts of which comprise such important social and psychological manifestations of *homo sapiens* as language, morality, logic, faith, etc. Just as all of those, humour may be described as partly natural and partly acquired.

Raskin’s argument here is that all humans are capable of creating and sharing humour. Cisneros *et al.* (2007:1) assert that, “the purpose and end result of humour, much like that of language is the externalisation of human thought and conceptualisation”. This externalisation carries multiple meanings, partly as an outlet to express certain emotions, partly as a social device, and partly as an exercise of the intellect. It is this broader nature of humour that informs the major aim of this study, that is, how humour is used to express Shona people’s views and feelings about women.

Cisneros *et al.* (2007:1) further argue that:

Humour is, for example, steeped in and shaped by culture. The experiences that we share as members of a culture are the basis for jokes, humorous observations, puns, ironies, satires, and punch lines that strike us as amusing. In researching the humour of languages across widely differing cultures, language families, and typologies, we can better understand the linguistic, cognitive, and cultural influences on humour, and see these same influences as reflections of the culture through humour. From language emanates the very essence of the worldview encoded in a joke or story, and in its realm the abstract is given form and transmitted to others.

Cisneros *et al.*'s (2007) observations here are very critical in this study as it has already been argued that Shona as a patriarchal society reflects its values and beliefs in humour. It is how women are presented in Shona humour that this research focuses on, with the assumption that how women are presented in humour is a reflection of what the Shona people think about women.

Ngugi (1986) avers that language is an image-forming agent that provides the group with a whole self-conception - individually and/or collectively. In this case, the argument is that among the Shona speakers, humour is used to formulate images about women in particular, and it is the kind of images of women that this research interrogated. The study investigates how women are viewed and what the society hopes for/expects of women.

It should be noted that the content of the said jokes – much as in most cases they are meant to direct the audience's attention towards the subjects of the joke, reveal significantly the character

or underlying traits of the joker (or at least the environment from which they derive). The study inevitably interrogates as well such factors vis-à-vis the conditions and images perpetuated and revealed by the analysed jokes. Women, in this case, are the core of reckoning for which analyses are centered. Edley (2001:202) asserts that ‘lived ideologies’ (a society’s way of life’) are “wonderfully rich and flexible resources for social interaction and everyday sense-making”. Jokes are arguably one of the commonest forms of social interaction that transcend all levels of social rungs and cultural manifestations; and are a hilarious way through which society reflects upon, reprimands, cautions, and counsels as well as corrects itself, among other functions.

Relevant here is van Dijk’s (1993:251) claim that in order to relate discourse and society, and hence discourse and the reproduction of dominance and inequality, we need to examine in detail the role of social representations in the minds of social actors. It is the social representations of women in particular, which is the subject of this study.

Imlawi *et al.* (2015:86) propose that humour is important in a variety of settings, including the development of social relationships. Humour is an engaging personality trait that has direct implications on building interpersonal and professional relationships and communication, (Graham, 1995). Hetch (1984) finds humour as key in communication satisfaction at all relationship stages, while Canary *et al.* (1993) consider humour as vital in relationship maintenance. Emerson (1969:169) is of the idea that joking provides a useful channel for covert communication on taboo topics. Normally a person is not held responsible for what he does in jest to the same degree that he would be for a serious gesture. In this research, the researcher

finds out how, in the process of addressing taboo topics, women – in relation to men, are depicted.

Stebbins (1979:95) states that humour may serve as an outlet for group hostility and aggression, as a way of controlling undesirable behaviour, or as a means of developing or maintaining group cohesion. Signes (2007:727-728) offers that humour, as has been often argued, implies a violation of the social, linguistic norm or “subjective moral order”; at the same time that, as argued across many theories of humour, it is accepted that it can provide some form of tension release, and can facilitate a reinterpretation of a given situation or event. Bippus (2003), cited in Signes (2007:727-728), states that humour’s ambiguity enables it to be used to communicate and enforce social norms and relational expectations with the possibility of saying “Only kidding!” if comments are not well received. If humour can be used to release tension and hostility, it can, therefore, be used to examine the effect to which humorous narratives are used in Shona to express gender stereotypes and the sexist presentation of women in particular.

Humour can serve many functions depending on the intensions of the speaker. There are interpersonal, social, psychological and physiological functions. These are discussed below.

2.6.1 Interpersonal Functions of Humour

Günther (2003:16) states that “humour in communication is extremely versatile, serving a variety of different goals depending on context, relationship between speakers, etc”. On that note, humour is categorised on the basis of it serving in interpersonal communication. In classifying humour in terms of interpersonal functions, Günther (2003:16) adopts McAdams’ (1988) model which describes two structures according to two principal, antagonistic tendencies governing human conduct in life and relationships: a tendency towards agency or to assert one’s own individuality, and a tendency for communion. According to this view, people are constantly engaging in balancing the two tendencies, that is, expressing personal conventions, meeting others’ expectations, establishing intimacy and others.

Humour helps in maintaining equilibrium of intimacy and it also reduces social distance. Hampes (1992:127) observes that intimate relationships benefit from the use of humour because it allows partners to deal with the stress within those relationships. But humour is also encountered in official settings, often characterised by a low level of intimacy. In this case, humour would be serving the function of ‘breaking the ice’ (that is, reducing social distance) and facilitating communication.

It should be noted that in the production of humour, hierarchy also comes into play. Typically, humour is initiated by the superior, though the inferior may also initiate humour, depending on the context. Various studies have demonstrated that humour helps to increase interpersonal attraction (Rubin, 1987; Kane *et al.*, 1977; Derks, 1989; Finkel & Eastwick, 2012) and enhance self-image (Hay, 1995; Martin, 2007; Tsakona & Popa, 2011). Crawford & Gressley (1991)

identify *creativity* and *caring* as the most important aspects of humour in subjects' descriptions of a person they know who has an excellent sense of humour. *Creativity* reflects the ability to make spontaneous or off the cuff witty remarks and *Caring* refers to the use of humour to ease social tension, to cheer up other people and to reduce others' stress or anxiety (Grawford & Gressley, 1991:223-224).

Günther (2003) states that humour can also allow people to have fun together through exchanging humorous quips, funny stories, mock insults, etc. This function is referred to by Attardo (1994:328) as 'defunctionalisation' since language is used for lucid purposes and not to transmit information, whilst Collins (1988) refers to such kind of function as 'to resist boredom'. From what the various scholars have pointed out, it can be noted that humour serves a variety of functions. On a personal level it aides in the reduction of stress and anxiety and helps one cope with difficult or embarrassing situations. Humour may also be used to "promote self-image since 'a sense of humour' is generally regarded a positive character trait", (Günther, 2003:18).

Humour can also be used to enhance solidarity and group cohesion when members routinely employ it and it may also be used for pleasure and entertainment's sake. While the present research agrees with this function, emphasis is given on the kind of images that were created regarding women, regardless of the purpose of the humour.

2.6.2 Social Functions

The social functions of humour are basically the role that humour plays in society and group culture. Apte (1985), Linstead (1985) and Marlowe (1989) focus on the role that humour plays in maintaining and enforcing social values and boundaries. Since in culture there are certain topics that are considered taboo, humour may function as a form of social control to enable people to address threatening or taboo topics (Ziv, 1984, 1988). Graham *et al.* (1992:177) propose that sharing information on these unmentionable subjects requires interlocutors to negotiate suspension in order to tell a particular joke. On another vein, Lixfed (1986) observes that jokes ultimately serve to attack cultural norms with the aim of bringing about change. For example, humour may be used by the underprivileged to challenge the status quo (Arnez & Antony, 1968).

Sometimes humour may be used to introduce and foster conflicts within groups (Martineau, 1972). Douglas (1968:365) defines jokes as “a juxtaposition of a control against that which is controlled, this juxtaposition being such that the latter triumphs.” This kind of humour is meant to castigate the dominated group by the dominant group in its bid to exercise control. For example, one ethnic group may create humour that demean or undermine another group and this fosters conflict and some sort of rivalry between the groups. In the present study, humour is analysed to find out whether women are undermined or demeaned in Shona humour.

2.6.3 Psychological and Physiological Functions

This aspect of humour is relevant where humour serves the therapeutic function because of its effects on health and well-being of an individual. Studies have been carried out to prove that humour has positive effects on immunity, blood circulation, muscle relaxation, convalescence and digestion (Cousins, 1979; Dillion *et al.*, 1985; McCaffery, 1990; Ziegler, 1995; Martin, 2001). This is supported by the saying, 'Laughter is the best medicine'.

Humour may also be used as a coping strategy. For example Freud (1905/1976) proposes that humour is a form of defense mechanism while, on the same note, Vaillant (1993) describes humour as a mature defense which is similar to sublimation, altruism and suppression. Usually, self-directed humour which, in a way results in relief, is used for this purpose.

Moody (1978:4) states that 'coping humour' allows a person to remain in contact with reality and express emotional involvement. Polimeni & Reiss (2006:348) state that outside the social domain, humour may have modest physiological benefits such as boosting immunity. This research is not in any way focusing on humour that is used for psychological and physiological functions because it does not address the issues at hand. The study's aim is to examine the presentation of women in Shona humour.

For Alison (1998) cited in Owiti (2013:31) humour is created as a result of mockery and such humour actually attacks others and, most often, the butt of these jokes are the less powerful in

the society. Simpson (2003) in Owiti (2013:31) identifies this type of humour as useful in the creation of satire. Satirical humour may also use the powerful groups as the butt of the jokes. Normally in Shona, humour of this nature is meant to correct the vice in those people who hold positions of power and it is found mostly in music, poetry and drama. Issues to do with corruption, nepotism, favouritism, ill governance and other related issues are the main themes of humour that involves satire in Shona. Humour with satire is also found during work or beer parties where issues like meanness, irresponsibility, cowardice, foolishness and jealousy are a butt of most jokes in Shona. This, in Shona, is referred to as *chihwerure* and, in most cases, it does not stereotype any gender but it targets somebody whose behaviour is unbecoming.

Language is a powerful tool that privileges some over others. Sandstrom *et al.* (2010), cited in Bemiller & Schneider (2010:460), state that everyday behaviours, interactions and exchanges are filled with meanings that preserve and maintain the status quo on a structural and ideological level. Wodak (2011:11) illuminates the power relations in language by stating thus:

Power does not derive from language, but language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power, in the short and long term. Language provides a finely articulated means for differences in power in social hierarchical structures...CDA takes an interest in the ways in which linguistic forms are used in various expressions and manipulations of power.

Goffman (1956) maintains that jokes and other “social games” serve as a catharsis for anxieties and a sanction that encourages individuals to be modest in their expectations. Crawford (2003:1420) mentions that because of its ambiguity, humour allows insult and disrespect to enter dialogue in a “disguised and deniable form”. Shona is no exception insofar as humour and

power are concerned. Sexist humour is one of the types of humour that demonstrate power relations in Shona, where the male gender is depicted as superior to the female gender and women are derogated and belittled.

Owiti (2013:32) states that many scholars like Wash (1995), Alison (1998) and Salvatore (2009) agree that humour in language is created by handling of taboo topics in jokes. The taboo topics vary from society to society but some of the most common are; sex, excreta, religion and death. In the Shona language, humour is mostly punctuated with taboo topics, particularly issues to do with sex and sexual organs, illness, and other misfortunes and this research sets out to determine who, between men and women, are the butt of humour that focuses on taboo topics.

Emerson (1969:170) argues that:

negotiations about humour, then, may be regarded as bargaining to make unofficial arrangements about taboo topics. Two main issues pervade such negotiations. How much license may be taken under the guise of humour? While it is understood that persons have some leeway in joking about topics which they could not introduce in serious discourse, the line between acceptable and unacceptable content is ambiguous. So it must be negotiated in each particular exchange. Anyone making a joke cannot be sure that the other will find his move acceptable and anyone listening to a joke may find that he is offended.

Issues to do with sex are highly taboo in Shona and sexual humour may not be shared publicly among the Shona people. This research made use of humour that was circulated on the social media and it was easy to access humour on taboo topics. Because internet humour is not censored, possibilities are quite high that people create obscene images and taboo topics that they

cannot utter directly in public and the internet may constrain the person who would be posting humour.

Imlawi & Gregg (2013:15) state that:

research by Kurtzberg, Naquin & Belkin (2009) demonstrates that the use of humour in communication results in increased trust and satisfaction levels, higher joint gains for the community, and higher individual gains for the community member who initiated the humorous event. This suggests that the individual who initiates humour is engaging others in the community and improving their joint gains.

While this statement is true, the present researcher found out that most of the humour actually polarised the society since men and women were presented in a different modus and in most cases the female sex was sacrificed at in favour of the other (the male sex).

Cundall Jr (2007:203) avers that humour can, thus, provide an interesting vantage point from which we can learn more about a wide range of human behaviour. Although humour receives less attention, in overall, than many other aspects of human activity, it has been – and continues to be an important force in culture and the arts. D’Orazio (2011:2) mentions that there are multiple dimensions of humour, including attitudes toward humour, humour production, humour appreciation, using humour for social purposes, and using humour as a coping strategy. These dimensions, which make up a “sense of humour,” cover not only the ability to produce and appreciate humour, but also how an individual applies humour to everyday life. This study focused on humour appreciation, that is, how humour is used to understand gender in Shona culture.

Different styles of humour tend to be employed by different types of individuals. Individuals who are pleasant, have high self-esteem, and are open to new experiences tend to use humour for social purposes (Martin *et al.*, 2003). Conversely, individuals who are neurotic, not agreeable, or have low self-esteem are likely to use hostile and self-defeating humour (Saroglou & Scariot, 2002; Martin *et al.*, 2003). Focus in the study of this nature is neither on why people create humour nor the people's state of mind during humour production because of the sources of data that the researcher relies on. Focus is, instead, only directed at the complexities of images of women in humour and the implications of such images in Shona society.

2.7 Conclusion

The chapter has attempted to define humour in line with the focus of this study. It has also classified humour in terms of its content as well as its technique. The chapter has focused on the categorisation of humour by preceding humour theorists but also added three more classes of humour which are in line with the kind of humour that is found in Shona. Existing literature shows that humour falls into three broad categories which are sexual, aggressive and nonsense. From what can be seen in Shona, there are certain types of humour that do not fit well in the existing taxonomies, hence the need for more classes. The current researcher has, therefore, come up with a classification of six types of humour on the basis of content. These are sexual, aggressive, nonsensical, euphemistic, didactic and sadistic humour.

Besides focusing on the classification of humour in terms of content, the chapter has also dwelt on the types of humour in terms of technique. The researcher has described the types of humour in general and went further to narrow down to the types of humour that are found in Shona. In some cases, the types were the same but had different names from those given in English whilst in some cases the kind of humour would be peculiar to Shona. The next chapter, therefore, focuses on reviewing literature on gender and humour and on giving the theoretical background to the study.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on humour and gender and it also gives the theoretical background to the study. Its main focus is on exploring what other scholars have done on the subject. This is done in order to shed light and demonstrate how the current study charts its own path vis-à-vis earlier researches. The chapter also pays attention to the definition of gender in general and the Shona notion of gender, in particular. This is done in order to demonstrate how gender plays a role in the production of humour and to pave way for the explication of how gender is depicted in Shona humour in particular. Literary studies have been carried out on how Zimbabwean culture generally views and places women vis-à-vis men. This study makes use of a different genre to interrogate the depiction of images of women in order to make a critical appreciation of how Shona society perceives women as it is expressed in Shona humour.

More broadly, the role of humour has been investigated in various contexts and dimensions, including its psychological and psychiatric impact, its communicative and cultural significance, among other issues. Aarons (2012:18) notes that humour can be dissected as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any, but the pure scientific mind.

This research, essentially, taps into some of those assumptions and findings that have been made before by other scholars – be it in the medical field, psychology, ethnography, organizational culture, communication and so forth. The major point of departure in each instance is that the present study critically analyses the content of each given joke in order to derive the motives or drives, as well as infer and qualify the images that are portrayed in them in-so-far-as perception of women is concerned – at least in the Zimbabwean context.

3.2 Defining Gender

Staricek (2011:9) argues that the words gender and sex are often used simultaneously, but the two are different. Wood (2007:20) observes that sex is a designation based on biology, while gender is socially and psychologically constructed. One cannot choose her or his sex as it is determined during the early stages of conception. Gender, however, is acquired through social interaction and is viewed to be less stable than one's sex. Staricek (2011:10) is of the view that one's gender may change over time as he or she is exposed to and influenced by interaction in the social world. Conversely, it is argued that while sex is biologically determined, cultures outside of western thought believe gender is formulated in the psyche and is predestined at birth, (Spade & Valentine, 2007).

Wood (2007) argues that from the moment a person is born, they are socialised into their gender. At a young age, girls are taught to be feminine and to behave in ways that correspond with society's agreed upon definition of femininity — attractive, deferential, unaggressive, emotional,

nurturing, dependent, among other things. Likewise, boys are encouraged and socialised to be masculine — strong, ambitious, rational, emotionally controlled, independent, and self-oriented (Wood, 2007). The same is true in Shona. There are roles that are expected of a woman and those that are expected of a man. Traditionally, these roles were meant to complement each other for the smooth flow of the society.

Bern (1974, 1977, 1981, 1993) discusses how gender serves as a filter through which the world is perceived. Bern argues that the gender-polarising social practices dictate what men and women ought to do and such gender schemas are limiting to both sexes. Mio (2009:175) remarks that the gender schema influences our perceptions, feelings, and behaviours and is one of the most dominant schemas influencing us. This is because society is set up to reinforce the gender distinctions, from the toys with which children play to the clothes people wear, as well as the employment opportunities available to the sexes.

Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2003:4) allude to the fact that gender does not just exist, but is continually produced, reproduced, and indeed changed through people's performance of gendered acts, as they project their own claimed gendered identities, ratify or challenge others' identities and, in various ways, support or challenge systems of gender relations and privilege. In Shona culture, for example, boys are expected to be tough and rough. They play through fighting and that is considered normal. Girls, on the other hand, are expected to be meek and humble. They should not be aggressive. Boys are expected to play with toy cars and ride bicycles while

girls are expected to play with dolls and play house. This is meant to prepare them for adult life where men should be brave, outgoing and adventurous whilst women should be good mothers, housewives and they should do all domestic chores.

Although gendered behaviours tend to be ascribed to either sex, there is nothing inherent about the behaviours that may be considered to be male and female (Plester, 2015:540). That is why this study examines the character traits or, rather, stereotypes that are attached to women in particular because the Shona believe women act in certain ways that are different from what men do. Alsop *et al.* (2002) have it that context, discourses and norms can influence how gender is performed and perceived. In this case, the researcher argues that gender can be performed and perceived through humour.

Holmes & Marra (2010:10) argue that language plays an important part in constructing the gender order. For example, in Shona, women are not expected to use vulgar language or comment on men's physical appearance in public. Those who do so are labeled whores. Conversely, men can freely utter vulgar and pass nasty comments about women and women's bodies without any censorship. Cameron (2007:16) proposes that one legitimate goal for language and gender scholarship is political: to contribute to the wider struggle against unjust and oppressive gender relations, by revealing and challenging the ideological propositions which support and naturalise those relations. Gender is just one component of social meaning, an aspect of social identity conveyed indirectly through stances indexed by the choice of particular

linguistic and discursive features which may, of course, be multi-functional (Holmes, 1997, 2006). Gender as a social ideology can be expressed through language and can be used as a lens to find out how the Shona perceive gender in their society.

Mio (2009:175-176) asserts that;

three generalisations are “common knowledge” among humour researchers: (a) gender humour is universal, (b) men disparage women in jokes more than the reverse, and (c) women are more likely to laugh at jokes told by men than the reverse. These issues are directly connected to the issue of sex and power. Because men are more in positions of power but are threatened by women, they tend to tell jokes directly, depreciating women in order to maintain the power. Women, on the other hand, tend to be more indirect in their humour by telling jokes and stories that are subtle and ironic.

This assertion shows how power influences humour, as it affects the kind of humour one produces and how one reacts to humour. Mio & Greasser (1991:168) propose that telling jokes is one of the few expressions of intimate feelings allowed to men, which “enables males to maintain a masculine stance while still addressing their intimacy needs”. Bergmann (1986:63) states that women are traditional objects in various cultures since there is a prevalence of jokes about dumb blondes, scatter-brained heads, myopic wives, mothers, mothers-in-law and lady drivers. In this study, focus is paid on how women are presented in Shona humour. The next section gives an overview of the relationship between humour and gender.

3.3 A General Overview of the Relationship Between Humour and Gender

According to Nevo *et al.* (2001:144), theoretically, there is no reason to assume differences in basic cognitive or psychological processes of humour mechanisms across cultures. All cultures laugh and smile at incongruities and their solutions; mechanisms such as surprise, superiority and tension relief are universal. However, cultural preferences may affect both the specific content and participants' perception of incongruities and their resolutions, as well as the interpretation of the surprise element. Each culture has its own set of values, norms, and unwritten rules of what is appropriate in humour, and these largely determine the content, target, and style. This research unearths the complexities of gender, (women in particular) in Shona culture as it is expressed in Shona humorous narratives.

Nevo *et al.* (2001:145) indicate that early studies of gender differences in humour focus on differential preferences for joke content. Researchers agree that women prefer less aggressive, less sexual, and more neutral and absurd jokes than men do. Nevo *et al.* go on to state that when the focus of studies shifted from the issue of content to the question of the target of humour, researchers found that both men and women preferred women as the butt of jokes. This research focused on women as the butt of the jokes and examined how women were presented in Shona humour.

Mauldin (2000:313) argues that the literature on jokelore and humour theory has focused primarily on analyzing joke structure for the purpose of explaining either why a particular utterance was funny, or why it was uttered (and listened to) in the first place. Signes (2007:730) states that the relationship between gender and humour is becoming more and more complicated since “joking styles still play a part in social typification”. This research does not limit itself to how jokes are structured in Shona, neither does it focus on humour styles by men and women, but it focuses on the images of women in Shona humour.

Morris (2006) analyses how women have been depicted in two archetypal gender jokes: blonde jokes and mother-in-law jokes through an Internet research of comedic websites. In Morris’s analysis, an “evil” mother-in-law caricature and a “dumb” representation categorically emerged from the analysis. Morris argues that the two categories of jokes express the sex stereotypes about women and they depict women in a negative light. The current study draws inspiration from Morris’ study and it tries to find out whether the same kind of depiction is evident in the Shona context. However, unlike Morris (2006) who only focuses on blonde jokes and mother-in-law jokes, this research examines issues of women, womanhood and women’s roles, focusing not only on the mother-in-law but also on the other forms of female identity such as wife, daughter, mother or girlfriend.

Rulli (2010) makes a comparative analysis of the comedy in *Saturday Night Live* season one contrasted with *Saturday Night Live* season thirty-five. Thirteen comedic devices are utilised as tools for analytic assessment: clownish/silly, logical implausibility, slapstick, surprise,

misunderstanding, irony, satire, parody, socially inappropriate humour, gross humour, self-deprecation, invective and wordplay. Rulli focuses on the two types of previous information that are required for audience appreciation and amusement: prior knowledge of general society and prior knowledge of specific information. Although Rulli analyses the different types of humour, the missing link in his/her study is the depiction of gender, which is what forms the major concern of the current research.

Wilson (2008) focuses on some of the marginalised stand-up comedians and analyses these to display the limitations of contemporary theories, as well as to point out the possibility for stand-up comedy to enact critique. The primary finding is that humorous techniques create a separation between the stated and the inferred, which provides possibilities for audience judgment that is prudential in the sense of operating without pre-set models. This research is not in any case focusing on stand-up comedy nor its role in politics and satire, but it assesses the limitations or applicability of the Disparaging Theory of Humour in Shona and the depiction of women in the different types of humour that are found in Shona.

Signes (2007) is concerned with the representation of women and femininity by analysing the character Sally in several episodes in which she is humorously portrayed as the alien overwhelmed by the juggernauts of being a woman who does not know what is socially expected from her. Signes (2007) analyses the kind of gender messages that are present in the series and proves how humour may help to question many established stereotypes and can help override sexist representations of women as well as some social premises concerning gender biases. This

research draws from most of the observations made in Signes' (2007) research, but the difference is that the present study does not focus on episodes of comedy on television, but on the depiction of women in Shona humour that is circulated through social networks.

Sunderland (2006) examines the notion of *contradictions* as experienced by feminist readers of sexist jokes, and at ways in which such readers may deal with these. Drawing on the notions of *interpellation* and *focalisation*, Sunderland (2006) focuses on ways of reading the text in question. Then, drawing on notions of *reader response(s)*, *discourse(s)*, *post-feminism*, *irony* and *double voicing*, Sunderland also emphasizes on ways of articulating feminist readings of the set of jokes. Insights are drawn from Sunderland's (2006) study, that is, how women are depicted in Shona humour, though the current research does not focus on how the feminist reader reacts to the humour.

Nayef & El-Nashar (2014) focus on gender stereotyping in Egyptian sexist internet jokes. They did a comparative analysis of how Egyptian women and non-Egyptian women are presented in internet jokes and the results show a strong proclivity to depict Egyptian women negatively when compared to non-Egyptian women. Nayef & El-Nashar (2014) also dwell on the depiction of Egyptian women vis-a-vis men in sexist internet jokes and they concluded that women were presented negatively as unfit for the public domain, as sex objects and as talkative.

In a separate study, Nayef & El-Nashar (2014) did an examination of how language is used in internet comic jokes to disparage women and represent them negatively. They did a qualitative

and quantitative analysis of general sexist jokes and specific sexist jokes to find out whether women and girls are being the target of the jokes in general or whether there is a specific category of women which is being the subject of ridicule. The jokes were classified into four categories which are: devaluating the personal characteristics of women, jokes that focus on physical beauty of women or lack thereof, instigating violence against women and confining women to the private sphere. Nayef & El-Nashar (2014) concluded that personal attributes far outnumber the physical features and they argue that the jokes conform to the conservative nature of the Egyptian society by not joking about women's body parts. They also noted that the jokes promote gender inequality in a patriarchal society that regards men as the 'unmarked', the 'normal' while women are labeled the 'marked', 'different' and such seemingly harmless jokes should not be dismissed lightly as being just jokes. The current study builds on Nayef & El-Nashar's findings and it focuses on the Zimbabwean context, Shona in particular, to find out how women are presented in humour.

Ndlovu & Ngwenya (2012) make a review of public transport stickers and the negative insinuations that they carry regarding the female gender. Such research becomes a springboard for the current one as the researcher notices that females in general receive more derogatory remarks than men whilst the males in most cases retain their dignity and are not admonished in society. Ndlovu & Ngwenya (2012) do not only conscientise people of the negative connotations surrounding public transport stickers towards the female gender, but these scholars also highlight the negative connotations of doing this, noting the fact that it has "serious implications on the reconceptualisation and reclamation of African womanhood". This research analyses the

depiction of women in Shona humour while it also draws insights from Ngwenya & Ndlovu (2012).

Thomae & Viki (2013) focus on the effects of sexist humour on men's rape proclivity and they argue that sexist humour promote and justify rape culture as well as the emotional and psychological abuse of women. Strain *et al.* (2015) as well as Mallet *et al.* (2016) examine men and women's perceptions of sexist humour and they argue that women react negatively to hostile sexist jokes while men take sexist jokes lightly. Lafrance & Woodzicka (1998) examined women's verbal and nonverbal reactions to sexist humor and concluded that women were disgusted by sexist humour and displayed feelings of embarrassment. This current study focuses on the presentation of women in Shona humorous narratives and leave out the readers's reactions to the jokes as it is an area that warrants a separate research.

Reichenbach & Hashen (2005) focus on women's laughter in the Middle East, particularly at an evening gathering of women in the village of Deh Dariya in Bahrain. They focus on the kind of humour that women make whilst they are on their own. They focus on the experiences of women in their marriage which they share with the others during a function they attend in the evenings. The article gives the impression that women suffer most of the time and Reichenbach & Hashen (2005:75) argue that the group of joking women presented all their suffering as something funny: that is, the hidden pain and the disappointments, loneliness and weakness lurk behind the women's jokes and obscene stories. Reichenbach & Hashen (2005:75) further state that the situations that the women are involved in are too disastrous and too horrible to hope for a

rational solution. Therefore, they resort to the only answer that seems appropriate: they burst into laughter and conquer a moment of “power in powerlessness”. The laughter of the women of Deh Dariya appears to be part of a discursive strategy that enables the women to voice the unspeakable. By doing so, they save faces and the dignity of all participants, but they also overcome the limits of socially accepted speech. Reichenbach & Hashen (2005) discuss the issues of the relationship between men and women; and how women suffer in their marriages. This research focuses on the images of women that were created in humorous Shona narratives as circulated on the social media. Insights are drawn from Reichenbach & Hashen’s (2005) research, though the conclusions and findings differ since the thrust is somewhat different.

Hay (1996) focuses on the interaction between gender and humour in spontaneous New Zealand English using three groups of people, the females only group, the mixed group and the males only group. Hay’s (1996) major focus is on examining the types of humour that the three groups tend to use in their conversations. The results were that women were more likely to use observational humour than men, insults and role play are more likely to occur in single sex conversation and humour involving quotes and vulgarity seldom occurs in mixed interaction and is more often used by men than by women. Hay (1996) also found that anecdotes and fantasy humour were more likely to occur in mixed interaction than in single sex interaction. Men tend to use more role-play and wordplay than women whereas women are more likely to use jocular insults. Besides these findings, Hay’s (1996) corpus of humour is fresh humour although the claim in the research is that men were more likely to use external sources of humour than women.

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On the functions of humour in Hay (1996)'s research, it is claimed that women are more likely to use humour for solidarity than men and that women use humour to share personal information about themselves whereas men are more likely to capitalize on shared experiences. In Hay's research, it is also argued that men are more likely than women to use humour only for the general function of increasing status and solidarity and performing positive work for their personal identity. It is also highlighted that men are more likely to use humour to cope with situational problems, whereas females more often use general coping strategies, which enable them to cope with problems not specific to the immediate situation. It is claimed that humour used by females is more likely about a topic involving people than men's humour. Men joked more about work, alcohol, computers, movies, television and books. In mixed groups, Hay's (1996) argument is that men contributed more humour than women. Although Hay's (1996) study offers some insights into the subject of gender and humour, the current study differs from Hay's study in the kind of methodology for data collection and the corpus of humour used for the research. Whilst Hay's (1996) study relies on focus group discussions of three groups, the current study focuses on humour that is gathered through social networks and the originator of the humour may not be ascertained, as most of the humour would be written. The present study's major concern is to find out the images of women in humorous Shona narratives.

D'Orazio (2011) focuses on how humour can be used to show display and express attractiveness in mixed gender interactions. The study was carried out amongst University students who were asked to interact with each other in order to test the two theories of attractiveness. D'Orazio

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(2011) makes use of the Sexual Selection Theory as well as the Interest Indicator Model to analyse data. The Sexual Selection Theory emphasizes that humour is used by males to “show off” their genetic qualities of intelligence and the Interest Indicator Model explains that humour is used by both males and females as a way of demonstrating interest in another individual across all social levels, whether it be friendship or a sexual interest. D’Orazio (2011:23) argues that their study does not support both the Interest Indicator Model and the sexual Selection Theory as there is no relationship between the males’ display of intelligence and attractiveness of the female partner as suggested by the Sexual Selection Theory. Similarly, contrary to the predictions of the Interest Indicator Model, there is no main effect of attractiveness of the confederate when predicting the participant’s humour usage.

D’Orazio’s (2011) results indicate that male participants are slightly more humorous than female participants. While D’Orazio’s (2011) research is on humour and gender, focus in the present research is on how humour can be used to explain how gender is perceived in Shona and the data is analysed using the Superiority Theory of Humour as well as Feminism.

Günther (2002) pays attention to humour, jokes and laughter in the conversational corpus of the British National Corpus. Günther’s (2002) emphasis is to identify possible connections between social attributes and humour/laughter behaviour. The social attributes that are considered are gender, age, group compositions and social class. On the gender variable, it is concluded that the humorous maneuvers of ‘inventing funny scenarios (fantasy humour’, ‘generating implicature’ are more often used by males whilst ‘against good manners: violating social conventions’ is more

often used by females. The finding is consonant with the prevalent view of females being more conscious of social norms than males and supports Hay's (1995) observation of a male bias towards 'fantasy' humour.

Günther (2002) also argues that the age of speakers affects their humorous behaviour and 'choice' of humorous maneuvers. The telling of funny stories is found to be equally popular in all age groups but the category of 'inventing funny stories' is most often used by speakers aged 15-24. With increasing age, the 'generating implicature' maneuver is used more frequently. This is interpreted as reflecting the subordinate status of children towards their adult co-conversationalists. On the social class variable, social class attributes are found to be operative in the use of 'vulgar language' as a humorous resource by speakers of the lower end of the social stratum. As a concluding remark to the study, Günther (2002:210) argues that both genders display the full repertoire of laughter functions and humorous maneuvers - only with the difference that, roughly speaking, females do everything more often than males.

Günther's (2002) study offers useful insights into the present study. However, the present study does not focus on all those extra-linguistic variables to analyse how humour is produced and appreciated in Shona. Focus is on how gender is presented in the sample of humorous Shona narratives. An appreciation of how gender (in particular, women) is perceived in Shona is the major concern of the present research.

Brunner & Costello (2002) dwell on the meaning behind sexual humour in the workplace. Their claim is that though humour in most of the times seems or sounds subtle, deeper meanings and, most of the times, negative or damaging images are sent. One of the arguments put forward by Brunner & Costello (2002) is that humour maintains an existing structure. Most of the times, sexual humour in the workplace is used to support the patriarchal structure and the seemingly harmless jokes and remarks may undermine a woman's advancement, thereby preserving the existing power base. The other argument that is put forward by Brunner & Costello (2002) is that even among the employees themselves, men tend to create sexual humour that may undermine or harm the female counterpart but the same cannot happen for women in relation to men. It is argued that the male colleague makes use of sexual humour that keeps the female counterpart a subordinate.

Brunner & Costello (2002) conclude that sexual humour perpetuates men's domination of women while appearing innocent in intent and, in this way, supports the existing patriarchal, social structure of organisations. They also argue that women need to recognise that even if sexual humour does not cross the boundary into harassment, it still may communicate a deeper and darker meaning. Although Brunner & Costello (2002) examine sexual humour and its implications to women in the workplace, the present study examines sexual humour to find out how women are depicted in Shona. This study is not necessarily concerned with humour in the workplace. The data used in this study was mainly gathered from social media platforms and the study looks at how women are represented in Shona humour.

Sayi (2013) examines gender sensitivity in *Isichazamazwi SesiNdebele* (Ndebele General Dictionary). Sayi's (2013) research is in the area of Ndebele lexicography whereby she arrives at the conclusion that the headwords that are used to describe women are derogatory and insensitive towards women, yet there are no equivalent terms to describe men who behave like such. Chitauro-Mawema's (2003) study focuses on the language of the Shona as it relates to women and women's space. Her interest is on reference terms that the Shona speakers use to refer to single women, whether divorced or otherwise, as well as the terms that are used to refer to the single women's children. Chitauro-Mawema (2003) concludes that the terms that the Shona people use to refer to the single women and their children reflect a patriarchal tradition which reinforces the idea that a family should be headed by a father who gives the children identity. Most of the terms that are analysed in Chitauro-Mawema (2003) reflect a negative attitude about the nature and status of single women and their children. While single women and their children are marked negatively in Shona, Chitauro-Mawema (2003) concludes that men and their children are not marked in the same manner. As a concluding remark, Chitauro-Mawema states that the terms reveal asymmetries between female and male roles within the Shona society. The terms indicate the stereotyping or prejudice of a patriarchal society in which women are depersonalised and their actions are scrutinised and judged while men's actions are tolerated, because men are the given authority.

The present research benefits much from Chitauro-Mawema (2003), although the difference is that the current study does not dwell on reference terms that are used to refer to single women and their children. The study is confined to humour and the images of women regardless of

whether they are single or not. The perception here is that most humour created in Shona is mainly centered on the people's beliefs and culture and how they perceive gender. Given this background, some of the observations that Chitauro-Mawema (2003) makes are corroborated by some of the present study's conclusions.

Sion & Ben-Ari (2009) focus on body, sexuality and family among Israeli Military Reserves. Humour is used in their research to uncover issues related to masculinity in the Israeli military. As justification for using humour to explore the issues related to masculinity in their research, Sion & Ben-Ari (2009) state that they focus on humour because there is the strikingly intensive, almost obsessive use of humour in the units as soldiers not only joked a great deal but communicated tacit messages through their jokes and that soldiers addressed issues hardly discussed otherwise.

Sion & Ben-Ari (2009) focus on two types of humour that are used in the units, the more socially "ordered" situations in which set jokes are told, and the free-flowing, on-going joking that accompanies almost any activity. Both types are performed in public and involve only men. On humour and the units, it is argued that cohesiveness and camaraderie are established through humour. Powerless people are turned into the butt of jokes. Humour is also used to show control, masculinity and change. In the units, Sion & Ben-Ari (2009) also note that jokes about women and homosexuals often involve expressing things about relationships between heterosexual soldiers. Male prowess (*vis-à-vis* females), women's inferior social positions, and homosexual traits are used to discuss relative standing and relations between men. Because of the competition

over dominance and submission, humour in the units, therefore, enables the relatively safe release of hostile, competitive attitudes. Dirty jokes are also used to express men's fear of their women's infidelity.

Sion (1997) cited in Sion & Ben-Ari (2009:35) argues that women are often portrayed in military culture as irresponsible, potentially disloyal, and, when unaccompanied by partners, easily seduced by other men. It is also pointed out in the jokes analysed in Sion & Ben-Ari (2009:36) that women are portrayed pornographically, as objects offering men sexual gratification. Women are depicted as available partners for any men, even when pretending not to be, while men are represented as interested in women solely for sexual pleasure. In sexual humour that is used in the units, men debase women by turning them into sexual "equipment". It is argued, therefore, that through jokes and mockery about sex and women, groups create common understanding based on heterosexuality and strengthen solidarity by objectifying the "other", the woman portrayed as an anonymous figure and as a body without personality (Sion & Ben-Ari, 2009:37).

The jokes that the soldiers make about women are not only about sexuality. When they are talking about their wives, the soldiers discuss women as subjects of love, the women are treated with respect. Because she is considered as a faithful helpmate to a man, and an object of adoration, her sexuality is defused and related to her fecundity so it is clear that sexual humour that the soldiers make in their units is not only about sexuality of the female figure but it depends on the relationship that is there between the men and the women in the jokes. If she is just a commercial sex worker, for example, then the woman is described according to her sexuality but

if she is a married woman, then she is sexless and faithful. So humour is used in the Israeli military to express issues of masculinity, heterosexuality and sexuality in women.

While Sion & Ben-Ari (2009) offer insights into the current study, the point of departure here is that the present research is not going to focus on military or any particular field but it will look at humour in Shona language that expresses the issue of gender, in particular, women. Whether the humour is used to create cohesion, group solidarity or any other reason, this is not the major focus of this present study. My major preoccupation is to examine how the Shona perceive and present women in humour.

Laineste *et al.* (2012) focus on Estonian jokes and describe the general reflection of a 'neutral' woman in jokes. Their study examines location, sex and women's roles and they conclude that the woman is largely confined to the domestic sphere, in interaction with her family and close friends. Where sex is a topic, the woman would always be in interaction with her husband, a stranger or a lover. The woman in Estonian jokes is always the target or subject when she is in interaction with her close relatives and the protagonist when interacting with her children and husband. Laineste *et al.* (2012) argue that jokes carry old-fashioned and entrenched stereotypes. Their study concludes that Estonian jokes reinforce the widely shared and deeply entrenched beliefs about women. This current study builds on Laineste *et al.*'s findings and focus on the African context, in particular Shona, to examine how women are presented in humorous Shona narratives.

Bergmann's (1986) study examines feminist and sexist humour. The argument in the article is that the feminist, whilst she tries to stand and fight for women's rights, is still a woman and she possesses the qualities of being a woman, those of being irrational, irresponsible and emotional. Bergmann (1986) states that feminists are too sensitive; they do not have a sense of humour and they take offence at everything, even when no offense is intended. The reason that Bergmann (1986) puts forward as justification for the feminists not laughing at sexist humour is the fact that women constantly and continuously encounter situations in which they feel oppressed, belittled and harmed because of social attitudes towards them as women. A man who is not a member of the target group can typically accept friendly teasing or ridicule as just that because he knows that it will end momentarily. Bergmann (1986) refutes the belief that the feminist finds sexist humour offensive because she is psychologically unable to separate what goes on in the parlor room from what goes on outside the parlor room.

It has been highlighted in Bergmann's (1986) study that the offense of sexist humour is not just the offense of sexism but that sexist humour adds an offense that is additional to the offense of sexist beliefs, attitudes and norms. These beliefs and norms hurt nobody else than women themselves because they are the ones who are disparaged in sexist humour. Bergmann's (1986) research is very crucial to the present research as it sheds light on some of the issues that are going to be focused on. The current study focuses on sexist humour to examine how women are presented in Shona jokes. The study makes use of the Superiority Theory of Humour, alongside the Feminist Theory in the analysis of data.

Bemiller & Schneider's (2010) research examines the content of sexist humour in order to show how sexist jokes offer portrayals of misogyny that serve many functions, some of which include the sexual objectification of women, devaluation of their personal and professional abilities and support violence against women. It is further claimed that sexist humour, as well as other forms of derogatory language, contribute to patriarchal ideology – a belief that gives men power over women by maintaining a binary gender system where men are inherently different, and men are accorded more value than women.

Cameron (1985:4) cited in Bemiller & Schneider (2010: 462), states that “Sexist language teaches us what those who use it and disseminate it think women’s place ought to be: second-class citizens, neither seen nor heard, eternal sex-objects, and personifications of evil.” It is argued that sexist humour, though constructed as harmless fun, creates a difficult social environment for women. Just like anybody else, when sexist jokes are told women are left with two options, either to laugh at the jokes or to express dismay at the jokes’ content though either choice is problematic. By laughing, she supports a patriarchal system; by not laughing, she lowers her social power even more for she is considered as someone without a good sense of humour and as somebody who is ostracised from the group.

On sexist humour, Bemiller & Schneider (2010) claim that within the sexist systems, jokes create an “us versus them” duality that has the potential to have real life implications. Their claim is that what is told as a joke is not really a joke at all but, instead, a form of power that is used to oppress and subordinate entire groups of people. The sexist humour that is examined in Bemiller

& Schneider focus on women's personal attributes, or lack of it), women's place in their private sphere (jokes about cooking, cleaning, and childcare), as well as jokes that are extremely violent towards women, (for example, suggestions of abusing women to put them in their place, killing women, raping women).

Wesely (2002), cited in Bemiller & Schneider (2010:463), states that by sexually objectifying women and demeaning their personal and professional abilities, jokes support a patriarchal culture that continues to oppress and subordinate women. In their analysis of data, Bemiller & Schneider (2010) use the subthemes of the imperfect body, personality, character flaws and lack of intelligence. In the sexist jokes that are analysed, women's bodies are never acceptable. They always need some modifications because their entire bodies or body parts are either too big or too small and, in most cases, those who are considered overweight are poked fun at. There are also sexist jokes about menstruation and menopause, which underscore the notion that women are unclean, less human and something to be feared. It is also argued that women's beauty is male identified, such that in order for her to be identified as beautiful, she is not allowed to have grey hair, wrinkles, sagging skin, or varicose veins. Once a woman enters menopause, she ceases to be a 'woman' and is no longer considered attractive or desirable. On personality/character flaws, in the workplace for example, women who are happy, bubbly individuals are labeled as unintelligent and unqualified for high ranking positions whilst women who are aggressive are construed as pushy or bitchy. Neither type of woman is desirable. Women are also considered less intelligent than men and sometimes their intelligence is slightly above that of animals. Sexist jokes also objectify women by constructing them as objects for men's sexual pleasure and by

decompartmentalising their bodies (by focusing on only one part of their body). Similarly, it is argued that jokes that sexually objectify women contribute to a culture that sees women as only valuable for their ability to sexually satisfy men.

Jokes about violence against women support the control of women through violent means and it is argued that, in the jokes, if women do not comply with stereotypical expectations of femininity, violence is a logical – even desirable outcome. In the jokes that Bemiller & Schneider (2010) analyse, they highlight themes that equate women to objects available for men's pleasure, make light of violence against women, denigrate women's personal characteristics, and belittle their social roles. The argument here is that sexist humour serves as one mechanism that conveys women's subordinate position to men and these jokes are dangerous as they are told under the guise of humour, implying that they should not be taken seriously. Bemiller & Schneider (2010) focus on humour at individual and institutional levels and their findings are crucial to the present study.

While Bemiller & Schneider (2010) dwell on sexist humour and how it affects women at individual and institutional levels, the present research is not going to pay attention to sexist humour only but to other types of humour which also have the aspects of gender in them – though the large body is composed of sexist humour. Bemiller & Schneider (2010) focus on internet humour and this researcher also makes use of the internet as the major source of data. This research also benefits from the findings from Bemiller & Schneider's study.

From the discussion of existing literature that is related to this study, it can be noted that what has been carried out on a related area of focus has been done in languages other than Shona. Therefore, the current researcher puts the humour theories to test by examining whether the same can be said about the Shona situation in-as-far as the depiction of women is concerned. Studies in the Shona language that focus on women have been in lexicography or in other sociolinguistic aspects. This makes the current research worthwhile, as it will bridge the missing link in the study of how humour can as well be used to analyse the depiction of women in the Shona context.

3.4 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section provides the theoretical background to the study in order to explore the research questions that are outlined in the first chapter of this thesis. The study adopts an eclectic approach. Since the study is on humour and gender, it makes use of the Superiority Theory of Humour as well as Feminism in order to make a meaningful interpretation and analysis of data. The research puts to test the two theories to try and explain the depiction of women in Shona humour.

This study focuses on the depiction of women in humour because in Shona humour, just like in most other Bantu and non-Bantu languages, the butt of gender/sexist humour is mostly the woman. Bergmann (1986:63) acknowledges that women are traditional objects of humour in numerous cultures. Ford *et al.* (2013:64) submit that, “research suggests that sexist humour

creates a context that justifies the expression of prejudice against women”. It is against this premise that the researcher found it imperative to adopt the Superiority Theory as well as Feminism to critique the aspect of gender in Shona humour. Although most of the humorous narratives that can be found in any language have the woman as the butt, the Superiority Theory came in handy in explaining who, between man and woman is depicted as superior to the other. Feminism exposes and challenges the gender relations in Shona as expressed in Shona humour.

3.4.1 Humour Theories

Traditional humour theorists have developed three theories to try and explain how humour functions in speech communities. These theories are the Superiority Theory, the Incongruity Theory and the Relief Theory. According to Kulka (2007:321), the Relief/Release Theory emphasises the liberating effect of humour. This means that laughter is seen as a discharge of surplus energy which alleviates psychic tension. According to Schwarz (2010:50), as its name suggests, the Release Theory posits that humour is used to release tensions or to make one feel liberated when talking about taboo topics such as sex.

According to the Release Theory, humour taps into repressed sources of pleasure, pressure or anxiety (Little 2009:1249). Beijzen & Valkenburg (2004:147) postulate that from the perspective of Relief Theory, people laugh because they need to reduce physiological tension from time to time. In this case, it means humour helps us laugh at how foolish we are and not to take our

mistakes too seriously. The Relief Theory assumes that laughter and mirth result from release of nervous energy. In this view, humour is mainly used to reveal suppressed desires and to overcome socio-cultural ambitions. This theory will not be of much use to this study because it does not have anything to do with gender and, above all, “it simply seems false that every time we laugh we are working off excess energy” (Morreall 1987a:6).

The **Incongruity Theory** maintains that the object of amusement consists in some kind of incongruity and that the laughter is an expression of our enjoyment of the incongruous. Identified with Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer, the Incongruity Theory suggests that humour arises from the juxtaposition of two incongruous or inconsistent phenomena (Little, 2009:1245). Morreall (1987b:6) considers the Incongruity Theory to be "the most popular current philosophical theory of humour" and states further that it "holds that the formal object of amusement is 'the incongruous'. According to Martin (1998:28), Incongruity Theories "focus on the cognitive elements of humour." Schwarz (2010:41) states that humour results in this case from the fact that there is a difference between what the recipient of the joke expects to happen and what actually happens. This means that humour is created by incongruity evoked by two conflicting meanings. The introduction and the main part of the joke might evoke a certain expectation as to how it will turn out. But the revelation of the punch line makes our expectation vanish and provokes, therefore, a sort of discrepancy which elicits laughter. Consequently, incongruity involves a moment of surprise that results from the clash of two contrastive meanings.

According to the Incongruity Theory, it is the violation of an expected pattern that provokes humour in the mind of the receiver. Rather than focusing on the physiological (Relief Theory) or emotional (Superiority Theory) function of humour, the Incongruity Theory emphasises cognition. It assumes that the cognitive capacity to note and understand incongruous events is necessary to experience laughter or mirth. Absurdity, nonsense, and surprise are vital themes in humour covered by this theory (Berger, 1993; McGhee, 1979; Veatch, 1998).

According to Raskin (1985) and Attardo (2001), incongruity refers to the cognitive consequences of humour and the emphasis is focused on the contrastive or distinct meanings of the joke. Attardo & Chabanne (1992:169), however, stress that an object is never incongruous "per se", but must occur in a situation which renders it unsuitable or contrastive to another object. They see the main function of the joke introduction and its main part in "setting the background against which and in reason of which the punch line appears incongruous" and is, therefore, impossible to predict.

Most cognitive humor theories assume that humor relies on the simultaneous perception of a situation (event, idea) from the perspective of two self-consistent but normally incompatible frames of reference, namely incongruity (Samson, Hempelmann, Huber, & Zysset, 2009). According to Suls (1972), a situation becomes humorous and as such associated with the experience of a positive emotion (i.e., exhilaration, mirth, laugh, pleasure) through a two stage process. This process involves first the identification of an incongruity and then its subsequent resolution in order for a situation to be respectively understood and appreciated as humorous. In

particular, situations, events, or objects are incongruous when their presence triggers a discrepancy with the situation model constructed by the recipient (van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983; Zwaan, Langston, & Graesser, 1995).

What is emphasised in the Incongruity Theory is the “formal mechanism of substitution rather than the butt of the joke” (Holm 2011:18). The current researcher is not focusing on the formal aspect of the humorous Shona narratives, neither is she dwelling on how humour is used to do away with excess energy. The major concern of this study is to analyse how the butt is depicted in humour which, in this case, is how women are presented in humorous Shona narratives. The reason behind the bias is that in Shona, just like in all other languages, the most prevalent form of humour is sexist humour, of which sexist humour mostly ridicules women. Although the comic effect of the joke comes from the incongruity, the reader will only focus on the images of women in Shona humour. The incongruity of the jokes helps make the narratives comical, but the researcher will go a step further to examine the politics of gender in Shona humour, with specific reference to the presentation of women.

Ford *et al.* (2008:160) assert that sexist humour trivialises sex discrimination under the veil of benign amusements, yet it communicates an implicit norm that it is acceptable to relax the usual critical reactions of discrimination. It is through this realisation that the researcher finds it crucial to use the Superiority Theory of Humour to examine the relationship of women vis-à-vis men in Shona humour in order to try and explain who, how and why between these two sexes, is

disparaged, discriminated and stereotyped. The next section is an exploration of the Superiority Theory of Humour.

3.4.1.1 Superiority Theory of Humour

The Superiority Theory, also referred to as Disparagement Theory (Suls, 1977), Hostility Theory (Morreall, 1987), Derision Theory (MacHovec, 1988), or Disappointment Theory, the Theory of frustrated expectation (Allen, 1998) and the Self-esteem Humour Theory or Disparaging Theory, (originally propounded by the British philosopher, Thomas Hobbes in 1651). Hobbes points out the role of the feeling of superiority in humour by claiming that “laughter is caused by (among other things) the apprehension of some deformed things in another, by comparison, whereof they suddenly applaud themselves” (in York, 2012:74). Hobbes’ contention here is that people laugh at those whom they consider inferior, though in some cases humour may not necessarily come from somebody else’s inferiority.

Little (2009:1245) argues that the Superiority Theory arguably enjoys the longest lineage of all, and is identified with ancient thinkers such as Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, and Cicero who associated humour with aggression and described it as a mechanism of disparaging others to enhance one’s own sense of well-being. Aristotle and Plato emphasised in their work that laughter is a means of power and superiority when it is directed against the faults of other people and it, thus, expresses their inferiority.

Plato in Morreall (1987a:10) considers amusement to be "a kind of malice toward [powerless] people", and Morreall (1987a:3) emphasizes that "laughter is always directed at someone as a kind of scorn." Plato, for example, argues that weak individuals deploy humour only where they are unlikely to face counterattacks. Allen (1998:10) argues that we can find Aristotle's attitude towards the source of humour when he defines it as "enjoyment of the misfortune of others due to a momentary feeling of superiority or gratified vanity that we ourselves are not in the predicament observed." Suls (1977:41) clarifies that the Disparagement Theory "means those theories of humour based on the observation that we laugh at other people's infirmities, particularly those of our enemies." He further states that the incongruity-resolution model mentioned in the section above can account for disparagement humour in those cases where the incongruous punch line involves a surprising misfortune. It is, therefore, prudent for the present researcher to use the Superiority Theory of Humour to examine how women are depicted and such analysis will covertly explain the gender relations among the Shona people of Zimbabwe.

One of the most contemporary champions of the Superiority Theory is Gruner (1978, 1997), who states that "ridicule is the basic component of all humorous material and, ... to understand a piece of humorous material, it is necessary to find out who is ridiculed, how, and why?" (Gruner, 1978:14). It is because of this realisation by Gruner that the current researcher adopts the Superiority Theory in the analysis of the gender matrix in Shona humour in a bid to try and explain how and why women are ridiculed.

Amongst the other humour theories, the Superiority Theory has been selected as the best theory to use in this research as it suggests that:

differences in sense of humour relate to the kinds of things that people find amusing which in turn have to do with their attitudes toward the target or “butt” of the humour. People are more likely to laugh at jokes that disparage or ridicule people whom they do not like, and less likely to laugh at jokes that disparage people with whom they identify. Thus... this theoretical approach leads to a focus on differences in the content of the humour that people appreciate or enjoy (Martin, 1998:30).

Although Martin (1998:30)’s assertion sounds plausible, the only point where we differ is on the fact that people laugh at people whom they do not like. Sometimes it is not a matter of not liking, but it is simply because the people who perceive themselves as better want to prove that they are just superior to the one who is disparaged. On that note, then, the current researcher adopts Ferguson & Ford’s (2008:283) assertion that the Superiority Theory emphasises antagonistic social relationships between humourists and targeted individual, groups or objects in a given context. In the context of Shona, women are mostly disparaged and the disparagement humour enforces the gender stereotypes and the status quo, which shall be demonstrated later in the analysis of data.

Kulka (2007:321) mentions that the Superiority Theory pronounces that the comical is perceived as inferior and our laughter is an expression of the sudden realisation of our superiority. Jensen (2009:8) claims that what makes us laugh is the sudden glory of realizing (or imagining) the misfortunes or disagreeable attributes of others, which make ourselves seem superior to them

even though we are well aware of our own defects. This means that in humour and gender, therefore, one gender may feel or view itself as superior to the other through perceiving the purportedly inferior gender as deformed in character or otherwise. According to Veatch, (1998:188), someone or something is responsible for a moral violation and, therefore, the perceiver who presumably is not, can think herself as superior. Jensen (2009:8) rightfully points that:

Jokes and other humorous expressions within the domain of what is called superiority humour poke fun at certain people by pointing out their perceived weaknesses, misfortunes, or defects. Not only do superiority jokes poke fun at other people, but often at people who are members of certain social classes or social groups. This means that superiority humour is often more complex than just laughing at the imperfections of others, and it is more than just glee, because it involves complex social patterns, social categories, and social attitudes of certain social groups towards each other.

The Superiority Theory, therefore, helped in explaining how the Shona people perceive and dictate gender as is expressed in their humour. From what can be seen in the selected jokes for this study, women form the butt of the jokes and they are disparaged for their perceived weaknesses and defects.

Neria (2012:27) asserts that;

humour can tell us something about who we are or where we belong because, in what we find funny, we discover what we consider to be inferior, ridiculous, different, stupid, or unlikable. ...Humour is a form of cultural insider-knowledge and its

acknowledgement and fragmentation can be very revealing for understanding a social group.

In this case, from the superiority point of view, the researcher draws conclusions from the kind of images about women on what the Shona people consider as socially correct and socially ill insofar as gender and gender relations are concerned.

Bergson (1911), cited in Neria (2012:29), argues that “we find in humour the expression of an imperfection that should be corrected. Laughter is a social gesture that singles out and represses a special kind of absent-mindedness in men and in events.” Through laughter, we are pointing to a fault and to the necessity of correcting it – which elevates us to a position of superiority (Neria, 2012:29). In laughter, we always find an avoidable intention to humiliate and, consequently, to correct our neighbor – if not in his will, at least in his deed (Bergson, 1911:136). 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 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 to win! (Gruner, 1997:6). The Superiority theory of humour, therefore, explains the way women are presented in Shona humorous narratives.

Sexist humour, which constitutes the bulk of the data for this study, centers on the disparagement of women in Shona. Thus, the current study makes an appreciation of how women are presented in humour. Like what has been pointed out, in superiority humour, the

teller of the joke would want to prove that they are superior to the opposite gender/sex; so the study examines who, between men and women, are presented as superior or inferior to the other gender. Since we have already noted that in the humour of most languages Shona being not an exception), women are the butt, this theory was used to examine and prove that women are disparaged in humour as well as to explain the gender relations in Shona.

According to Bemiller & Schneider (2010:463), what is told as a joke is not really a joke at all but, instead, a form of power that is used to oppress and subordinate entire groups of people. Cameron (1985:145) offers that language, the institution, the apparatus of ritual, value judgment and so on, does not belong to everyone equally. It can be controlled by a small elite. In other words, therefore, the current researcher argues that the problem is not the language itself, but who controls the language. It is a matter of who controls the language that determines who is disparaged in humour. The Superiority Theory, then, explains the gender matrix in Shona as well as exposing how patriarchy, at least in the Shona context, has affected how women are perceived and expected to behave.

Shona, as a patriarchal society, has women occupying the lower range of the social strata. This is expressed in oral literature, written literature and even in ordinary discourse between or among Shona people where women are, in, most cases depicted in a negative light. In humour as well, this trend is almost the same as we have a wide array of sexist humour which pokes fun at and vilifies women. According to Romero & Cruthirds (2006:65), gender-based humour is usually

aggressive in the form of degrading comments to make the initiator feel superior. The Superiority Theory, therefore, aids in explaining the status quo that is depicted in Shona humour.

Humour styles that are congruent with the Superiority Theory include ridicule, teasing, insults, stereotypes or sarcasm (Meyer, 2000; Gilbert, 2004). These styles of humour, including sexist humour, are used in this study to explain gender relations in Shona. According to Holm (2011:17);

through its recourse to such notions of normality and inferiority, Superiority Theory, thus runs counter to understandings of humour as inherently subversive, offering instead, an interpretation of the comic as a site of ridicule, rather than rejoicing, that serves to reaffirm structures of power and ways of being. The Superiority Theory, thus, offers an interpretation of humour as a form of social corrective.

The researcher, therefore, demonstrates how humour in Shona is used to reaffirm structures of power from the lenses of the Superiority Theory.

The Superiority Theory has this weakness of stating humour as a form of social corrective, as it is not always the case that people create humour as a way of correcting others socially. Of course, there are some forms of humour such as ridicule, insults, *kunemera*, *utukwa* that serve to correct socially, but there are other forms like sexist humour or gender based humour that can function as stereotyping mechanisms and these ones are there to demean and prove that the butt is inferior to the joker or to the audience. The major purpose of such humour that is stereotyping in manner is not to correct but to prove a certain point; that one gender is superior to the other. It

is from this realisation that the current researcher investigates Shona humour and argues that humour can be used to depict gender relations in a language.

Bemiller & Schneider (2010:460) state that symbolic interactionists argue that language is a very powerful system that privileges some over others. Jokes serve to tell others “who we are and who we think they are in interaction settings”, (Lynch, 2002). Humour, therefore is used to reflect the perception we have about others. Goffman (1956) avers that jokes and other “social games” serve as a catharsis for anxieties and a sanction that encourages individuals to be modest in their expectations. Wolf (2002) asserts that a joke does not exist unless someone or something is its object of ridicule. From this realisation, the current study, therefore, argues that humour that is created and circulated among the Shona speakers portrays power dynamics or gender imbalances between the two sexes, where the woman is always at the receiving end.

3.4.2 Feminism

This section explains the gender theory that was used in the study. Since the study focuses on the depiction of women in Shona humorous narratives, it is prudent for the researcher to also make use of a gender theory alongside the Superiority Theory of humour in order to analyse and explain how women in particular are reflected in Shona humour.

bell hooks (2000:1) defines Feminism as a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. The study argues that Shona humour expresses sexism, sexual exploitation and the

oppression of women and, therefore, Feminism comes in handy in explaining the status of women among the Shona people of Zimbabwe as expressed in Shona humour.

Trethewey (2001:189) is of the assertion that “taking a feminist approach to the study of humour is necessary (and effective) in order to make “the familiar, taken for granted world strange and unfamiliar through ideology critique”.

In this study, the researcher makes use of the Feminist approach to try and investigate identity construction and stereotypes among other critical inquiries. Most of the humorous narratives in Shona tend to present the female figure as inferior to men and with questionable character traits. This kind of depiction is consistent with the Superiority Theory of humour where individuals laugh at the expense of others in a display of dominance. In particular, the study makes use of Feminism, which takes into account aspects of patriarchy and oppression against women. These aspects are clearly stated and reflected in the kind of humour that is under study.

From the variety of Feminisms, the study makes use of some tenets of the Radical Feminism in the analysis of data. According to Lorber (2009 :16);

Radical Feminism had its start in small, leaderless, women-only consciousness-raising groups, where the topics of intense discussion came out of women's daily lives -- housework, serving men's emotional and sexual needs, menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, menopause. From these discussions came a theory of gender inequality that went beyond discrimination, to oppression, and a gender politics of resistance to the dominant gender order. Radical Feminism's theoretical watch word is patriarchy, or men's pervasive oppression and exploitation of women, which can be found wherever women and men are in contact with each other, in private as well as in public. Radical Feminism argues that patriarchy is very hard to eradicate because its root -- the belief that women are different and inferior -- is deeply embedded in most men's consciousness.

In this study, therefore, the researcher makes use of radical Feminism to explain the gender relations between women and men and to expose how women, in particular, are presented in Shona humour. The researcher is aware of the criticism that is leveled against Radical Feminism, that of presenting men as the enemy. In this study, the researcher is not blaming men in particular for the inferior status of women, but blame is placed on patriarchy and cultural ideology as bell hooks (2000:1) rightly notes that all sexist thinking and action is the problem, whether those who perpetuate it are female or male, child or adult.

Feminism has been criticised by African scholars as Eurocentric and as a disruptive force on the African social order. The current researcher begs to differ with this perspective as we can safely apply some of the tenets of ‘western’ Feminism to the African context. Mama (2007:7) writes that:

In resisting the insights of ... feminist epistemological interventions, African scholarship has remained poorly equipped to address the challenges posed by gender, class, ethnic and other divisions that characterise social reality in Africa as anywhere else. In this respect African scholarship confounds its own ethical agenda and limits its contribution to the emergence of a more liberated and just social order.

It is, therefore, necessary to filter through the Feminist movement and adopt some critical tenets that may help explain and shape gender in the African context. It does not help in any way to deny facts about gender in the African context in the name of being African proper. Gender has always been critical and has always affected Africans since time immemorial, and to try and hide the fact to pretend as if Africa is a cultural idol would be to deny facts. Therefore, applying

Feminism to the analysis of humour and gender would be doing enough justice insofar as revealing the facts is concerned.

The researcher is also aware of the misconceptions that are there with regards to the tenets and the major focus of Feminism with regards to its application to African affairs. It is always misconstrued that Feminism is for white women and anyone who claims to be a feminist is criticised of being female-centred and anti-male. According to Atanga *et al.* (2012:7), the misconception of Feminism emanates from people who, perhaps, see Feminism as anti-men, anti-child and disruptive of the 'natural' state of family. For Atanga *et al.* (2010:7), the rejection of Feminism on the academic front at least, "(on the intellectual grounds of nationalism and pan-Africanism) has been seen as misguided". As a matter of fact, "although the Feminist Theory applies to women, it is possible to just as effectively apply the same ideologies to men", (Sharf, 2008). Male stereotypes are also prevalent as female stereotypes and the stereotypes can just be as burdening and destructive. In this research, therefore, the researcher used the Feminist Theory to critique gender stereotypes for women as is depicted in Shona humour.

Although Feminism lays emphasis on three key issues; race, class and gender, in this research the researcher focuses mainly on the issue of gender to explain how women (*vis-à-vis* men) are depicted in humour. From the researcher's hypothesis, it is argued that women are more disparaged in humour than men and, therefore, the Feminist Theory comes in handy in explaining how patriarchal hegemony has influenced the depiction of women in humour. The role of Feminism in this research is what Toril Moi (1985) construes as the exposition of the way

in which male dominance over females is viewed as both cultural ideology and fundamental concept of power. It is the researcher's assumption that humour reflects the power dynamics between men and women, as women, who are considered as the other, are mostly disparaged in Shona humour.

It is noted that gender is defined and understood culturally and socially. In African societies and in Zimbabwe in particular, patriarchy has played a significant role insofar as gender relations are concerned. In this study, Feminist Theory questions and challenges the hegemonic tendencies and fight for a more equal or balanced depiction of women in humour.

Although humour can be regarded as trivial and nonsensical, most humour theorists like Kuiper (2008), Chapman & Foot (1976), Neria (2012) and Plester (2015) have argued that humour is a mirror through which a society can reflect critical issues in a light way. It is, therefore, imperative to analyse how gender is represented in humour, to find out whether there is a balanced and fair presentation of women (and men)'s images in humour and to bring on board how gender is constructed in Shona.

According to Ford *et al.* (2008:160), sexist humour "...trivialises sex discrimination under the veil of benign amusements...yet communicates an implicit norm that it is acceptable to relax the usual critical reactions of discrimination". It is from this assertion that the current researcher used the Feminist Theory to examine gender relations and to argue that Shona humour discriminates the female gender.

It is the current researcher's claim that the Feminist Theory can be used to challenge the normalised, hegemonic humour discourses in relation to gender. The major argument for this study, therefore, is that because of patriarchy, the kind of humour that speakers create is bound to represent and show the negative stereotypes that are associated with a particular gender – women in this case.

Included in much of Feminist theories is the concept of hegemony. Lull (2003), cited in Patterson (2006:15) argues that hegemony is the process by which the dominant group gains and maintains power over the subordinate classes. In this case, the current researcher argues that Shona as a patriarchal society has men as the dominant gender whilst women are regarded as second class citizens and, therefore, we have male hegemony. Most of the humorous narratives that are created in Shona, consequently, seem to perpetuate these hegemonic tendencies and, therefore, in this study, hegemonic humour helps explain the purpose of humour (to undermine, oppress and vilify women) and the Shona society's use of such humour (to serve and preserve the dominant gender). The concept of hegemony, thus, helps in exploring and explaining the Shona speakers' use of humour to depict women (*vis-à-vis* men). In other words, humour that is studied in this research helps explain and explore male supremacy and female oppression.

3.4.3 Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a social system where much of the power rests in the hands of men, who then take advantage to dominate all spheres of life – both private and public. Onyango (2007) pronounces that most African societies have always been patriarchal and its power ideology structures are always propagated through genres such as songs and proverbs which are used to show gender constructions. Kambarami (2006:1) states that in the Shona culture, patriarchal practices shape and perpetuate gender inequality and strip women of any form of control over their sexuality due to the fact that custom in Africa is stronger than domination, stronger than the law, stronger even than religion.

Shona society is not an exception insofar as patriarchy and its insinuations is concerned. The strong effects and impact of patriarchy are seen in politics, in the economic sector, in social and religious circles. More often than not, we hear Shona speakers, particularly men, saying, “*Mukadzi mukadzi chete*” (A woman will always be a woman no matter what) and “*Mukadzi na mutadzi zvakafanana*” (*mukadzi* (woman) and *mutadzi* (sinner), are rhymes), meaning a woman and a sinner are analogies. This is further supported by the Biblical belief that a woman, Eve, was deceived by the serpent and this led to the demise of eternal life for humanity. Such kind of perception leads to further oppression and discrimination against women simply because they are ‘naturally weak, inferior and malicious’ (c.f. Vambe, 2013; Ncube & Moyo 2011). Patriarchal

tendencies are, therefore, engrained and enshrined in Shona orature, humour being just but one of the genres of orature.

Current research argues that it is not that women are evil and wicked as speakers would want to label them, but it is because of patriarchy and its effects on the speakers' minds that speakers tend to depict women and men in a particular way. The current study argues that it is patriarchy that helps shape the Shona peoples' perception about gender and gender relations. It is this gender and gender relations that the current researcher is analysing and commenting on. The researcher asserts that the presentation of women in humour is not always realistic, but is determined and shaped by patriarchy.

Since humour that has to do with gender is in most cases sexist, there is a tendency for the humour to demean and undermine women, to sexually objectify and devalue their personal and professional abilities and support violence against women. Millet (1969), cited in Chitando (2011:17) argues that the most profound divisions are based on gender and that all societies are patriarchal, with men using ideology to oppress women.

According to Kambarami (2006:9), "the patriarchal nature of our society (Shona society) has shaped and perpetuated gender inequality to the extent of allowing male domination and female subordination. This sad state of affairs has been fuelled by the socialisation process". This means that in Shona society, it is a given that men are superior and females are inferior because this mentality has been socialised into the Shona speakers through the family, religion, economy,

politics and education where in all these institutions men are accorded a higher position whilst the female counterparts occupy the lower position. This is not only found in practical terms only but it is also expressed through language, since culture influences language. Even if one is to look into proverbs, for example, the bulk of proverbs portray the female figure negatively. She is depicted as inferior, mentally and physically weak. Women, especially beautiful ones, are either labeled as witches, whores, thieves or with other negative character traits. For example the expression *Kuguta sehamu yemukadzi* (Fully satisfied (with food) like a wife's relative) stereotypes women as mean and hateful of their husbands' relatives, whilst *Mukadzi mutsvuku kusaroya anoba* (A light skinned woman is either a witch or a thief) presents women as evil. In orature, women are wicked, malicious, cunning and callous towards their fellow women and to their step-children.

The negative depiction of women also extends to humour. Ford *et al.* (2013:72) notes that sexist humour encourages the expression of pernicious beliefs that justify a social system of gender inequality among those high in hostile sexism. Sexist humour, thus, not only influences interactions at an interpersonal level: it also contributes to shaping the larger social structure. This assertion supports the idea that the Shona speakers, both men and women, have internalised the status quo between men and women and express this status quo in their humour.

Bemiller & Schneider (2010:462) are of the idea that sexist jokes, as well as other forms of derogatory language, contribute to patriarchal ideology – a belief system that gives men power over women by maintaining a binary gender system where men and women are inherently

different and men are accorded more value. Cameron (1985:4) states that sexist language teaches us what those who use it and disseminate it think women's place ought to be: second-class citizens, neither seen nor heard, eternal sex-objects, and personifications of evil. Consequentially, patriarchy shapes these images about women and men in Shona humour and, therefore, the Superiority Theory as well as Feminism help in explaining and revealing the depiction of gender in Shona humour.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature on humour and its various types. The chapter has also made an attempt to define gender as well as giving a synopsis of what other scholars in my area of study have said about gender and humour. This research only focuses on jokes which can also be referred to as humorous narratives since they are the best type that can be used to examine how gender is depicted in Shona. From the review of literature, it can be noted that very little has been done on humour in Shona and the aspect of jokes and gender have been ignored, at least in the Shona language. Another point of interest from the literature review is that humour has been analysed in terms of how women and men are depicted.

The chapter has also given the theoretical background to the study. The theoretical frameworks discussed in this chapter are used in the analysis of data on gender and humour in this research. The study makes use of Superiority Theory of Humour, Incongruity and Feminism in order to examine and explain how women in particular are presented in Shona humour. Although

Superiority Theory, Incongruity and Feminism are 'western' theories, the researcher has applied them to the analysis African humour (Shona in particular), and these theories complemented each other in trying to explain gender relations, and in particular, how women are presented in Shona humorous narratives. The next chapter analyses the depiction of women in relation to sex.

CHAPTER FOUR

WOMEN AND SEX

4.1 Introduction

This section analyses and discusses humour that sexually objectifies women. The selected humorous narratives have been categorised under the following sub-sections: women as sex objects, women as sex-obsessed/nymphomaniacs and old women as sexually repelling. Because in Shona society the female figure is perceived as inferior to men, the woman is depicted as wanting in terms of sex and sexuality. The woman is presented as lacking in terms of sexual morality and below is a detailed analysis of the humorous narratives.

4.2 Women as Sex Objects

Shona humorous narratives display tendencies of sexualisation or objectification of the female body. Because Shona society views women as the other, women are taken as sex objects. The imagery that is used in the humorous narratives makes it possible for the researcher to claim that Shona humour presents women as sex objects. The woman is presented in relation to her sexual appeal and her body is viewed as a sex tool. Themes that emerge in this category are infidelity, hyper-sexuality and women as sex objects.

In most of the humorous narratives that fit into this category, the woman's worth is depicted in relation to how she can be used to satisfy men's sexual desire. Women are depicted as objects of desire that are meant to satisfy men's sexual desires. Women are expected to fulfil men's romantic fantasies.

It is a common trend in Zimbabwean literature, particularly in Shona novels by male writers, that women are depicted as sex objects (c.f Gaidzanwa 1985; Chitando 2011). The same depiction is evident in music, particularly in Zimdancehall music (for example music by Winky D, Jah Prazah, Stunner, Killer T and Tocky Vibes) where women are highly sexualised. A woman's worth is measured by her ability to appeal to men's eyes. She should be able to satisfy a man sexually and she should have a sexy body. The picture of the woman in contemporary Shona music (and written poetry), particularly ZimDancehall music, is that of a woman with a large bust, curvy hips, smooth skin, nice legs and a fair complexion. This is more of a western-derived type of perception that is consistent mainly with contemporary males than with the ordinary view of traditional Shona males who revered more the fuller/heavier woman than the skinny, 'sexy' ones with huge busts and bums and slim waists. In Shona humour, women are presented as sex tools as is portrayed in the following joke:

13. *Kudanana nehure kwakafanana nemunhu ari kudya mapotato crisp muchurch. Munhu wese anenge achingokucheuka achisvotekana, asi nechemumwoyo vazhinji vanenge vachitoadawo machips acho.*

[Dating a whore is like noisily eating crispy chips in church. Everyone looks at you with disgust...but deep down inside, most want some too.]

In the above joke, the analogy of dating a whore and noisily eating crispy potato chips is a case of female objectification. Though Shona society does not approve somebody dating a prostitute, the same society inwardly admires and envies the person who would be dating a whore for the sole reason that he would be getting ‘good’ sex from the whore.

The joke demonstrates that women are viewed as objects that are meant to be used, abused and misused by men. This kind of imagery affects women’s dignity and humanity. Women are, therefore, depicted as objects of men’s desires, because of the fact that Shona society regards women as inferior to men. The woman’s body should fulfill men’s romantic fantasies because a woman is a mere sex object. This points to the objectification of the female body as her worth is in her ability to satisfy men sexually. The same point is demonstrated in the narrative below:

14. *Mupriest weRoma akabatsira murume wechipoitori netransport. Mupriest akatanga kudya pork pie yake ndokuti kumupositori, “Huyai tidy.” Baba vaya ndokuti, “Handidye pork.” Mupriest ndokuti, “Aaaah, makarasikirwa. Hamuzive zvinonaka!” After some time mupositori asvika paaida kusarira ndokuburuka achitenda nekubatsirwa netransport akati, “Mofamba zvakanaka. Monosimbisa mudzimai wenyu nevapwere.” Mupriest ndokuti, “Handina mukadzi. Hatitenderwi kuroora.” Mupositori ndokuti, “Aaaah, saka makarasikirwa! Hamuzive zvinonaka!” Saka akarasikirwa apa ndeupi?*

[A Roman Catholic Priest offered a lift to a male member of one of the Apostolic Church sects. The priest started eating a pork pie and offered it to the apostle. The man says, “Thank you, but I don’t eat pork”. Then the priest replied, “Shame, you are missing out, this is delicious. You don’t know delicacies!” When they reached the apostle’s destination, and upon disembarking, the apostle thanked the priest and said, “Safe journey. Pass my greetings to your wife and children,” to which the priest answered, “I don’t have a wife. I am not allowed to marry.” “Shame, you are missing

out”, retorted the apostle, “You don’t know delicacies” (i.e. you don’t know how pleasurable sex is). So who is missing out here?]

The above narrative, which code mixes Shona and English, shows the objectification of women in humour. In the joke, the two men, the priest, and the apostle try to outdo each other in terms of how and what they use to enjoy themselves and satisfy their desires. The priest feasts on pork and mocks the apostle who does not take pork, but the priest turns out to be the one who is ‘missing out’ as he does not have a wife, and thus *haazive zvinonaka* (he does not know the real delicacy). By juxtaposing pork and women, the joke seemingly confirms the fact that women are sexually objectified. They are ‘thingified’ and are, therefore, to be used by men. It is the imagery that is used in the narrative that makes it possible for the researcher to argue that women are depicted as sex objects and, therefore, inferior to men.

In this case, therefore, the statement *hamuzive zvinonaka* (you don’t know delicacies) shows that the woman is presented as an object that provides a man with sexual pleasure. Even the object marker *zvi-* as in *zvinonaka* (things that are delicious) speaks to the objectification of women. The joke implies that the priest is losing out as he does not have a wife to have sex with. Even the question that is posed at the end of the narrative, *Saka akarasikirwa apa ndeupi?* (So who is missing out here?) shows that one cannot compare the pleasure he gets from sex with a woman with the pleasure that one gets from just eating some pork pie. Such a joke objectifies women as the woman is viewed as an object that has to be used by men, just as the priest uses (eats) pork to satisfy his appetite. Jokes 13 and 14 are sexist in nature and they therefore confirm Cameron’s

(1985:4) assertion that sexist language teaches us what those who use it and disseminate it think women's place ought to be: second-class citizens, neither seen nor heard, eternal sex-objects. The jokes depict the inferior role of women mere sex objects. Below is another joke that points to the sexual objectification of women;

15. *Quote of the day: Vasikana vakafanana neMango. Iwewe paunenge uchimirira kuti dziibve, mumwe munhu ari kutodzidya nesalt.*

[Quote of the day: Girls are like mango fruits. Whilst you are waiting for them to ripen up, somebody else is eating them with salt.]

The above joke likens girls to mangoes, and it is this kind of simile that makes the researcher posit that Shona humour sexually objectifies women. Among the Shona in particular, when a mango fruit is still a *gan'a* (the Shona term for a fruit not yet ripe for consumption), one may choose to take it with salt in order to counter its bitterness. The quote, which in this case functions as a joke, portrays the female figure as a sexual figure which, even when she is not yet ripe for marriage or for sex, some man may just choose to have her and use her for his sexual gratification (and thus if one has such a girlfriend, he should not wait for her to be sexually ready as he will lose out to other men in the process). The joke depicts the woman's worth as simply that of sexually satisfying men. The joke shows that society has no respect for women as the woman is just a sex tool. The joke is therefore a good example of sexist humour. Ford *et al.* (2013:67) rightly notes that sexist humour can have deleterious social consequences. The joke trivializes the sin of fornication as well as the offence of statutory rape and the traditional

moralist values on chastity embodied in *mombe yechimanda*. (*Mombe yechimanda* is a cow that is paid to the bride's family as a token of appreciation if the girl's husband found her a virgin on their wedding day or on their first sexual encounter.) Such jokes are tantamount to the abuse of the woman as she is depicted as a sex object.

Joke (15) implies that a woman, no matter her age, is a potential sex tool. Even when a mango is not naturally ripe for consumption, a person can find means of consuming it, i.e., eating it with some salt. The same applies to women – even when a girl is not yet ripe for marriage or for sex, lust may actually drive a man to sexually abuse her, as is hinted by the imagery of eating an unripe mango fruit with some salt. The implication of the joke is that a woman, no matter her age, is just a sex tool. Thus, someone may choose to eat an unripe mango with a pinch of salt.

Bemiller & Schneider (2010:473) note that 'if a woman is just an object – a thing – then she has no feeling. She is nonhuman; she is the other'. The above joke (15) contributes to a culture that accepts the use of violence against women and it also leads to a culture of disrespect for women. The joke below also confirms the sexual objectification of women.

16. *Mudhara Serebhu ari mubhazi achibva kubasa achienda kumba kwake kuWaterfalls akagara paside pemukadzi ari kuyamwisa mwana wake; apa mwana ari kuramba kuyamwa. Mai vaye vanotyisidzira mwana wavo vachiti, "Ukaramba kuyamwa ndichapa hangu sekuru ava mukaka wako". Bhazi rati fambe fambe vava paround-about mwana uye achingoramba kuyamwa, mai vaye vanopamha zvakare kuti, "Yamwa iwe ndisati ndapa sekuru ava!" Ipapo Mudhara Serebhu anotarisa kuna mai vaye obva ati; "Ambuya rongai zvinhu zvenyu ka1, kana muchindipa ingondipai izvozvi zamu racho ndiyamwe hangu. Mabvira kudhara muchingoti muchandipa zvino ndakangogara muno, apa ndanga ndichifanira kuburukira paZindoga".*

[Uncle Serebhu was on a bus coming from work. He was going home in Waterfalls and he sat next to a woman who was breastfeeding her baby. The baby was refusing the milk. The woman threatened the baby saying, “If you continue refusing to be breastfed, I will give your milk to this old man next to us!”. When the bus had travelled some distance, and as they approached the roundabout – with the baby still refusing to feed, the mother again said, “Have your milk, child, before I give it to this man next to us.” Uncle Serebhu looked at the woman and said, “Woman, make up your mind once and for all. If you want me to suck your breast then let me do so now. You have been saying this for so long and I have been waiting for it. Actually I was supposed to have dropped off at Zindoga”.]

It is the old man’s statement that makes the narrative humorous. It is a common practice among women to make false threats to their young children in order to make them eat, but the old man in the joke took the false threat seriously and he pursues the woman to the point of missing his destination. The man does not mind walking or catching another bus home for as long as he gets the opportunity to suck the woman’s breasts, and this is the amusing part of the narrative. The joke implies that, in the eyes of Shona men, a woman is just a mere sex tool; that is why the old man pursues the woman to the point of missing his destination. These beliefs sustain toleration of sexual violence against women and perpetuate rape cultures (Cowan, 2000). The narrative fosters sexual violence against women and promotes sexual violation of women’s rights as the woman is depicted as a sex object that is there to please men. Although the old man is presented as lustful, the same joke presents the woman as an object which men cannot resist.

A woman’s worth is measured on how she is capable of pleasing men sexually. Single mothers are lampooned and they receive the scorn of the Shona community. They are accused of either

having failed to treat their husbands well or for sexual unattractiveness and sexual incompetence. In Shona, a man can dump or cheat on his wife if she is inept in bed and in domestic skill; such as cooking and washing. The joke below confirms the sexual objectification of women:

17. *Mwana weimwe mvana aiverenga transcript yamai vake yekuCollege. Akabvunza mai kuti, “Ko ma C aya anomirira chii?” Zvikanzi namomz vaya, “Anonzi ma Credits, anomirira kuti ndakapasa masubject iwayo.” Mwana anonongedzera pana F zvikanzi namai, “Uyo anoreva kuti Fail, zvichireva kuti ndakafoira subject yacho.” Mangwana acho mwana akatora I.D yamhamha vake ndokutanga kuseka zvisingaite, kusvikira mai vava vabvunza mwana kuti ari kusekei. Zvikanzi nemwana, “Asi mhamhawa futi. Mungafoirewo ne sex chaiyo? Ndokusaka makasiwa naDaddy.”*

[A single mother's naughty boy was reading the mom's College transcript. He asks, “What do the Cs here stand for?” The mom replies, “Those are Credits, indicating I passed the subjects.” He points to an F and mom replies, “It means I failed.” The next day the kid holds mom's ID and starts laughing uncontrollably. The mom gets irritated and demands to know what's so funny and the kid replies, “But mom, how could you fail sex, of all things? No wonder daddy left you.”]

Humour lies in the child's interpretation of his mother's Identity Card. The son mistakes the 'Sex' for gender with sex for the sexual act and he is quick to conclude that his mother was ditched because she had failed at sex (misinterpreting 'F' for female to mean 'fail' as in the academic transcript). What induces humour is the son's open remark on his mother's incompetence at sex, which demonstrates how women are expected to fulfill men's sexual desire.

In the above narrative (17), even a child understands the centrality of sex and sexual prowess on the part of a woman's socialisation in Shona culture. Since a woman is perceived as a sex object, she has to make sure that she is apt in bed if she is to maintain her marriage or love relationship and this is a typical patriarchal perspective among the Shona. The joke shows the Shona society's beliefs insofar as the issue of sex is concerned. The woman is supposed to use all means necessary to please and satisfy the man sexually, lest she risks losing him.

Culturally, it is the woman who is sexually oriented by her aunties and grandmothers. It is the woman who does labia elongation for her husband's pleasure. (Men are also coached by their uncles and grandfathers on matters of sex. They are given herbs to eat in order to strengthen their backs so that they are not overpowered by their wives in bed, but all the same, a woman is not culturally sanctioned to leave her husband if the husband happens to be less endowed sexually.) If a woman cannot satisfy her husband in bed, she is sent back to her people to be taught how to please a man in bed and sometimes she is even divorced. For example, among the Shona, a woman who does not have elongated labia is referred to as *hadyana/chikadhlana* (a clay pot for cooking relish) which has a smooth brim. The *hadyana/chikadhlana* type of woman is not preferred for a wife/lover as she is said not to provide her husband with sexual pleasure. It can be noted therefore that jokes 15, 16 and 17 highlight patriarchal tendencies as they show that a woman has no control over her body. A woman is depicted as a tool that is meant for satisfying men's desires. This depiction confirms Kambarami's (2006:1) assertion that in the Shona culture, patriarchal practices shape and perpetuate gender inequality and strip women of any form of control over their sexuality due to the fact that custom in Africa is stronger than domination,

stronger than the law, stronger even than religion. Therefore, among the Shona, women occupy a lower position than men and that is why jokes in this section demonstrate the superiority of men over women.

Among the Shona people, it is not only mere sex that matters, but it is a woman's sexual prowess that determines her stay in marriage. The joke shows that if a woman is poor in bed, she is not woman enough and she, therefore, would not stay in marriage. The responsibility of maintaining a stable relationship is placed upon the woman and the man is presented as an endangered species that should be protected by being kept happy by the wife, (Makoni 2013:52). Such presentation confirms the stereotypification of women as sex tools, which points to the inferior status of women among the Shona people.

In Shona culture, when a man marries, the wife belongs to the entire clan. This does not mean that all the men of the family enjoy sexual favours from the woman, but it means that she is socially controlled by the family. She has to please the entire family and behave according to the demands and expectations of that family. The woman has to be morally and socially upright. Besides, she also has to be beautiful. On the bride's first encounter with the family, the family is quick to notice and comment on her beauty. If she is not beautiful, the husband is ridiculed and the wife can as well be scorned. Even the songs that are sung to welcome the new bride emphasise on her beauty or otherwise, though she is not supposed to take offense. The act is referred to as *kunyomba* (mockery).

Kunyomba is a kind of register that is used by the wife and her husband's sisters or by the wife and her husband's young brothers to poke fun at each other. Shona humour can also make use of the *kunyomba* register and jokes of that nature objectify women. The joke below shows the objectification of women.

18. *Tiri akafunga zvokunoratidza vabereki vake musikana wake kumusha. Achingosvika, baba vake vakabva vamudeedza padivi ndokumuzevezera pasi pasi vakati; "Nhai Tiri mwanangu, musikana akanyangara kudai wakamuwanepi? Ane mhanza inopfuura yangu, haana mazino mukawwa, mhuno dzakabatana kuita buri rimwe, makumbo ese ndeekuleft..." Vasati vapedza Tiri ndokubva adeedzera nezwi riri pamusoro zvikanzi, "Musatombondizevezera zvenyu, haanzwe uye haataure." Baba vakabva vafenda.*

[Tiri went to his parents' place in the country to introduce his girlfriend. Upon arriving, his father took him aside and, in a low voice, said: "Tiri my son, where on earth did you get this ugly girlfriend of yours? Look, she has a bald head that is worse than mine, she has missing teeth, her nose is bunched into one nostril and her feet are both of the left side..." Before he had finished talking, Tiri, in a loud voice said "Don't even bother whispering father, she does not hear, neither can she talk." Father collapsed.]

What evokes humour in the above narrative is the description of the young man's fiancée. The degree of ugliness, coupled by her deafness and dumbness makes the father faint. The joke exhibits how a woman's beauty is emphasised. In Shona, in particular, there is evidence of sexist definitions of womanhood in which a woman is supposed to be sexually appealing and attractive. More often than not, women are valued according to their physical worth before their character is even judged.

In the joke above, all the features that the fiancée exhibits are not fit for what the society expects of a wife. A deaf and dumb bride is the least thing that Shona society expects from a potential wife. The Shona society, at least in that regard, is unfair on disabled women. Disabled women are the least choice when it comes to marriage and this is an unfair treatment of women because they are discriminated on disability grounds.

In Shona folktales, for example, we hear of beautiful girls who married very ugly men but never do we hear of ugly girls marrying handsome men. This shows that patriarchy defines and contains a woman's sexuality. A woman has to appeal to sexuality as is defined by men and failure to do so means she would be an outcast. In Shona, though, there is a saying; "*Hapana hari inofa isina kubikirwa*" (No claypot will break before being used for cooking), meaning that nobody would die a celibate; but in practice, it is easier for an ugly or disabled man to marry a very beautiful woman, than it is for an ugly woman to marry a handsome man, let alone a disabled woman to marry. This is unfair on the part of the woman.

The joke below also points to the objectification of women.

19. *Vamwe mai vakashatashata vakapinda mushop nezvivana zvavo two zvavanga vachipopotera. Shopkeeper akanyemwerera ndobva ati kwavari; "Mamuka sei mhamha? Vana yenyu vakanaka. Matwins here?" Mai nyakushata vaya ndobva vanyarara kukarira vana, ndokuti: "Kwete, mumwe ane 9 years mumwe 7. Chii chaicho chaita kuti mufunge kuti matwins? Munopengasu, kana kuti hamunyatsooni zvakanakanaka?" Murume uya ndobva ati, "Handipengi, uye handisi bofu, asi ndanga ndichingoshamiswa bedzi kuti ndiani angashinge kurara nemi ka two kese."*

[An ugly woman walks into a store with her two kids and is yelling at them. The storekeeper pleasantly says; “Good morning Ma’am and welcome. Beautiful kids. Are they twins?” The ugly woman stops yelling and says, “Hell no, they are not. One is 9 years and the other is 7 years old. Why the hell would you think they are twins? Are you blind or stupid?” The storekeeper replied, “I am neither blind nor stupid Ma’am, I just can’t believe someone would have the nerve to sleep with you twice.”]

The statement *Ndiani angashinge kurara nemi ka two kese?* (Who would have the nerve to sleep with you twice?), makes the narrative amusing. It is as if an ugly woman is scary and no man can have the nerve to have sex, twice, with such an ugly woman. As the joke suggests, a woman has to be beautiful. She has to sexually appeal to men, which is why the storekeeper is surprised that somebody can have the nerve to sleep with such an ugly woman, twice for that matter, as if an ugly woman cannot have sex with a man. Because a woman is viewed as a sex tool, she has to be attractive so that men can use her.

Because of the patriarchal nature of Shona society, women’s beauty is dictated by men. No wonder why even at women’s Beauty pageants in today’s world, the judges are mostly men. This is a very good example of the sexual objectification of women where beauty is dictated and judged by men. Such practices undermine and devalue the woman.

In joke 19 above, the ugly woman, who is referred to as *nyakushata* (lit. the one who owns ugliness) is also associated with ill manners. She is loud mouthed, harsh and outspoken. The

harsh response that she gave to the shopkeeper is uncalled for. The unwarranted harshness that the woman expresses is meant to prove that an ugly woman is repulsive both outwardly and inwardly and should, therefore, not be taken for a wife. The joke, therefore, implies that a man cannot enjoy sex with an ugly woman – and such kind of humour strips ugly women of self-confidence and it stereotypes ugly women as repulsive sexually and otherwise.

Another joke to show how women are objectified is given below.

20. *Mwana: Daddy, ndingapewo musikana wangu chii paValentine's?*

Baba: Akanaka here?

Mwana: Hongu.

Baba: Mupe phone number dzangu.

[Son: Dad, what can I give my girlfriend on Valentine's Day?

Dad: Is she beautiful?

Son: Yes.

Dad: Give her my phone number.]

In the above joke, women are depicted as sex objects that are meant to be used by men. The father's advice to his son is incongruous and it is what makes the joke humorous. Instead of telling his son to give the girlfriend something material, the father asks his son to give her his phone number and the assumption is that the father wanted to have sex with the girl because he has heard that the girl is beautiful.

The joke depicts men as promiscuous. The reason why men are depicted as sexual perverts is because they view women as sex objects. This tallies with the joke 15 where women are

compared with mango fruits. In the above joke, there is no justification as to why the father would ask his son to give the girlfriend his phone number except for reasons of adultery. Actually, among the Shona, men who have affairs with young women are praised as ‘the’ men and men boast about breaking young women’s virginity. This demonstrates how women are perceived as sex tools.

Sexist jokes can be on the woman’s physical state, particularly her sex organs, and even the reproductive system. These are the parts that are thought to be necessary for men’s pleasure. There are jokes that ridicule the female sex organs, those that ridicule her for having abnormal features, and those that scorn her for menstruating. There is an English joke which proves this:

An Architect asked a Town Planner a question. What do you think was wrongly designed in a woman's body? The Town Planner said “I think the Entertainment centre is too close to the sewage system!

The above joke ridicules women on the basis of their sexual organs. The joke mocks women because the ‘entertainment area’, which in this case is the vagina, is too close to the ‘sewage system’, which is the anus. While men enjoy sex with women, the joke implies that men dislike the fact that the vagina is too close to the anus. Whilst the male reproductive organ is positioned on almost the same position with that of a woman, it is the woman’s sexual organ that is ridiculed because she is the one who is objectified and meant to be ‘used’ by man inasfar as sex is concerned. In Nda, one of the indigenous languages that is spoken in eastern parts of Zimbabwe, the man is referred to as ‘*muisa*’ (lit. the one who puts) and the woman is referred to

as 'muiswa' (lit. the one who gets inserted/put) and this shows how the society objectifies and demeans women. The man is the agent and the woman is the object and, therefore, inferior to men. The following joke lampoons women on the basis of their shape and size:

21. *Tumira joke rino kuvarume vose vanokwanisa kunyemwerera after reading it... Girlfriend yakafanana necellphone, asi mukadzi akaita se TV... nekuda kwezvinotevera:*
- i) Kumba unoona TV, asi paunoenda out unotakura phone yako;*
 - ii) Unoshandisa TV imwechete kweupenyu hwako hwose, asi unochinja phone panongoburwa dzimwe nyowani;*
 - iii) Dzimwe nguva unombofadzawo neTV, asi nguva zhinji munhu anotamba nephone yake;*
 - iv) TV inenge iri hombe uye yakasakara, asi kafoni kakanakanaka, kadiki, kane shape ingori bhoo bhoo plus kari portable;*
 - v) Ne cellphone unotaurawo uchiteerera, asi ne TV unongoteerera wakangotarisa nguva yose;*
 - vi) Unogaroratidza shamwari yako phone yako, asi haumbofa wakavaratidza TV yako; and,*
 - vii) Chekapedzisira, maTV haana mavirus, asi maphone mavirus hobho.*

[Send this to all men who can smile after reading this....

A girlfriend is like a cellphone whereas a wife is like a TV... here's why:

- i) At home you watch TV but when you go out you take your cellphone with you;*
- ii) You use the same TV for almost your entire lifetime, but you change your cellphone every time a new model is released;*
- iii) Sometimes you enjoy TV but mostly you play with your cellphone;*
- iv) A TV is big and old but a cellphone is cute, slim, curvy and portable;*
- v) With a cellphone you talk and listen, with a TV you just listen and watch all the time;*
- vi) You always show your friends your cell, but you never show them your TV; and*
- vii) Lastly, TVs don't have viruses, but all cellphones do.]*

In the above joke, women are compared with objects that are meant for men's use. Women provide sexual pleasure and entertainment to men. The married woman is compared with a TV

which is a domestic gadget, unattractive and not portable, to highlight the domestication of women; yet a girlfriend with whom the man would be having an extra marital affair is portable, attractive and well-shaped. The joke suggests that with age, the woman is depleted in appearance, body and mind. When a woman is married, she is no longer attractive and she ceases to provide her husband with the pleasure and awe that she used to give him when they were still a boy and a girl, as is indicated by number (iii). The joke displays total objectification of women by attacking married women – presenting them as frosty, unattractive, monotonous and unsophisticated.

The joke, therefore, means that women are objects of male gaze. Men are ashamed of their wives, hence they never show them off to their friends as is suggested by item (vi). It is men who dictate how a perfect and sexy woman should look like. Big bodied and old women are not attractive to men as is illustrated by the imagery of the television set which is big and unattractive as compared to a cellphone that is small and portable.

The joke also depicts women as boring and domineering. Women talk too much and men hate it as is alluded to on item (v). Married women are depicted as monotonous, irksome and sexless. The changing of girlfriends points to the use and abuse of women by men and this is tantamount to the objectification of women.

The above joke (21) also depicts married women as frigid, emotionless, sexless, dull and reserved. Because an ordinary TV has programmed functions, one cannot do anything else with

it except to watch it, whereas with a cellphone one can choose what to do and when to perform certain functions on it. Women are, therefore, presented as objects which men use to satisfy their sexual appetite and, at the same time, they are also depicted as disease carriers as is implied by item (vii). This could also be a warning to seek after ‘side chicks’ at men’s peril – or, better still, an advice for them to stick with their old TV, as is supported by the Shona proverb, *Zingizi gonyera pamwe maruva enyika haaperi* (A person should be faithful to one sex partner).

The joke below presents women as sex objects.

22. *Reasons dzakanakira Doro kudarika Mukadzi:*

- i) *Ukatenga doro unokwanisa kudaidza hama neshamwari kuti huyai tinwe doro randatenga asi pane madzimai panonetsa, hapadaidzanwe kunyange munin'ina wako chaiye;*
- ii) *Ukatenga doro unovhura wega, hakuna munhu anozofamba achitaura kuti hee doro rina Banda ndini ndakarivhura. Mukadzi wako unonzwa mumwe achiti takabva neko;*
- iii) *Ukatenga doro kana risingaite unokwanisa kurichinja wopihwa rimwe but kana ari mukadzi maI;*
- iv) *Doro rakafanana, harina kuti ndere kunzvimbo ipi, asi unonzwa vamwe vachiti maChawa akapenga;*
- v) *Doro unorinwa kubva musi wa 1 January kusvika musiwa 31 December but mukadzi rimwe zuva anenge akaneta, mamwe mazuva anenge ari kumwedzi.*
- vi) *Pagaro pedoru pakanyorwa kuti Alcohol may be hazardous to health, unonwa uchitoziva kuti ndinofa, but pagaro remadzimai hapana kunyorwa, unotozoyeuka wave kufa.*

[Advantages that beer has over women:

- i) If you buy beer you can afford to call your friends and drink together, but when it comes to women, it’s very difficult because you cannot ask anyone, even your younger brother, to sleep with your wife;
- ii) If you buy beer, you can open it for yourself and no one would move around claiming to be the first one to open it, but for your wife somebody can go around saying I am the one who broke her virginity;

- iii) If you buy beer which doesn't taste good, you can return it and get another bottle, but you cannot do the same for a wife;
- iv) Beer tastes the same, no matter where it's brewed, but you may be surprised to hear some people say women of Malawian origin are very great in bed;
- v) You can drink beer from the 1st of January to the 31st of December, but with a woman it's something else. Sometimes she would be tired and some of the days she would be menstruating;
- vi) On the bottom of a beer bottle it is clearly labeled 'Alcohol may be hazardous to health', you drink it at your own peril and fully knowing, but on a woman's bottom, nothing is written; you will only realise it and regret when it's too late and you are dying.]

In the above joke, women are compared with beer and the joke states that beer is better than women for several reasons. In item (ii), the implication is that because a woman is an object, she is actually 'opened' (*anovhurwa*) by a man and it is as if the woman is the maleficiary during sex. In Shona it is humiliating to marry somebody who was deflowered by another man. It is quite embarrassing for a man to hear someone say I broke your wife's virginity (*Mukadzi wako ndakamuvhura*) because a woman is a woman who is supposed to be 'used' by one man.

Men say that some women are 'juicier' and 'sexier' than others, for example on item (iv), it is stated thus *MaChawa akapenga*, (women of Malawian origin can give a man great sexual pleasure). Women who are poor in bed are labeled *mvura yega yega*, which means they are as tasteless as water. The joke, therefore, stereotypes women of Malawian origin for being dexterous in bed as compared to Shona women.

In Malawi, girls undergo the *Chinamwali* rite of passage where they are taught how to handle a man in bed and men believe that these women of Malawian origin have higher sexual prowess

than ordinary Shona women; hence the saying *MaChawa akapenga*. In street lingo, girls/women who have undergone the *Chinamwali* rite are said to have done ‘bedroom apprenticeship’.

Though women are regarded as sex objects, they are also depicted as disease carriers, as is implied by item (vi). Men cannot help having sex with women because women are sex tools, yet the same women are also accused of spreading deadly diseases to men. Women are, therefore, presented as dangerous disease carriers who infect unsuspecting men. Because the jokes centre on women and compare them to consumables, the researcher argues that women are objectified. Women are presented as objects that are meant to be used and abused by men, and such presentation is dehumanizing in nature and so has to be challenged.

4.3 Women as Sex-obsessed/Nymphomaniacs

Although women are depicted as sex objects, they are also portrayed as sex-obsessed. Jokes in this category suggest that a woman does not think of anything else except sex. Both married and unmarried women are depicted as habitually in need or in search of sex. It is as if women cannot do without sex. From the humorous narratives in this category, women are depicted as highly obsessed with sex. The joke below attests to this point.

23. *Private caller: Hello! Am I speaking to Anita?*

Anita: Yes.

Private caller: Asikana, siyanai nezvekufonerana nemurume wangu handiti!

Anita: Ndanga ndatya, ndafunga kuti muchati ndirege kurara naye. Kana zvakadaro iri bhoo. Good night.

[Private caller: Hello! Am I speaking to Anita?

Anita: Yes.

Private caller: Lady, stop the habit of calling my husband. Ok?

Anita: Oh, just that! I thought you were going to ask me to stop having sex with your husband. If it is just stopping communicating with your husband over the phone, that is so simple. I will do so with pleasure. Good night.]

The above joke, which is in the form of a dialogue between a wife and a small house (a married man's unofficial wife/live in girlfriend) depicts the female figure as obsessed with sex. Humour lies in the incongruity in Anita's response to the private caller (wife)'s plea not to sleep with her husband. The wife demanded that Anita stops communicating with her husband and, implicitly, she meant even sleeping with him. All Anita wants from the married man is sex and it is probably sex in exchange for money or other material things. To Anita, communicating with the married man over the phone is not an issue. Her problem would be to completely stop sleeping with the man because all that she wants is sex.

Besides being nymphomaniacs, the joke also suggests that women are evil. Anita does not mind wrecking another woman's marriage and this is wickedness on her part. The joke, therefore, stereotypes women as evil as the woman marvels in in her fellow woman's unhappiness. The above joke (23), however, demonises women and presents them as wicked.

The joke below also shows that women are obsessed with sex.

24. *Mumwe mukadzi akaenda kwachiremba akasvikoti “Chiremba, murume wangu haafariri bonde.”Chiremba akati “Zvakanaka. Mupei mapiritsi aya mazuva ose. Isai piritsi rimwe chete mutii yake zuva rega rega.” Mukadzi uya akasvikoisa piritsi rimwe chete riya sezvaanga arairwa, vakaita bonde mukadzi akafadzwa nazvo. Mangwana, mukadzi akaisa mapiritsi maviri, vakafadzana zvakanyanya. Zuva rechitatu mukadzi akabva akuturira mushonga wese wanga wasara mutii yemurume wake. Mushure memazuva maviri chiremba akafona achida kunzwa kuti zviri kufamba sei, mwanakomana ndokudaira foni akati kuna chiremba; “Mai vari pacomma, mainini vari muchipatara, sisi vebasa vakanomhan’arira baba kuti vakavabhinya, iniwo shure kwangu kuri kurwadza nekubuda ropa, baba vachiri kungomhanya mhanya mugadheni vasina kupfeka vachingodaidzira kuti “Bingo! Bingo! Bingo! asi imbwa dzacho hadzisi kutombobatika.”*

[A woman went to a doctor and said; “My Husband is not interested in sex.” Doctor said; “Ok! Give him these pills every day; put 1 pill in his tea.” The woman did that and they had sex, which they enjoyed. Next day she put 2 pills in his tea and they enjoyed much more. Third day, she emptied the remaining medication in his tea... Two days later the Doctor called to know the progress; their son picked up the phone and said to the doctor, “Mom is in a coma at the moment, Aunt is in the hospital, Maid is suing Dad for rape, my own ass hurts and is bleeding and Dad is still running naked in the garden shouting Bingo! Bingo! Bingo! But the dogs are nowhere to be found.”]

What makes the above narrative humorous is not the language use, but the events themselves. The fact that the man had sex with everyone and still running stark naked, calling the dogs makes the narrative humorous. The woman is depicted as obsessed with sex. Where she is told to administer just a pill, she empties the remaining medication so that she can enjoy more sex. The woman is foolish enough not to realise that too much medication will harm her husband. Now the reader cannot blame the husband who rapes everyone else in the home and performs bestiality on the dogs, but rebuke and scorn the foolish woman for putting everybody’s life in danger because of her selfish sexual desires.

Such depiction stereotypes women as foolish, selfish, stupid and sex obsessed; they cannot think of anything else besides sex. Such depiction of women as selfish is also witnessed in oral narratives where women consulted traditional medicine practitioners for some love potion. Because they would want to have total control over their husbands, the women would sometimes overdose their husbands and this would sometimes result in the husband's death or becoming what in Shona is referred to as *madununu* (morons). Humour of this nature depicts women as selfish sex perverts.

Jokes that depict women as unsatisfied in bed also imply that women are not good communicators. Where they feel that their husbands are not satisfying them in bed, instead of saying it out, women are easily tempted to find satisfaction elsewhere. This could be caused by the general expectation that women should refrain themselves and repress their sexual drives.

Generally, in Shona it is taboo for a woman to directly ask for sex. If she does that, she is suspected of prostitution. Even for her to initiate sex with her own husband, the woman may be asked, "*Wakazviona kupi?*" (Where did you learn this?), or "*Wakazvinzwa nani?*", (Where did you hear this from?). This demonstrates how women's sexuality is contained and dictated by men. Because a woman is a mere object, she cannot initiate sex or openly display her sex appetite.

Among the Shona people, an ideal woman should wait for her husband to initiate sex. The Shona woman is completely tamed and, inasfar as sex and sex related issues are concerned, the woman

should always pretend to be innocent. Even upon marriage, the bride is expected to be virgin whilst nobody bothers to find out whether the groom is virgin as well. In fact, in Shona as boys grow up into young adults, traditionally they would be encouraged to adventure in sex with girls, but when they wanted to marry, they have to make sure that they marry virgins. The opposite is true for women. A girl is supposed to abstain from sex and to keep her virginity for her wedding day. If she adventures in sex she is labeled a whore and on her marriage if she is found not to be a virgin her husband's relatives would present to her family an old coin with a hole or a plain white cloth with a hole to show that the bride was no longer a virgin. This would bring humiliation to the girl's family and the groom would not pay *mombe yechimanda* for her. All this shows how women are viewed as sex objects amongst the Shona people.

The joke below presents women as nymphomaniacs.

25. *Mumwe musikana akange achangoorwa akati kumurume wake, "Honey, unoziva kuti ndiri mhandara, saka hapana kana one chandinoziva pa sex. Unganditsanangurirewo here first tisati taita?" Zvikanzi nemurume, "Ok, sweetie. Rega ndinyatsokutsanangurira nemutoo waunonzwisisa. Tomboti nyini yako ijeri, yangu musungwa. Saka zvatichaita pano apa ndezvekutora musungwa tomuisa mujeri. Wazvinzwisisa?" Musikana akati hongu. Saka vakabva vaisa musungwa mujeri kekutanga. (Vakarara vose kekutanga). Murume akabva anyemwerera, ndobva ati regai ndimborara mbijana ndichimbozorora. Chiriporipocho mukadzi ndobva adanidzira kuti, "Honey, musungwa anenge apunyuka mujeri uyu!" Murume ndobva atendeukira kumusikana ndobva ati, "Ok, ngatimubatei futi timudzose mujeri!" Murume anobva apindawo mu tune ndobva vaita futi kechipiri. Pavakapedza kechi two musikana akabva ati futi; "Honey, musungwa apunyuka futi!" Murume ndobva apenga achiti, "Iwe! Haisi life in jail ka iyi! Aaah!"*

[A bride tells her husband, "Honey, you know I'm a virgin and I don't know anything about sex. Can you explain it to me first?" "Okay,

sweetheart. Putting it simply, we will call your punani, 'The prison' and we will call my joystick 'The prisoner'. So what we are going to do now is to put the prisoner in the prison. Do you understand?" Wife said "Yes" and they put the prisoner in the prison for the first time. (They made love for the first time). The husband smiled with satisfaction and turned over to get some rest. Immediately his wife shouted; "Honey, the prisoner seems to have escaped!" Turning on his side, he smiles and says; "Then we will re-arrest him." After the second time, the bride says, "Honey, the prisoner is out again!" The husband yelled, "Hey, it's not a life sentence. Aaah!"]

The man uses the imagery of the prison and the prisoner to refer to sex. The way the new bride continually asks the prisoner to be incarcerated is what makes the narrative humorous. The husband's protest against the institutionalisation of the prisoner for the third time makes the narrative even more hilarious. The joke depicts women as sex obsessed. The woman does not seem to be satisfied by her husband, even though she purports to be having sex for the first time. Such kind of image is indecorous as it makes an implication that women are sex addicts.

The man is 'outdone' by the new bride to the extent of complaining, and this calls for laughter. Women are, thus, reduced to sex perverts who cannot have enough of sex yet in reality, both men and women enjoy sex. That is why in Shona culture there is *madanha* and *zvirevereve* (poetry of the blankets/love making poetry). *Madanha* are recited by women when praising their husbands in bed whilst *zvirevereve* are recited by men to praise their wives in bed. It is not realistic that only women want sex, neither is it true that women are not satisfied with one round of sex as is depicted in the above joke. Men and women equally want and enjoy sex.

In traditional Shona culture, if a woman fails to satisfy her husband in bed, she would be sent back to her people for cautioning and counseling and perhaps for sex-orientation sessions whereby she would be taught how to handle a man and to satisfy his sexual desires. If a man fails to satisfy his wife, the woman would complain to the husband's aunt and the husband would be referred to his uncles and/or grandfathers for counseling and for sex-oriented sessions to be taught how to handle and satisfy a woman in bed. In traditional Ndebele culture, the wife would cook her husband a meal whose relish is without salt and upon enquiry; she tells him that the same is what he is also giving her in bed. This, therefore, confirms that both men and women want sex and sex is regarded as a human right. The joke below presents women as nymphomaniacs.

26. *Mumwe murume anga akagara mumba achiona zvake bhora paTV magetsi ndobva aenda. Murume akatanga kupopota achiti "Magetsi anobhohwa mhani. Abva aenda apa ndangoona one round chete. One round chete here akomana. Haa zvinobhohwa izvi!" Mukadzi wake ndobva ati, "Mazvionaka kuti one round inobhohwa?"*

[A certain man was at home watching soccer on TV and suddenly there was a powercut. The man started to grumble saying, "These electricity powercuts disgust me so much. The power went off when I had watched just one round of soccer. Just one round! This is really boring!" The wife retorted, "You see how boring a single round is?"]

What is humorous in the above joke is how the woman manages to bring to her husband's attention her displeasure with just one round, not of soccer, but of sex. The wife's response is not directly related to the issue of soccer and electricity, but it is alluding to her displeasure in getting just one round of sex from her husband. It is this incongruity in the wife's response that makes

the narrative comical. The husband is complaining of having just watched one round of soccer, yet he does not satisfy his wife in bed as he gives her just one round of sex. The wife is complaining about her husband's ineffectiveness in bed. The narrative, therefore, stereotypes women as sex perverts. The woman in the joke does not get enough of sex yet she does not openly talk about it with her husband and she suffers in silence. Because the wife is inferior to her husband, she cannot openly and directly complain to her husband about her dissatisfaction in bed and she, therefore, makes use of this opportunity to at least express her displeasure. The following narrative also presents women as nymphomaniacs.

27. *Mukadzi akanzi ape speech parufu rwemurume wake...akati... "The devil is a LIAR!!" Vanhu vese vakati "Amen!"...Akati... "Satan atora murume wangu...but he is a liar mhani!" Vanhu vakati... "Amen". Akati... "In the name of Jesus...mangwana chaiye ndinenge ndave nemumwe"...Vanhu vakati ziiii.*

[A woman was asked to give a speech at her husband's funeral...and she said... "The devil is a LIAR!!" Everybody said "Amen!"...She said... "Satan has taken away my husband...but he is a liar for sure!" People said "Amen!" in response. She said ... "In the name of Jesus...by tomorrow, definitely I would be having another husband!" Everybody was dumbfounded.]

The incongruity in what society expects of a widowed woman and the widow's declaration makes the above narrative jocular. Whilst one may expect the woman to declare that she would be able to pull through the trying times, the widow declares that by the following day she would be having a new husband and this is facetious. The joke is an attack on women as it depicts women as hypersexual. The joke suggests that women cannot live without men because they have uncontrollable sexual desire. The woman who has just lost her husband could not wait to

get a new husband and she uses Jesus' name to declare that she would get herself a husband as soon as possible, which is blasphemous.

According to Shona custom, if a woman loses her husband through death, she waits for one full year before the *kurova guva* (bringing back the spirit of the dead) ceremony is done. It is after this ceremony that the widow may be inherited by the deceased husband's brother (*kugarwa nhaka*), or she may go back to her people if she does not wish to be inherited. When a man loses his wife, he can only marry another wife or *kumutswa mapfihwa* (to be given his late wife's young sister or niece as wife) after staying for a full year. In the narrative above, the woman cannot wait for the grief period and she wants to have a new husband just after the death of her husband, which is unheard of in Shona culture. The woman is, therefore, presented as a nymphomaniac for she cannot control her sexual desire.

In the joke above, women are lampooned as sex perverts and such presentation is complete dehumanisation and dewomanisation of women.

4.4 Old Women as sexually repelling

Jokes do not only lampoon young and middle aged women. Old women are not an exception insofar as jokes are concerned. They are depicted as evil; their bodies succumb to atrophy, and they are seen as generally dirty. Shona humour depicts old women negatively in terms of their morality as much as in their appearance. The jokes below demonstrate the point.

28. *Magistrate: Nhai gogo, mune makore mangani?*

Gogo: 85 mambo wangu.

Magistrate: Saka zvakafamba sei kuti musvike pakuuraya jaya rine makore 25?

Gogo: Kakomana aka kakauya ndigere zvangu, ndokundimbundikira zvinyoronyoro, ropa rangu ndokumhanya. Kakabva kapuruzira mazamu, ndakatanga kumerera muviri wese, ndokubva kanditsvoda, ndinzwe bvunzi rangu kumira richiti nyaunyau...ndokubva kanditakura ndokundiwisira pamubheda. Ndakanzwa kumhanyamhanya mudumbu nemufaro. Hapano kabvisa bhurugwa rangu ndikadikitira nekunyorovera netarisiro. Ndoo pakakabva kati, "Happy April Fool's Day!" Kana ndimiwo Magistrate, maiti ndaigodiniwo pakadaro? Ndakamuuraya ipapo ipapo!!!

[Magistrate: Granny, how old are you?

Granny: 85, my Lord.

Magistrate: What led you to murder a 25-year-old man?

Granny: This young man came to me, he hugged me warmly and I felt good. He then caressed my breasts and kissed me and I was sexually excited. He then carried me and threw me on the bed and my urge to have sex grew stronger. He took off my panty and I felt highly aroused, in anticipation for sex...and all of a sudden the boy said, "Happy April Fool's Day!" Even if it were you, my Lord, what would you have done in such a situation? I killed him instantly!!!]

Humour in the above joke lies in the incongruity of the events. Whilst one would expect the young man to have sex with the old woman whom he had aroused that much, humour is evoked by the man's sudden proclamation "Happy April Fool's Day!" Though old women are also human, Shona society does not expect them to crave for sex. The vivid description of how the woman was aroused and how then the young man suddenly 'lets down' the old woman is jocular. Culturally, it is not acceptable for someone to fool an elderly person and sex play is highly forbidden. Sex in Shona is sacred.

Though the young man had violated the old woman's rights, blame is placed on the old woman who was controlled by her emotions and murdered the young man who 'meant no harm'. Shona society does not expect old women to engage in sex or sexual activities.

The above joke also depicts women as dangerous and evil. They can do anything for sex. The joke attacks old women who, as argued earlier on, are not supposed to enjoy or crave for sex. The old woman is ostracised in matters of sex, for she is expected to be asexual. The paradox is that whilst old women are not expected to have sex, old men can freely have sex because in Shona it is believed that *Murume haachelorberi* (A man is never too old for sex) and *Murume ijongwe rinofa richikukuridza* (A man is a cockerel, it crows even up to its death). These sayings validate the fact that men are always sexually active whilst women will get to a point where they are sexually repulsive. This state of affairs is unfair on women as their love and sex life is determined by the society. Women in Shona are not free insofar as love and relationships are concerned and this in itself is a form of oppression.

Although old age is virtuous, old women and their bodies are depicted as atrophous. As the woman grows old, she ceases to be attractive and appealing to her husband and this is justification for men's tendency to marry younger wives when their wives become older. Though Shona humour suggests that women's worth is just in the blankets, their sexual virtues expire with age. Below is a joke that demonstrates that women's bodies degenerate with age and lose their sexual attractiveness.

29. *Vamwene vakashanyira muroora vavo kutaundi ndobva vasvika muroora akapfeka zvake panty nebra chete, ndokuti “Muroora, ko ndiyo ipi iyi?” Zvikanzi nemuroora, “Inonzi bedroom suit mhamha. Murume wangu anoifarira zvokuti dhuu.” Vamwene vakabva vazodzokera kumusha vakati regai ndinoitirawo murume wangu zvandakaona kuHarare. Vakabva vagara zvavo pabonde vakapfeka bhurugwa rega, murume wavo ndokusvika ndokuvati, “Aaah, ko mbuya vaBhiya, chii chamatiitira ipapa?” Zvikanzi “Inonzi bedroom suit baba. Ndakainzwawo nemuroora kuHarare.” Zvikanzi nemurume wavo, “Aah, manje yenyu iyi haiite. Inotomboda kunyatsoayinwa zvakasimba.”*

[A mother-in-law visited her daughter-in-law who lived in the city. She found her daughter-in-law putting on just a panty and a bra and she asked: “My daughter-in-law, why are you semi-nude?” The daughter-in-law replied, “It’s called a bedroom suit, mama, and my husband loves it.” The mother-in-law went back to the rural area and she decided to do the same for her husband. She took off all her clothes and remained with a panty only. She sat on a reed mat, waiting for the arrival of her husband. The husband was shocked to see her in that state and he asked thus; “Grandmother of Beatrice, what is this you are trying to do?” and she replied, “It’s called a bedroom suit, I learnt this from my daughter-in-law in Harare.” The husband then said, “This bedroom suit of yours is not in any way attractive. It needs some thorough ironing.”]

What is comical in the above joke is the husband’s reaction to his old wife’s attempt to be romantic. Whilst one would expect the husband to at least appreciate the wife’s attempt to spice up their love life, it is amusing to hear the man discourage the old woman and hurt her feelings by suggesting that she is no longer sexually attractive. Although the old woman tried to please her husband and do *madanha* (bedroom antics), the husband is not aroused by his wife’s wrinkled body that no longer appeals to his eyes. The female body is generally said to become waste, as it gets old. Men determine what is attractive or unattractive in a woman’s body. The husband’s statement is meant to thwart his old wife’s craving for sex because she is old and sexually unattractive and this is unfair for the woman.

In Shona, particularly in a polygamous set up, there is a common statement “*Regai mhuru diki dziyamwe*” (lit. Let the calves have the milk), which means that older wives should not demand or crave for sex from their husbands as they should let the younger ones enjoy sex. This is unfair on the older woman because while the husband would also be advanced in age, he is allowed to enjoy sex with his young wives as men are said to be never too old for sex. There is a general belief amongst the Shona in particular, that if a man has sex with an old woman, the woman develops *chipotera* (false pregnancy) and the old man develops what in Shona is referred to as *jendekufa* (a condition where one testicle swells and grows bigger than the other and this causes sterility). This, in my view is/was meant to discourage old women from yearning for sex and let their husbands freely look for sexual satisfaction from younger women. This demonstrates that Shona as a patriarchal society contains and controls women’s sexuality and views women as sex tools.

Sexist humor derives power to foster expressions of prejudice against women from the ambivalence of society's attitudes toward women, (Ford, Triplett, Woodzicka, Kochersberger, & Holden, 2013). The old woman in Shona humour is presented as sexless and castrating and she is not supposed to enjoy or crave for sex. Probably because as women advance in age, they would no longer be dexterous in bed and men would not enjoy sex with such women, the Shona people developed the theories of *chipotera* and *jendekufa* to discourage old women from having sex so that men can freely look for younger and energetic women who would provide them with the sexual pleasure they desire. Such practices oppress women and violate their right to sex. A similar English joke that presents old women as sexually repelling is given below.

An old lady was getting on the bus to go to the pet cemetery with her cat's remains. As she got on the bus, she whispered to the bus driver, "I have a dead pussy." The driver pointed to the lady sitting behind him and said, "Sit with my wife. You two have a lot in common."

The word pussy is an English slang term that refers to the vagina. In this joke, the old woman is depicted as waste. The stench that was coming from her dead cat was mistaken for a foul smell coming from her vagina. The driver's interpretation of the old woman's statement "I have a dead pussy" as "I have a foul vagina", and him asking the woman to sit next to his wife who also has a smelly vagina call for humour. The joke implies that a woman's body becomes waste with age. The old woman's private organ is compared to a dead cat, which is stenchy and fetid. The joke also means that the old woman's vagina no longer has life and is, therefore, sexually moribund. The joke has more to do with sexual vitality (the lack of it), than it is to do with the stench. Therefore, joke shows elements of superiority of men over women as it implies that the female body, particularly her vagina, wastes away with age and her sex organ stinks, whilst the man remains fit and young since the man, who is equally advanced in age, has no stinking organ and retains his virility. The joke therefore dehumanizes women.

The joke below ridicules old women's sexual desire.

30. *Gogo vaifamba zvavo vachibva paden pavo vachienda mutown. A teenage boy, Jonso akavahwandira mukakwenzi ndokuvabata otanga kuva raper. Gogo started shouting at the top of her voice, "Mapurisa! Mapurisa!!" but as Jonso continued, voice ragogo rakatanga kuderera. Gogo ne voice rakaneta, "Mapurisa, apurisa, purisa, urisa, risa, isa, isa, isa...!!!" Jonso apedza vakatanga kumubhabhadzira pa shoulder vachinyemwerera, zvikanzi, "Aka! Dai kasinganake ndaikasungisa nemapurisa aka!"*

[An old woman was walking from home to town. A teenage boy called Jonso waylaid her and raped her. The old woman shouted for help at the top of her voice, “*Mapurisa! Mapurisa!*” (Police! Police!) but Jonso did not let go of her. As Jonso raped her, her voice began to weaken, and with a weak voice the old woman said; “*Mapurisa, apurisa urisa, risa, isa, isa, isa!!!*” (*isa* means put). After the rape, the old woman gave the boy a pat on the shoulder and said with a smile, “This one! Had it not been that you are delicious, I would have reported you to the police!”]

The joke is typical of contemporary online humour which code-mixes English and Shona. Because of the reason that those who use the internet are able to read and write and are generally competent in English, cases of code-mixing of indigenous languages and English are also common. Humour lies in the old woman’s calls to the police (*mapurisa*) and her dropping of one syllable after the other, until she said “*isa, isa, isa*” (put, put, put), as if she was actually encouraging the rapist to give her more sex. Where she had initially been dropping one syllable subsequently, when she came to ‘*isa*’, she did not drop any more sound but kept on repeating the word *isa* as if it was a plea or an encouragement to the rapist to continue raping her and this makes the narrative thrilling.

The old woman in the joke enjoys the rape and she vows not to report the culprit to police because the rapist gave her such pleasure (*ainaka*). The joke implies that the old woman enjoyed the rape by saying ‘*isa*’, as if to urge the rapist on, yet rape is a violation of women’s rights and freedoms. The joke seems to support sexual violence against women as it suggests that women actually enjoy being raped, and this dehumanizes women. The joke below also confirms the same point.

31. *Mumwe blaz aibhinya chembere ndobva pasvika vanhu kuti vamumise zvikanzi nekachembere, “Chingokasiyai kapedzise kani! Tuvana twemazuva ano misikanzwa.”*

[A certain young man was raping an old woman and suddenly some people arrived at the scene and tried to stop the man from raping the old woman. The old woman then said, “Just let him finish. Children of this age are mischievous”]

The old woman asks her rescuers to let the rapist continue raping her as she blames children of today for mischief. What is considered an abnormality is the old woman’s sexual appetite. She asks the people to let the rapist continue because she is actually enjoying the rape. In Shona, there are the proverbs, *Muromo kapako kekuhwanda nako* (The mouth is a hideout, i.e. a person uses his/ her tongue/mouth to get what they want) and *Vakangwara havana nhamo* (The clever ones are never at a loss). The old woman in the above joke makes use of her shrewdness to stop people from disturbing the sex she was enjoying with the rapist. Her statement implies that she was actually enjoying the rape, but because society does not approve of an old woman having sex with a minor, she tries to hide behind her finger and pretends as if she wants to let the young man do what he wants because children of this generation are mischievous. It is the old woman’s sexual appetite, which is the object of humour. The joke, therefore, stereotypes old women as sex perverts and it fosters the sexual harassment of women. The joke below confirms that old women’s sexual appetite is the object of ridicule in Shona humour.

32. *Masendeke akasvika paigeza vakadzi parwizi ndokuti “Nhasi ndinokuridzai mese!” Akabva atanga nemusikana akanga aripo, ndokutevera pane mumwe, ndokusvika pane muroora. Saka pakange pasara kamwe kachembere kane 70 years. Muroora akabva ati zvirini nani modzokorora ini pane kuridza ambuya because vakura. Kachembere*

*kakabva katanga kupenga kachiti "Iwe! Wagara une udyire.
VaMasendeke vati munhu wese! Saka chave chijana changu!"*

[Masendeke came to a river where women were bathing and said, "Today I am going fuck all of you." He started by a girl who was there, raped the next woman, raped the next one, then raped a woman whose mother-in-law was also present. The 70-year-old mother-in-law was the only one left and, out of pity, the daughter-in-law asked Masendeke to repeat raping her in place of her mother-in-law. The mother-in-law then shouted angrily saying, "You! I always knew you are such a selfish woman! Mr Masendeke said every one of us! So it's now my turn!]

Edmund Masendeke and his accomplices, Elias Chauke and Stephen Chidhumo, were notorious armed robbers who embarked on a spate of gruesome murders, armed robberies and rape around Zimbabwe in the 1990s. They escaped the Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison and were rearrested and sentenced to death and were hanged in 2003. The mere mention of their names make Zimbabweans who know these robbers' history shudder.

The word *kuridza* (lit. to beat, as in beating the drum) is an offensive slang word for having sex with a woman and it has some connotations of fixing or punishing the woman through sex. Whilst one would expect the mother-in-law to thank her daughter-in-law for selflessly opting to come to her rescue, the old woman shouts at and accuses the daughter-in-law of selfish gluttony. The old woman even uses the honorific *Va-* (Mr), to address the notorious rapist, so that she does not miss the opportunity, and this shows how desperate she was for sex. In Shona culture, old women are not expected to enjoy sex. They are associated with chastity. Though this joke depicts women in a rape case, humour lies in the fact that the old woman in particular, is willing to be raped. Given her advanced age, one would have expected her to plead with the rapist to spare her

and the incongruity in her stance makes the narrative humorous. The joke, therefore, stereotypes women as sex obsessed and it supports violence against women. A similar joke is given below:

33. *Masendeke akasvika pane imwe chembere yanga ichitsvaga huni ndobva ati “Nhasi mbuya ndoda kukuridzai zvichienderana nemazino ari mukanwa menyu. Shamai muromo tione kuti mazino enyu mangani. Mbuya vakavhura muromo ndokuonekwa vaine mazino 3 chete. Masendeke akavazvambura 3 times ndobva ati, “Yaa, mbuya, zvakwana. Chisimukai muende!” Zvikanzi nambuya vaya, “Mishta Mashendeke, pane rlimwe rlriri kukuku!”*

[Masendeke came across an old woman who was collecting firewood then he said to her, “Old woman, today I want to fuck you as many times as the number of teeth that you have. Open your mouth so that I can count how many teeth you have.” The old woman quickly opened her mouth and Masendeke counted three teeth and raped her 3 times. After the rape, Masendeke ordered the old woman to get up and go, that’s when the old woman said to him, lispng, “Mr Mashendeke, I have another tooth there.”]

The joke attacks old women for craving for sex to the extent of choosing to be raped. What is amusing is the bravery that the old woman has to tell the notorious rapist that there is another tooth far back in her mouth so that she can have another round of sex. She does not mind that Masendeke would sometimes commit rape and murder the victim(s) because all she wants is sex. The joke shows how old women wildly crave for sex. In Shona culture, as women advance in age, they are expected to be unsullied, yet men are viewed as perpetual boys. The issue of sexuality is biased in favour of men because of patriarchy and male hegemony.

Laineste (2012:25) rightly observes that “similarly to ethnic humour, gendered humour is also based on the juxtaposition of “us” and “them”, and as joke-tellers have traditionally been male, it

is the female character who fills the inferior role of the “other”. This implies that women are regarded not only as different, but also inferior to men. A woman has long been regarded as a sexual being who can only be evaluated on the basis of her appearance ...regarding women as sex objects, beings void of any thought and even deprived of having a personality. Though women are presented as sexually repelling, they are depicted as having wild sexual desire. The joke displays women’s stupidity and their pronounced sexual availability and vanity. This therefore suggest that men are superior to women for they are the ones who “use” women and take advantage of women’s sexual availability.

4.5 Women as Morally Decadent

Humour in Shona depicts women as morally decadent. In fact, they are presented as unfaithful to their husbands/boyfriends. Jokes in this category suggest that women cheat on their husbands because they are sex perverts. The joke below supports the researcher’s claim.

34. *Manje Kira akabva kubasa kwake Bhuruwayo achimboshanyira vadzimai kumusha. Akaburuka patownship akagotanga kunwa hwahwa negen’a romuraini make. Gen’a rikatanga kumusasa kuti madzimai ese ari muraini make apera kukwirwa naJoo. Asvika kumba vadzimai vakamugamuchira samazuva ose. Iye aingofunga nyaya iya but apa achingofungawo kuti kuda wake ndiye akasara kukwirwa naJoo. Akagoti kuna vadzimai; “Ko ndanzwa kuti Joo apedza kukwira vakadzi vavanhu muraini kusiya kwomumwe chete.” Vadzimai ndokuti “Ummm, ungava ani iyeye akasara? Aaah, pamwe ndiMai Mary.”*

[Kira was coming from Bulawayo where he was employed, to visit his wife who stayed in the rural area. He dropped off at the township and

started drinking beer with his friends. His friends told him that all the married women in the community were being bedded by a man called Joo. He got home and his wife gave him her usual warm welcome. He was thinking about the issue all the while, but he also thought that maybe his wife was the only one who did not have sex with Joo. He then said to his wife: "I heard that Joo has been sleeping with all married women in this community except for one woman." The wife then replied, "Hmmm, who could it be? I don't know. Maybe it's Mary's mother"]

The woman's response to her husband is incongruous with the expectations of the reader and this is what makes the narrative entertaining. Whilst one would expect Kira's wife to say she is the only one who has not slept with Joo, it is surprising to hear her say probably it is another woman called Mai Mary, and this is humorous. The woman confirms that all the women in the community had sex with Joo and this presents women as perfidious and untrustworthy. Besides her being unfaithful, the woman is also depicted as foolish and stupid.

By simply expressing her doubt on who amongst all the women in her neighbourhood could have escaped Joo's sexual escapades, the woman does not realise that she was indirectly admitting that she herself also had sex with Joo, and this is enough to warrant her divorce. Though we are not disputing the fact that women can as well be unfaithful, such kind of presentation is unfair on the part of the women as they are depicted as worse than dogs.

The woman in the above joke (34) is weak and unprincipled; she is unfaithful and she cannot resist Joo's sexual advances, which means that women are presented as morally decadent. The joke points to the unfair practice that is found in Shona society. Mostly men work in the city whilst their wives stay in the rural areas. While these men may have the liberty to seek sexual

satisfaction from other women, women are not allowed to do likewise. No matter how long the husband may stay away from home, the woman is expected to restrain her sexual desire and wait for her husband. This also points to how Shona society contains women's sexuality. The researcher is not advocating prostitution or unfaithfulness between partners, but is arguing that Shona society oppresses women in terms of sex and sexuality. Men freely quench their sexual desire with other women whilst women are expected to contain their sexual desire. The joke below also paints women as perfidious.

35. *Chinzwa manje: mumwe muface ari kudriver kunotoro madam pabasa pavo, ndopaanoona muface waakadzidza naye obva ati regai ndimupe lift. Vari munzira kudaro vachitaura nyaya vachiseka vanobva vamiswa nerobot pa intersection apo madam vakamira mberi kwe intersection. Muface wake waatakura anobva ati "Aaah, unoona chimai chakamira apo icho shamwari? Ah, chimai chakapenga ichocho. Ndakambochinyenga shamwari tikaita 2 weeks tichidanana. Shaa, hapana anonakirana nechimai icho. Chakazondibhowa ndachibata nedzimwe dzimuface dzepamagarage apo shaa, apa icho chaimbomhanyamhanya chichiti chine murume chii chii. Chinenge chihure futi chimukadzi icho. Ah, kana chiine murumeka, haa murume wacho akadhibha. Iduzman chairu chairu..." Right, ndiwe murume wacho uri kuudzwa izvi unoita sei?*

[Hear this: a certain man was driving to pick his wife from work and suddenly he saw his former schoolmate and offered him a lift. When they were driving along, they were talking and laughing and then they stopped at a traffic light. The man's wife was standing across the road. The former schoolmate then said, "Ah, do you see that woman who is standing over there? My friend, that woman is wild in bed. I once dated her and our love lasted for just two weeks. My friend, no woman can ever match her in bed, she has great sexual stamina. But she got on my nerves when I caught her with another man who is a garage attendant at that garage over there, and yet she had been telling me that she is married. That woman is a bitch...if for sure she is married, then the husband is a fool, a damn fool..." Suppose you are the husband, what would you do?]

The dramatic irony in the above narrative makes the joke comical. The man exposes his friend's wife's illicit behaviour and the imagined man (the husband)'s reaction after hearing all this evokes humour. The woman in the above joke has multiple sex partners and she is a prostitute. Normally, prostitutes are believed to be wild in bed and the man's friend confirms this by saying "*hapana anonakirana nechimai icho*" (no woman can ever match her in bed). The joke is sexist in nature because it is the female figure who is perpetually derided. The woman is depicted as a temptress and a cheap purveyor of sex. The joke confirms the idea of urban bad women as portrayed in colonial Shona literature. The joke is a perpetuation of misconstrued facts about women as unfaithful and immoral. The message that is conveyed in this joke hammers home the misconception and belief that women are responsible for spreading sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS because women have multiple sex partners.

The succeeding joke presents women as cunning and unfaithful.

36. *Mamboonawo kwaenda Jesu?*

Mumwe mukadzi anga achisasana zvake nechikomba chake mumba make ndokubva anzwa knock padoor. Akafunga kuti zvimwe murume wake auya, ndobva ati kuchikomba, "Kwira muceiling, chop chop!" Chikomba pachakapinda muceiling, mukadzi akaona chimwe chikomba chake chechipiri chichipinda. Chikomba chiya pachakati chiregai ndirare naye, murume wemukadzi akabva asvika, mukadzi ndokuti kuchikomba, "Pinda muceiling." Zvikomba zviya zvasangana imomo, chikomba 2 ndokuti kuchikomba 1, "Hama, tichabuda sei muno?" Chikomba 1 ndokuti; "Hameno iwe, ini ndichatoburuka murume uyu paanenge ave kurara nemukadzi wake." Murume wemukadzi uya paanga ave kurara nemukadzi wake, chikomba 1 chakajamba chisina kupfeka ndokusvikomira pamubhedha chichibva chati: "Ndini Jesu, ndauya kuzokuzivisa kuti ucharopafadzwa nemwana musikana", ndobva chakurumidza kumhanyira panze. Chiriporipocho, chikomba 2 chakabva

chaburukawo chichifemera padenga ndokusvikomirawo chichiti, "Ndini Satani! Mamboonawo kwaenda Jesu?" Murume akabva akurumidza kuti, "Tevera sooo."

[Which way did Jesus take?

A married woman was having a nice time with one of her boyfriends when there was a sudden knock on the door. Thinking that it was her husband, she instructed the man to jump into the ceiling, only to realise that it was another boyfriend of hers. When the second boyfriend was about to make love to the woman, the woman's husband came. Boyfriend number 2 had no option except to jump into the ceiling. "How are we going to get out of here?" asked number 2 to boyfriend 1. "I don't know, but for me I am getting out as soon as the hubby starts making love to his wife." When the time came, Boyfriend 1 jumped from the ceiling, naked. He landed on the bed and said; "I am Jesus, I have come to inform you that God shall bless you with a baby girl!" He quickly vanished. Number 2 swiftly followed, panting and he said, "I am Satan! Which way did Jesus take?" "Go that way" the husband quickly replied.]

Much as the reader may find the joke humorous, it is a critique to the female figure as she is depicted as a whore who can manage to have numerous sex partners when she is, in fact, married. The most hilarious part of it is how the two adulterous men managed to get their way out of the house without the husband suspecting anything. Though the joke, in a way, pokes fun at men as stupid, it presents the woman as a cunning bitch.

The reader may sympathise with the husband who is made to think that his wife's sex partners were actually Jesus and Satan, respectively. The researcher, therefore, argues that these jokes are not just mere jokes, but they are 'manifestations of true belief systems that are part of patriarchy' (Bemiller & Schneider, 2010:463), belief systems that maintain the status quo that women are adulterous and, therefore, should be guarded all the time and men are victims of women's traitorous behaviour.

The joke undermines the marriage institution, which is supposed to be based on trust, love and fidelity. Shona culture accords married women respect, as is dictated in the saying, “*Mukadzi wemumwe ndiambuya*” (Someone else’s wife is (like) a mother-in-law) which means that a man cannot have a sexual relationship with someone else’s wife. The above joke reduces and cheapens sex, which in traditional Shona society was (and still is) sacred and meant for procreation. In the joke above, the woman engages in sex not for procreation purposes, but for pleasure and mischief and she gets away with it. The joke below also stresses how women are presented as morally decadent.

37. *Yedu yekuhura iyi nhasi tazoitiswa zvimwe:*

Ndangosvika mumba megirlfriend yangu, ndichangobva kugara pachair, tanzwa knock padoor, zvikanzi nechimoko “Pinda musaga, pinda musaga chopaz.” Saga ranga riri paside pemubhedha.

Ndichingopedza kuzvirongedza musaga, chimoko chavhura door, muchinda achibva apinda. Nyaya dzatanga kutaurwa dzaita kuti ndiite doubt kuti murume wake, chimwe chikomba ichi. Ndaakufunga kuda kubuda, door rabva ravhurwa, samusha vasvika.

Chikomba chakagara pachair ini ndiri musaga, ndanzwa chimoko chave kuti, “Daddy, ava ndibaba vanotengesa madhumbe. Ndavaudza kuti nhasi handina mari vadzoke next week, saka vanga vachitokumbira zvavo mvura, vave kutobuda.”

“Mukwasha ndokuonai next week. Takurai zvenyu saga renyu.”

Muface akandikanda pafudzi. Tafamba tafamba ndonzwa munhu ave kuti, “Nyaya yedu yechihure iyi! Ndava kungotakuriswa zvandisingazive!”

Iniwo ndokupindura, “At least uri kuona kwauri kuenda. Ko ini ndiri musaga?”

[My promiscuity has landed me in trouble today:

I went to my girlfriend’s place, and just as I was about to sit down, we heard a sudden knock on the door. The girlfriend quickly said to me “Get into the sack, quick.” The sack was just by the bedside.

No sooner had I wriggled myself into the sack than the woman opened the door and some guy got in and the two started talking. The issues they were talking about made me suspect that the guy was not the woman’s

husband, but it was one of her other boyfriends. Just when I wanted to get out of the sack, the door was opened, and this time it was the woman's husband.

The other boyfriend was sitting on a chair and I was in the sack. I heard the woman say; "Daddy, this gentleman is selling some yams and I told him that I do not have money today. I asked him to come next when we will be having money. He has asked for some water and he is getting out now."

"Sir, you may take your sack with you. I will see you next week"

The guy threw me on his shoulders and got out of the house. When we had gone a distance, the guy said, "This habit of promiscuity has landed me in trouble. I have been made to carry something that I do not even know."

I replied, "You are better off my friend, at least you can see where you are going. You are better than me who is in the sack."]

The above joke is highly sexist in nature as it depicts women as adulterous, prostitutes and conniving cheats. According to Ivy & Backlund (1994:72), if sexism refers to attitudes and/ or behaviours that denigrate one sex to the exaltation of the other, then it follows that sexist language would be verbal communication that conveys those attitudes or behaviours. In this case then, the above sexist joke denigrates the woman because, within a short space of time, she is surrounded by three men, all of whom want her sexual favours, and surprisingly, she manages to hoodwink them and the other two, (who in this case are her 'clients'), went out of the house without the husband noticing anything amiss. This kind of image portrays the female figure as unfaithful and untrustworthy. That is why maybe, in the Victorian age, women were made to wear chastity belts to guard against women's infidelity. The husband in the above joke (37) is depicted as a saint whilst the wife is demonised. Women are depicted as sexually mischievous and their husbands are victims of this mischief. This stereotypes women as heartless, evil,

scheming and dangerous. The joke, therefore, points to the belief that Shona society has inasfar as women are concerned. A similar joke with women as morally decadent is given below.

38. *Chakazoitika ndechekuti murume akanzwa kuti mukadzi wake ari kushinha nemumwe munhu saka ndokutayimira time yaakaudzwa. Murume ndokunoka padoor na9pm. Zvechokwadi mukadzi aiva nechikomba. Saka yaakazotamba ndeyekuti akapfeka hembe dzemurume wake ndokubuda ari bara akananga panze, murume ndokuti “Enaro! Ndicho chikomba chiya ichi!” ndiye tande zvakadungamidzana. Pasina 200 metres mukadzi ndokumira achiziva kuti chikomba by now chabuda mumba manje, iye ndokuti, “Nhai baba Getty, saka ndozvaunondifungira nhai?” Zvikanzi nemurume; “Sorry mukadzi wangu. Ndakanzwa nababa Jonso kuti uri kuhura naJames.”*

[What happened is that a certain man was tipped off that his wife was having an extra marital affair with another man so he trapped her. The man came home unexpectedly and he knocked on the door at exactly 9 pm. For sure the wife had her boyfriend in, so she quickly put on her husband’s clothes and stormed out of the house in great speed. The man then said to himself, “Yes, this is the man who is sleeping with my wife!” then he followed her in hot pursuit. The woman then stopped when she had gone for about 200 meters, which she knew by then her boyfriend would have gotten out of the house. She then said to her husband, “Father of Getty my husband, really is this what you think of me (you think I am a bitch?). The husband then said, “Sorry my wife. It is Jonso’s father who told me that you are having an affair with James.”]

The apologetic stance that the husband takes after being tricked by his wife is comical. It is the husband’s confession that he was told by Baba Jonso that his wife is having an affair with James that makes the narrative hilarious. The word *Enaro* that the man used shows how convinced he was that the person who stormed out of his house was the man who was cheating with his wife and the dramatic irony here makes the reader laugh.

The woman is presented as cunning and unfaithful. The way she quickly hatches a plan to trick her husband is typical of fiction. The husband does not even realise that the person he was chasing was actually his wife and this is meant to prove how cunning, tricky and immoral women are. The joke, therefore, demonstrates the complexities of the images of women in humour because where women are presented as foolish in some of the jokes analysed earlier, the above joke presents women as cunning, which shows a double standard in terms of how Shona society views women. What makes the narrative more comical is how the wife manipulated and deceived her husband and having him confess that he was told by Baba Jonso that she was cheating. The narrative presents women as immoral, unfaithful and cunning.

Below is another narrative that presents women as cunning and immoral.

39. *Vakadzi, vakadzi, vakadzi! Vanhu ava vakachenjeresesa chokwadi. Umwe murume akakurumidzisa kudzoka kubva kubasa, mukadzi wake aine chikomba mumba. Mukadzi uya akanzwa gedhe richivhurwa ndokukurumidza kumuka, panguva imwecheteyo chikomba chichimhanya kutora hembe kuti chipfeke. Asi mukadzi anga atoronga zano kare, ndobva audza chikomba chiya kuti chimhanyire muspare bedroom chisina kupfeka. Akabva atevera ndokufukidza chikomba chiya negumbeze rakanaka ndobva asiya magaro echikomba panze, ndobva achiudza kuti chisamboti bufu uye chisafukidze magaro acho. Murume uya achingopinda mumba mukadzi akabva akurumidza kumuudza kuti mai vake vari kurwara zvisingaite uye vaunzwa pamba nehanzvadzi dzavo. Akabva ati kumurume wake; "Pinda muspare umo uvakwazise usati waendazve kubasa." Murume akabva apfuurira kupinda muspare muya ndobva ati dhuma dhuma nemagaro aambuya. Akabva akurumidza kubudamo asati ambotaura kana chinhu. Akabva ashaya kuti oudza sei mukadzi wake kuti aona magaro aambuya ari pachena, ndobva angoti kumukadzi wake, "Umm, mai vari kurwara shuwa. Nhasi unotorara zvako navo muspare ini ndorara mubedroom nevana."*

[Women, women, women! These people are bloody clever. A guy came home from work early when his wife had another man in the house. The wife heard the gate opening and jumped while at the same time the boyfriend rushed for his clothes. But the woman had already hatched a plan quickly, and told him to dash into the spare bedroom without dressing. She followed and covered him with a nice blanket. But what's surprising is that she left the buttocks in the open, and told him not to say anything nor cover his butt. The moment her husband walked into the house she told him that her mother was seriously ill and had been brought home by her brothers. "You'd better go in and greet her before you go back to work, she's in the spare bedroom", she said. So the husband proceeded and found the door open and entered. No sooner had he entered did he come face to face with the buttocks and, before he could even utter a word, he dashed out the way he had come in through. Now, he couldn't bring himself to tell his wife that he had seen her mother's buttocks. So he just managed to say, "Hmm, mama is really sick, tonight you'll have to sleep together with her in the spare bedroom and I will sleep with the children in the master bedroom."]

The above joke depicts women as cunning, dirty and immoral. The woman is presented as a shameless, heartless and insensitive woman who can afford to enjoy herself with her boyfriend in her matrimonial home. The joke presents women as highly artistic, cunning and calculating, which again shows the complexity of the presentation of women in Shona humour. Such presentation of women presents the fears that Shona society has on women because society does not trust them. The speed with which the wife quickly hatches a plan to hoodwink her husband is just too swift. The kind of woman that is depicted in the humorous narratives is stripped of her morals and lacks manners and feelings. This is callousness of the highest level as the woman in the narrative denies her husband of his conjugal right, only for her to enjoy the night with her boyfriend in her matrimonial home.

In Shona culture, it is taboo for a son-in-law to see the nakedness of his mother-in-law or vice versa. The wife uses this trick to ensure that the husband would not ask to see the ailing mother-in-law after the shameful event. This is what evokes humour in the above narrative. Even the repetition of the word *vakadzi* in the opening statement demonstrates how women are difficult to understand. Nothing negative is said about the cheating man, which shows the bias that society has in cases of infidelity.

In Shona, generally a real man is him who cheats on his wife and has multiple sex partners. It is said, *Varume imbwa* (Men are dogs) which is similar to the Ndebele proverb *Indoda libhetshu lomziki* (A man is like a loin cloth made of *mziki* animal skin) which means a man cannot and would never be content with one wife. (A *mziki* is a type of animal that mates with any female *mziki* animal, it does not have one *mziki* female animal which it considers as its wife). It is normal among the Shona in particular, for a man to have more than one wife or to sleep with many women. Interestingly, if a woman is caught cheating she is automatically divorced. This demonstrates the disparities in the way men and women were/are supposed to behave, which is mainly biased towards controlling women's sexuality and promoting men's promiscuity and polygamy and this is also a result of patriarchy. The following joke presents women as dangerously adulterous.

40. *Mumwe murume akakurumidza kudzoka kubva kubasa, ndokusvikira wifaz yine chikomba. Mukadzi akabva akurumidza kutiza, achisiya machinda aya maviri mumba. Murume wemunhu ndobva abudisa pfuti achiinongedzera chikomba, chikomba chichibva chabudisawo pfuti yacho kwakunongedzerawo baba vema. Chikomba chakabva chati, "Futi*

mukadzi wako anotoda ini kudarika iwe.” Murume anoti, “Kana! Mukadzi wangu ndomuziva ini kudarika zvaunomuita iwe. Ndozviziva kuti anoda ini kudarika iwe.” Vanoramba vachikakavadzana kusvikira vazowirirana kuridzira pfuti mudenga, vachinyepedzera kunge vapfurana nepfuti, vorara pasi vachinyepedzera kunge vafa vose. Vakatenderanzve kuti kana zvadaro vaizomirira kuona kuti ndiani waanozonyanyochemba pakati pavo vari vaviri. Anenge asina kuchemwa anozobva asiyana nemukadzi uyu zvachose. Varume ava vanoita saizvozvo. Mukadzi uya paanongonzwa kurira kwepfuti anobva amhanyira mumba muya. Paanongoona ‘zvitunha’ zviya, anoseka zvake odaidzira achiti... “John, chibuda hako muwardrobe. Mabharanzi aya afa!”

[A man comes from work earlier than usual and finds his wife with another man. The wife quickly escapes out of the room, leaving the two men. The husband draws out his gun and confronts the boyfriend, who also takes out his own gun and points it at him. The boyfriend says... “Your wife loves me more than you”. Husband denies that, saying, “I know my wife better than you. I know she loves me”. The argument continues until they decided to solve it by firing into the roof, pretending to have shot each other, and then lie on the floor pretending to be dead. They would then wait for the woman to come back and see who she would mourn deeply between the two of them. Whoever would not be mourned over would leave the woman for good. They do that and the woman, upon hearing the gunshots, rushes inside. On seeing the two “dead” bodies, she laughs and shouts... “John, you may now get out of the wardrobe, the two bastards are dead!”]

The joke above presents the woman as a dangerous bitch. The incongruity in the woman’s reaction after seeing the two ‘dead bodies’ makes the reader laugh. The woman is not even worried about the death of her husband and she actually calls him *bharanzi* (a fool). This kind of presentation is dehumanising in nature as the woman is depicted as perfidious in marriage. The joke is anti-women and unfair on women as women are presented as unfaithful and dangerous.

The unfaithfulness of the woman in the joke is unjustifiable as the husband seems to be understanding. Given the situation at hand, the husband could have done something terrible to

his wife's boyfriend, but because he seems reasonable, the matter was resolved peacefully and they found out that none of the two men was special to the woman. The joke, therefore, presents women as unfaithful and dangerous and men as victims of women's misdemeanours. The joke below also presents women as unfaithful.

41. *Kamwe kamwana kakabvunza baba vako kuti, "Nhai baba, chii chiri pakati pemakumbo amhamha?" Baba ndokupindura vachiti, "Inyika nyoro mwanangu." Kamwana kakabvunza futi kachiti, "Ko imimi baba, chiiwo chiri pakati pemakumbo enyu?" Baba ndobva vapindura vachiti, "Makiyi epanyika nyoro." Mwana ndobva ati, "Saka chinjaika makiyi acho nekuti baba vepanext door vanawoo."*

[A little boy asks his Dad, "What's between mom's legs?" The father answers, "Paradise, my son." The kid asks again, "What's between your legs?" The father replies, "The key to paradise." The son says; "Piece of advice Dad, change the lock, the man who lives next-door has a spare key."]

Humour comes from the child's advice to its father. Shona humour, just like Shona folktales, makes use of children as characters. The child in the above narrative symbolizes innocence. In Shona, it is taboo to directly refer to sex and sex organs and the father uses the euphemism *nyika nyoro* (wet land/paradise), to refer to the woman's sex, and *makiyi epanyika nyoro* (the key to paradise), for the male sex organ. Issues of sex/sex education are not supposed to be imparted to young children as sex is considered sacred among the Shona people. The woman is depicted as careless and inhuman as she exposes her little child to her proscribed sexual behaviour.

The innocent boy in the joke unconsciously exposes his mother's felonious behaviour to his father because he witnesses his mother's sexual escapades with the neighbour. A normal woman,

under normal circumstances would not expose her child(ren) to any sexual act. As a mother and a protector, the mother is supposed to protect and nurture her children and groom them into socially acceptable citizens. The kind of treatment and presentation of the female figure exhibited in the above joke is unjustifiable and biased.

This prejudiced imaging about women can be linked to the Bible where women are presented as the genesis of evil where humanity is subjected to mortality because of the woman, Eve, who was deceived by the serpent. In the same case, therefore, the child's morality is exposed to danger because of the woman's ill behaviour. The husband is exposed to sexually transmitted infections as the woman has another sex partner. The same kind of presentation of women as sources of evil is also prevalent in written Shona literature where women are depicted as prostitutes.

The joke below presents the son, the mother and the father as liars, though the woman is depicted as a dangerous liar.

42. *Mumwe murume akangonzwawo nezverobot rinobata munhu ari kunyepa kwakuritenga. Robot raiti kana munhu akanyepa romuwacha mbama. Akabva aritesta vapedza kudya chikafu chemauro. Baba: "Nhai Amos, wanga uripi panguva yechikoro?" Amos: "Kuchikoro baba." Robot zimbama dzemu pana Amos. Amos: "Aiwa ndanga ndichiona mafirimu aJackie Chan!" Robot zimbama dzemu pana Amos! Amos: "Aiwa ndanga ndichiona porno." Baba: "Iwe, pandanga ndiri zera rako iri ndaisaziva kuti chinonzi porno chii." Robot zimbama dzemu kuna baba. Amai: "Hahaha! Zvine basa rei? Handiti Amos wacho mwana wenyu?" Robot zimbama dzemu kuna mai.*

[A man heard about a lie-detecting robot and bought one. The robot would slam a person whenever he/she tells lies. The man tested the robot when they have just finished having their supper. The man said to his son; Amos, where were you when others were at school? Amos: I was at school, dad. The robot slammed Amos. Amos: No I was watching Jackie Chan movies! The robot slammed Amos once again. Amos: No! I was watching porn. Daddy: You! When I was your age I did not even know what porn was. The robot slammed the father. Mom: Hahaha! Does that matter? After all Amos is your child! The robot slammed the mother.]

Although the three characters in the above narrative are liars, it is the woman who commits a grave and unpardonable lie by lying that Amos is the man's son. Women are depicted as dangerous liars as they can make men take care of children they did not sire. There is a general saying that "*Mukadzi anokuchengetesa mwana asiri wako*" (A woman can make you keep a child that is not yours), meaning that women can never be trusted in matters of who the real fathers of their children are. The joke is, therefore, an example of the sex stereotypes that are attached on women as evil beings, liars, cheats.

Though in Shona they say "*Gomba harina mwana*" (A philanderer cannot claim paternity over a child), to make a leeway for those women who may have children out of wedlock, it is not acceptable for women to sire children with other men who are not their husbands. In traditional Shona society, if a married man was unproductive, his relatives would secretly arrange for his wife to have a sexual relationship with his younger brother (which in Shona is referred to as *kupindira*), without the man's knowledge, for the purposes of bearing children. Once the wife became pregnant, the woman and her husband's young brother were supposed to end the sexual

relationship and the child would belong to the infertile man. The ‘arranged adultery’ was only for the purposes of procreation and the two were not allowed to have an affair outside this.

It is probably for this reason that the same society that arranges for a woman to have sex with her husband’s brother without the knowledge of the husband, fails to trust women in matters of children’s paternity and this becomes a double standard. Women are, therefore, victims of circumstances for the same society that makes her conceal the truth from her husband for the purpose of saving her family is the same society that accuses and suspects her of adultery. The above joke shows the fears and worries that Shona society has over a child’s paternity because a woman is never trusted in terms of sex. The above joke stereotypes women as adulterous and untrustworthy, which is what is presented in the joke below.

43. *Mumwe murume akanzwa kuti hurumende iri kuzopa rubatsiro kuvabereki vane vana vanodarika vashanu. Saka akabva angonanga kune vamwe vakadzi two vaainge akamitisa achibva angosvikatora vana vake ndokuenda navo kumba. Akasvika kumba ndokusvikowanawo vamwe vana vake three vasipo ndokuti; “Ko adzimai, vamwe vana vaendepi?” Iye akapindura akati “Vauya kuzotorwa nana baba vavo. Vanababa vacho vangonzwawo chiziviso chamanzwa ichocho saka vasvikotorawo vana vavo pano.”*

[A man heard that the government was giving assistance to parents who had more than five children. The man then went to two other women whom he had sired children with and took his two kids home. He got home, only to be surprised to see three of his children missing, and he said to his wife, “My wife, where are the other three children of ours?” The wife replied thus, “They have been taken away by their fathers. Their fathers have also heard the same announcement so they have come here to take their children.]

Though the joke presents both the husband and wife as cheats, the husband appears to be the victim and the wife is the antagonist because the husband loses more. In Shona culture, it is permissible and normal for men to have children outside wedlock (*vana vemusango*), but for a woman to have children out of her wedlock is abominable. In real life situations, children outside wedlock would pop up at the funeral wake of a deceased man and this is considered normal among the Shona people, yet it is highly unacceptable for the same to apply to a deceased woman.

In the above narrative, women are depicted as cheats and untrustworthy. Where the man had two children outside wedlock, the wife had three, with three different men and this is unacceptable and unexpected of a married woman among the Shona people. Women are presented as unfaithful and deceptive as is also illustrated in the joke below.

44. *Madzimai eruwadzano anoplanner kutengera pastor wavo birthday present.*

Mai Kamusoro: E-eh vasikana, ini ndinoti tivatengere mashirt nekuti ose abvaruka collar nehapwa.

Mai Kamudyariwa: Aiwa ini ndinoti masheets. Havasisina kana one, ose ave mamvemve.

Mai Mhofu: Ko iwo ma underwear avo ose kunge akajoborwa nejongwe pakati. Ndinotimanduwe.

Mai Kamuriwo: Ha-a, kana vasikana! Ngatitenge mubhedha. Wavari kushandisa izvezvi wave negomba uye kubayabaya ungati une zvipikiri.

Mai Moyo: Ko tikatenga hair remover nekuti choya chavo hachichaita.

Uriwewo wakateerera ungati kudini nemadzimai eruwadzano aya?

[Church ladies plan to buy their pastor a birthday present.

Mrs Kamusoro: Well ladies, I propose that we buy him shirts because the ones that he has are all torn at the collar and armpits.

Mrs Kamudyariwa: But I suggest we buy him new sheets coz the ones he has are all ragged now.

Mrs Mhofu: How about his underpants? All of them look like they were poked all over by a cock. I propose we buy him underwear.

Mrs Kamuriwo: Hmm... but no, ladies. I say let us get him a new bed. His now has broken springs and they prick on your back like sharp nails.

Mrs Moyo: How about getting him some hair remover ladies? His pubic hair is now overgrown.

If it were you listening, what would you say about these church ladies?]

The above joke, which is in the form of a dialogue between five church women, confirms gender stereotyping that has been alluded to in the analysis of almost all of the jokes in this section. In the above joke, even the 'religious' women are not spared the whip of stereotypification. Women are presented as adulterous and they are stupid enough not to realise that they are all sexually abused by their church pastor, or if they do, they do not mind probably because they want to get some favours from the pastor.

It is amazing to note that each of the women wanted to prove that she knows the deepest secrets about their pastor and it is an indication of how irrational and adulterous women are. Though the pastor is painted as a debauchee who abuses his status and position to sexually exploit the female members of the church when he actually is supposed to be morally upright and chaste, the joke places all the derision on the women who seem to be bragging about being intimate with the church pastor. Under normal circumstances, one would not expect married women to talk about their church pastor's overgrown pubic hair, prickling bed, tattered bed sheets and torn shirts. One would wonder how these women got to know about these things which are supposed to be private. The joke, therefore, ridicules the women's morality as it stereotypes women as sluts. The

joke is a dewomanisation of the female character and it suits well in Freud's category of crude humour, which is also the case with the joke given below.

45. *Murume aigeza zvitunha akaenda kumba ndokuti kuna vadzimai; 'Murume wandageza nhasi akatemwa nyora pamboro nejende.' Vadzimai ndokuti; 'Aaah! Sigauke afa?'*

[A man who works at a funeral parlour got home and said to his wife; 'A dead man whom I embalmed today had cicatrix (tattoo marks) on his penis and testicles.' His wife then replied; 'Oh my God! Sigauke is no more!']

The incongruity in the above short narrative makes the joke comical. One wonders how the woman got to know that of all the men in the area, it is only Sigauke who had some tattoos on his private parts. The implication of the joke is that the woman had an extra marital affair with the now deceased Sigauke and she had slept with most of the men in that area and she knows how their privates look like; hence knowing that of all the men in the community, it is only Sigauke who had cicatrix. The women depicted in most of the jokes do not have anything respectable in them. Actually, the women are a subject for scorn and ridicule. Women are portrayed as prostitutes and untrustworthy, as is also illustrated in the narrative below.

46. *Madzimai anhasi:*

Paive nekamwe kamwana kainge kaine chipo chekurota. Zvese zvakairota zvaitoitika. Kana kakarota munhu achinzi ari kufa, munhu iyeye aitofa chete. Mumwe musi kamwana kaya kakamuka kachiti kuna mai vako; "Ndarota baba vafa mangwana", kachireva zuva raizotevera racho. Kakabva katsanangura nguva yaizofa baba vako kachiti vaizofa na3 O'clock masikati. Zvisinei, amai havana kuita nharo, nababawo havana kuita nharo nekuti vaiziva kuti hope dzemwana hadzipotsi. Sezvineiwo, hama neshamwari dzakakokwa kuti dzizoonekana nababa vava zuva

risati rasvika. Rakazoti zuva rasvika, baba vakareurura zvitema zvavo zvoise pamberi pevanhu vese vachiti ivo vaizoda kuti vapinde denga vakachena. Dzakati nguva dzave kuda kukwana, vanhu vakatanga kunamata, vamwewo vakatanga kuridza mhere. 14:57, haiwa, yakange yangove mhere yega yega. 14:58, vanhu vave kungoti, “Mufambe zvakanaka” vachingochema. 14:59, munhu wese akatanga kuridza mhere inonzi mhere. 15:00, baba vepanext door vachibva vafa. Mubvunzo madzimai: Anga ari baba vemwana ndiani?

[Today’s women:

There was a boy who was gifted at dreaming. Everything that he dreamt of would come to pass. If he dreams of somebody’s death, that person would surely die. One day the boy woke up and said to his mother, “Mom, I dreamt of father passing away tomorrow”, meaning that the father would be dying the following day. The boy then explained that the father would die the following day at exactly 3 O’clock in the afternoon. Likewise, the mother and the father did not object to what the boy had said, for they knew very well that the boy’s dreams would come to pass. Therefore, all friends and relatives were called to come and bid farewell to the father of the house before his demise. When the day came, the man confessed all his sins for he wanted to go straight to heaven. When the time was ticking, people started praying, others started wailing. At 14:57, everybody was just weeping. 14:58 people were saying to the man, “Go in peace, Go well”. At 14:59, everybody was wailing loudly. Then at 15:00, the man next door passed on. Now the question for you women: Who was the father of the child?]

The above narrative presents women as unfaithful. The events unfold in their chronological order from the beginning to the end and the characters do not have proper names, which is also typical of folktales. The untimely death of the man who lived next-door instead of the child’s ‘father’ makes the above narrative comical. The joke implies that the mother hides facts about the child’s real father and it is only through the child’s dreams, which would always come to pass that the child exposes who its real father was. The joke implies that the child belonged to the neighbour and it presents women as unfaithful, deceptive and dangerous, which is what is prevalent in all jokes that have been analysed in this section.

4.6 Conclusion

The humorous narratives analysed in this chapter present women as sex objects. Young and middle aged women are portrayed as sex tools whilst older women are presented as sexually repelling yet nymphomaniacs. Besides being sex objects, women are also depicted as sex obsessed, adulterous and unfaithful. Generally, women are presented as nymphomaniacs and morally decadent. The researcher has argued that the stereotypical images of women are a result of patriarchy where women are objects and their sexuality is controlled and contained by men. The jokes that present women as sex objects and as morally decadent are sexist in nature. Whilst women fornicate with men, all the blame is heaped on the woman and the man is absolved, which is unfair on women. The next chapter focuses on Shona humorous narratives that devalue women's personal characteristics.

CHAPTER FIVE

DEVALUATION OF WOMEN'S PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on selected jokes that present women as flawed in character. Shona humorous narratives that are analysed in this chapter present a devaluation of women's personal characteristics. In that case, women are presented as materialistic, domineering, stupid, irrational, unforgiving and compulsively jealous. Below is a detailed analysis of the selected narratives.

5.2 Women as Materialistic and Self-centred

Most of the narratives in this category depicted women as materialistic and have unjustified needs that are meant for their selfish and personal ends. Women are depicted as gold diggers who are only after money. In Shona humour, therefore, women are depicted as spendthrift, they are concerned about fashion and they always compete with their fellow women over dressing and make-up. Jokes in this category stereotype women as self-centred and materialistic. Like what Nayef & El-Nashar (2014:70) point out, "these stereotyping practices serve to further establish the sedimented social beliefs about 'the others' – beliefs which produced these practices – as well as the hegemony and superiority of one group on the one hand (the ruling group – us, the

normal) and the submissiveness of another group on the other (the subordinate group – them, the deviant). Jokes in this category therefore depict women as wasteful and as people who do not know how to spend their money wisely. This therefore suggests that women need men to assist them on how to spend money wisely, thereby demonstrating the superior role of men and the inferior position of women. The following jokes help to prove the claim.

47. *Phone inorira!! Musikana: Hallo*

Mukomana: Zviri sei sweetie?

Musikana: Ndiri bhoo zvangu.

Mukomana: Unenge uri busy zvakadini paweekend ugouyawozve kumba kwangu?

Musikana: Haa, sorry sweetie, handikwanisi kuuya. Ndiri kuenda kumuchato watete vangu, mangwana acho ndobva ndazoenda kucheche nekuti kune Thanks Giving. Saka ndinenge ndakabatikana.

Mukomana: Hoo, too bad! Ndaida kukutora timboenda zvedu kushopping, ndozokusurprisa neLenovo tablet neBrazilian hair yawaigaroti unoda iya.

Musikana: Saka ndinouya sweetie, and ndinogona kubva ndangoita newe weekend yese sweetie wangu.

Mukomana: Ko kumuchato wozoita sei manje?

Musikana: Muchato upi futi? Ndanga ndichitotamba zvangu newe ini.

Mukomana: Neniwo.

[PHONE RINGS!!! Girl: Hello

Guy: My love how are you doing? Girl: I'm fine.

Guy: Will you be busy this weekend so maybe you can come over to my place?

Girl: I'm sorry I can't make it because I will be attending my aunt's wedding and the next day is Thanks Giving at church, I'm so occupied.

Guy: Oh, too bad then! I wanted to take you out for shopping to surprise you with a Lenovo tablet and the Brazilian hair you've been asking for.

Girl: So I'll come over and I may even spend the weekend with you if you want my love.

Guy: What about the wedding?

Girl: Which wedding? I was just joking...

Guy: Me too.]

The joke above, which is in the form of a dialogue between a boyfriend and girlfriend has an incongruous end where the boy lets down his expectant girlfriend by saying he too was just kidding. The joke above presents women as materialistic and with conditional love. If a man does not have money, women cannot commit themselves much to that relationship. Women are also presented as consumerists. They want flashy, expensive and beautiful things and they always want to get these things from men. In other words, women want to reap where they did not sow and they use their sexuality for personal gain.

The joke above also presents women as liars. The girl had lied that she wanted to attend a wedding but upon hearing the boyfriend saying that he wanted to spoil her with the things that she has been asking for, she is quick to change and she admits that she has been kidding. This paints a materialistic and whorish nature on women, which is also demonstrated in the narrative below.

48. *Mumwe mukomana anga akato easa zvake nemusikana wake vari muBMW. Mukomana akati kune chimoko, "Babe, panguva yose iyi pane zvandisina kukubudira pachena. Shaa, ndakaroora, plus ndine vana 3, vakomana 2 nemusikana 1." Musikana anopindura kuti, "Eish, ende wandivhundutsa. I thought uchatu Bimma haizi yako."*

[A guy and his girlfriend are chilling in his BMW, the guy says 'Babe I have not been completely honest with you. I am married and have 3 kids, 2 boys 1 girl...Girl replies "Eish, I almost panicked, I thought you were going to say the BMW car is not yours."']

The above joke is typical of contemporary online humour which code mixes Shona and English and makes use of colloquial language. Words like *kueasa* (to relax), *chimoko* (girl), and *babe* (an

endearing term to describe a good-looking girl) are slang words, which also help in making the narrative appealing to the ear. The joke depicts the woman as abrasive and highly materialistic. The woman in the joke does not mind that the man she is dating is married and has three children. To her, what would be unfortunate is a situation whereby the car that the man drives is not his. What matters most to the girl is driving around in an exquisite car, showing off her 'rich' boyfriend to her friends. What the woman wants from the man is not love but money and material gain.

The joke also covertly shows how a woman can lead to the destruction of another woman. The girl in the joke does not consider the welfare and the feelings of the other woman because all she wants is material gain. In other words, the joke portrays women as evil and materialistic. Women are presented as the source of their fellow women's problems and destruction and they lack genuine sisterhood. The same aspect is evidenced by the joke below.

49. *Unotoona mwanasikana achiti, "Ko babie, where is my Independence Day gift?" wotoshaya kuziva kuti ndakadanana nacomrade here?*

[It's surprising to hear your girlfriend say to you, "Babe, where is my Independence Day gift?" and you will wonder whether you have fallen in love with an ex-combatant.]

The joke above, which is a one-liner, depicts women as materialistic. What evokes humour is the manner in which the joke is said. A popular contemporary standup comedian, Richard Matimba produces some hilarious "*Unotoshaya kuti zvirira kufamba sei*" (You would wonder how things are

working) skits which became popular in 2014. Matimba became popular for comically commenting on political issues, for example the so-called ZIMASSET. The above joke is coined in the same fashion and it is the woman's greed that makes one laugh. The woman in the above joke asks for a present for an event which does not warrant her getting one. The joke presents women as shameless opportunists. This kind of depiction is stereotypical as it makes women appear highly materialistic. Zimbabwe celebrates its Independence on 18 April and these commemorations do not warrant any gifts for lovers but because of greed, materialism and selfishness, the woman asks for a present from her boyfriend. Such presentation of women is stereotypical and it demonises women.

As is expressed in Shona humour, women, in their love of money, tend to be evil, selfish and inhuman. Women are depicted as malicious and wicked and they do not care about their husbands' welfare. They are just concerned with amassing wealth, which is a misrepresentation of the female figure. In the joke below, the woman reprimands her husband for having escaped death because he had visited the toilet. The joke, therefore, stereotypes, mystifies and mythifies women and casts them as malevolent beings.

50. *Madzimai anhasi:*

Murume ari kubva kubasa. Asvika kumba agara zvake pasofa achiratidza kushungurudzika.

Mudzimai: Ko kugara makabata shaya zvaita sei?

Murume: Mafriends angu ese aita tsaona akafa mushure mekunge cage inotidzikisa mumugodhi yadambuka rope.

Mukadzi: Ko iwe wanga waindepi?

Murume: Kundomama.

Mukadzi: Saka vaitwa sei?

Murume: Mhuri dzavo dzanzi dzichapihwa ma\$50000 per family for consolation...

Mukadzi: Mune shuwa kuti mandiruzisa \$50 000 nekumama chaiko?

Muri right right here imi chokwadi? Iko kumama kwamunongoti gare gare mamama, gare gare mamama, mamamiro rudzii iwayo?

[Women of Today:

A man comes home from work, sits on the couch, visibly shaken.

Wife: Why do you look so sad? What is the matter?

Husband: All of my friends were involved in an accident. The cage that was taking them into a mineshaft broke and everybody who was in the cage perished.

Wife: Where were you when the accident occurred?

Husband: I had gone to the toilet to defecate.

Wife: So what happened to the deceased?

Husband: Each family will be getting \$50 000 as compensation.

Wife: Are you sure that you have made me lose \$50 000 just because of poop? Are you normal and sane? Are your bowels so loose that every now and again you would be defecating? Tell me! What is that?]

The manner in which the woman shouts at her husband and the crude language that she uses to him call for mirth. *Kumama* is an offensive word for defecating and a more formal reference is *kuita tsvina*. The woman's use of the word shows how offended and disconsolate she was. The woman in the above joke does not have any respect for life. The woman is depicted as both materialistic and inhuman.

Faced with a situation whereby she has to choose between money and the death of somebody who is supposed to be so dear to her, the woman chooses money. She is prepared to be widowed rather than to stay in poverty. The woman is so heartless that she does not sympathise with the deceased and their families, neither does she celebrate her husband's narrow escape from death.

She actually attacks her husband for making her lose a fortune by his constant visit to the toilet, and this is unexpected of a normal human being.

The above jokes are sexist in nature. Crawford (1995) cited in Nayef & El-Nashar (2014:70) is of the view that “sexist humor is this type of humour that represents women negatively. It is regarded as another discursive tool that depicts 'man-as-norm and woman-as-problem research'. The woman in joke 50 is depicted as wicked, inhuman, and malicious as she does not value human life. This kind of presentation is highly unacceptable. An African woman cherishes her marriage, with all its concomitant challenges, but the kind of woman that is depicted in the joke above does not value life as well as marriage, which is an unfair presentation of women.

The succeeding joke also confirms the materialistic nature of women as is presented in Shona humour.

51. *Umwe mukadzi aishanda saboss pane imwe kambani. Shamwari yake yaakadzidza nayo yakapinda ari pakati pekuda kutanga kuitisa interview mumwewo mukomana aizoita basa rekutsvaira muofisi. Pakapinda shamwari iya, mukadzi akabva abata foni ndokubva anyepedzera kufona achishandisa landline yemuofisi make. Akabva ati “Hallo sweetie. Ndichati nonokei kuuya kumba nhasi....Ehe....Ehe...Hoo? Wanga uchida kuenda kuWedza kwatete neBenz here?...Hoo?...Manje neroad yacho yakashata iya kunotoda Land Cruiser ka...Hoo? Makey ndasiya mudrawer rekuleft reheadboard...Ehe...Hoo...fuel? Tora ATM card riri pasi peIpad iri paside table mubedroom imomo utore US\$500.00. Inokwanaka?...Kana maid asati abika ingotoraka mari wopfuura uchitenga 18 piecer paChicken Slice apo wobva wanditengerawo hako 4 piecer nefruit juice wopfuura uchindisiirawo kuno.... Alright honey, see you then.” Achingopedza kudaro, shamwari yake iya yakabva yati “Ndabva kuTelOne. Ndauya kuzoconnectawozve landline yenyu.”*

[A woman was working as a boss at a certain firm. Her long time friend, who happened to be her former school mate came in when she was about to start an interview with a man who was to be employed as a cleaner. When the former schoolmate came in, the woman took the phone and made a false call to her husband. She said; “Hallo sweetie. I will be coming home a bit late today...Yes...yes..., really?...You want to visit auntie in Wedza today? So you want to use the Mercedes Benz?...really? But the road is a bit bad; you may need to use an off roader, so you may use the Land Cruiser...alright.... The car keys are in the left side drawer of the headboard...Yes...is that so? You mean fuel? You may take the ATM card underneath the Ipad that is on the side table in our bedroom, and then withdraw \$500.00. Is that sufficient enough to take you to and fro?...Ok... If the maid hasn't prepared supper as yet, you may need to withdraw some more money and buy yourself an 18 piecer at Chicken Slice, then buy another 4 piecer plus some fruit juice for me and drop it by my office as you go...Alright honey, see you then.” As she finished talking, the friend then said, “Excuse me. I am coming from TelOne, I have come to connect your landline phone.”]

It is the imagined humiliation and embarrassment on the female boss that makes the above narrative comical. Humour comes from how the woman was trying to fake a good life to her friend and how much she would be embarrassed after learning that the friend as well as the interviewee found out that all she had said was phoney. The woman is depicted as an attention seeker. She is materialistic and silly. The joke implies that women are never satisfied with what they have and they want to live a life of competition. The woman wants to prove to her former friend that she is leading a luxurious and sophisticated life. One wonders how her husband was going to spend half a thousand dollars at a growth point and how the man was going to eat 18 pieces of chicken all by himself. The woman is ridiculed for her love of a movie-style kind of life and she ends up being stupid, foolish, and silly. The joke, therefore, stereotypes women as

materialistic, foolish and stupid. The joke below presents women as materialistic and consumeristic.

52. *Zvikonzero sei ndisina musikana!!!*

Handbag yemusikana- \$50.00, chikwama chemukomana \$5.00

Kugadzira musoro wemusikana- \$25.00, kugera musoro wemukomana \$2.00

Kugadzira nzara dzemusikana \$15.00, kutenga nail cutter yemukomana \$0.50

Mabhurezha emusikana \$15.00, kavhesi kemukomana \$3.00

Mabhurugwa emusikana (maG-string) \$15.00, manduwe emukomana \$2.00

Mapedhi (sanitary pad) \$5.00 hengechefu yemukomana \$0.50

**Matumbu evakadzi akakurisa asi tumatumbu twevarume tudikidiki.*

Vakakomborerwa VARUME vasingazoorori nekuti ndivo vachazoita VAPFUMI panyika.

[The reasons I don't have a girlfriend!!!

Ladies Handbag - \$50.00, Men's Wallet - \$5.00

Ladies Hairdo - \$25.00, Men's Hair Cut - \$2.00

Ladies Manicure - \$15.00, Men's Nail Cutter - \$0.50

Ladies Bra - \$15.00, Men's Singlet is \$3.00

A set of G string - \$15.00, Men's Boxers - \$2.00

Sanitary Pads - \$5.00, Men Handkerchief - \$0.50

* Ladies Stomach is extra-large while Men's Stomach is extra small

Blessed are MEN, who still remain single for they shall become the RICHEST men on earth]

The above joke compares between women's needs with those of men. It emphasises that women are expensive to maintain as most of their needs cost more than thrice the price of men's needs. The joke implies that it is better for men to remain single to avert the burden of taking care of a wife. Women in this case are depicted as a liability, for they plunder men's resources. Women are depicted as spending most of their time, money and energy on beauty. It is as if women have nothing much to do with their money except to waste it on cosmetics and clothing. The joke

implies that men know how to spend their money wisely hence the last statement, “Blessed are men, who still remain single for they shall become the richest men on earth”. The joke also depicts women as over dependent on men as is implied by the statement quoted above. Women are presented as parasitic in nature and they lack agency. They cannot do anything to help themselves as they wait for their husbands to provide everything for them, meaning that women are lazy.

In the African context, marriage is highly revered as it perpetuates humanity. In Shona, oral literature can be used to prove that celibacy was (and still is) castigated and everybody was supposed to undergo marriage as a rite of passage. The adage “*Hapana hari inofa isina kubikirwa*” (lit. No clay pot would break before having been used for cooking) confirms the fact that marriage was compulsory.

In traditional Shona culture, the more wives and children a man had the richer he was considered to be, but all the same, women had their property rights. So presenting women as parasitic is dehumanizing to the woman. In the above joke, men are encouraged not to marry so that they can enjoy their wealth, which is tantamount to selfishness, and selfishness is highly castigated amongst the Shona people.

The above joke implies that a man is financially and emotionally better off without a wife. Once he marries, he faces many financial and psychological challenges because of the woman and

such kind of depiction demonises the woman. The joke below verifies that women are presented as a liability.

53. *Mhinduro chaiyo chaiyo yepaupenyu; Mukadzi anobvunza kuti sei pamichato yese musikana achigara kuleft, mukomana achigara kuright? Murume anopindura achiti; “Sezvinotaurwa neprofit and loss statement, mari dzese dzinopinda mukambani dzinoenda kuright, zvose zvinobudisa mari zvinoiswa kuleft”*

[Best answer ever; Wife asks "Why in all weddings the bride sits on the left side and the groom on the right side?" Husband replies: "According to profit and loss statement, all income is always on the right side and expenses are on the left side".]

The above joke uses the analogy of the profit and loss statement in accounting to compare the relationship between men and women. Men bring in money whilst women plunder it and, hence, women are a liability. Women are presented as too dependent on men. The joke also hints on the inferiority of women as women are compared to expenses while men are compared to income. The woman is socially, economically and psychologically inferior to men. Men are the breadwinners and women are dependent on men and hence they are counted among the children as men's 'dependants'.

As espoused by Shifman & Lemish (2010:182), studies have pointed to substantive differences in the representation of men and women in media: men are identified with 'doing' in the public sphere and the world of occupation and are portrayed, largely, as rational, individualistic, and independent. They are shown to be more culturally and technologically oriented, but demonstrate difficulty in expression of emotions and displaying weakness. In contrast, women are associated

with 'being'/'appearing' in the private sphere, hence they are also evaluated on the basis of their appearance and sexual attractiveness, (Lemish 2008; Meyers 1999). Overall, they are characterized as romantic, sensitive, dependent, emotional, and vulnerable. In Shona, generally women occupy a lower status than men. Women are considered weak physically, socially and economically. That is why women in joke 53 are a liability. A look at education in Zimbabwe shows that the girl child has limited access to education because some parents believe that educating the girl child serves no purpose except to enrich the husband. Generally, the retention rate of girls in school is also low. A report by the Marist International Solidarity Foundation (2011:2) shows that during difficult times, parents often choose to send boys to school at the expense of girls. This is an unfortunate and unfair situation for women as they are regarded as second-class citizens. This, then, makes men better placed to secure formal employment and become the sole breadwinners of families.

In the above joke (53), the assumption is that the man is the one who works/is employed whilst the woman stays at home and waits for the husband to bring some money home. This points to the domestication of women. The joke also presents women as hopeless and helpless and as people who lack the agency to help themselves and their families. The above joke undermines the value and worth of women as women are portrayed as objects that lack agency.

Shona humour also presents women as nonentities. Women are depicted as subhuman and, in matters of ownership of children, women are depicted as valueless. Shona as a patriarchal society does not view children as belonging to both parents. In fact, a child belongs to its father and the

woman is a *mutorwa* (a foreigner) in the family to which she is married and to her own children. A woman cannot claim ownership over her own children and, in Shona, it is said “*Ukama hwekwamai hauna basa*” (Relations from one’s mother’s side are not very important). The joke below confirms the assertion that women are not very much recognised in marriage.

54. *Baba namai vakafunga kurambana vakaenda kucourt vanetsana kuti otera mwana ndiani. Mai vakabvunzwa kuti sei muchida kutora mwana, vakati hee, ini mwana ndakamuchengeta kubva iri nhumbu, ndikayamwisa kusvika akura, ndini ndaiita zvese nekumubvisa tsvina kusvika akura, saka ndini ndinofanira kutora mwana. Zvikanzi na Judge, “Baba, tauraiwo tinzwe.” Baba vakati “Ini hangu ndine mubvunzo. “Ko munhu akasvika paATM akabaira chicard chake, mari ikabuda inenge iri yeATM here kana kuti ndeyemunhu abaira chicard chake?” Baba vakabva vahwina mwana.*

[A husband and a wife wanted to divorce, and then they took their case to the civil court to determine who would take custody of the child. The wife was asked why she wanted to take the child, then she said; “I took care of the child, from pregnancy to date; I breast fed him and took care of him, I cleaned him when he had soiled himself, so I have all the right to claim custody of the child.” The judge then said to the man, “Tell us, why do you think you are the rightful person to take care of the child?” The man then said; “Mine is a question. If a person goes to an ATM and inserts his card to withdraw some money, does the money belong to the ATM or the card holder?” The man won the case.]

The joke devalues a woman’s worth. The woman is just there to bear and to take care of the children as it is her ‘natural’ role to look after children. This is what is implied by the analogy of the ATM and the cardholder. The woman is likened to the ATM whilst the man is the cardholder and so the child, who is likened to the money, belongs to the man (cardholder). The joke speaks to the inferior status of women in Shona society.

In Shona, women cannot claim right or control over children because children belong to the father. As a patriarchal society, Shona values men more than women. Children inherit the surname and totem of their father and it is a shame for a woman to bear and raise a ‘fatherless’ child. This is why in Shona society it is a shame for a woman to bear children to a man who would never be known to her family. The ‘fatherless’ child is viewed with shame and scorn and is referred to using derogatory terms which include *bonga*, *gora*, *baretume* which in English refers to a ‘wild cat’.

In the above joke, the woman gives ‘ineffectual’ reasons to try to claim custody over the children and, by comparing her to an ATM, it means that her worth is just in the womb and nothing else, as the ATM cannot claim ownership of the money. The woman’s arguments are considered trivial and silly. Sexist humor objectifies and trivializes women, which contributes to a hierarchical position of women as subordinate to men in society (Montemurro, 2003). The joke implies that the nurturing role of women is not significant as she is merely a childbearing machine and a machine cannot claim ownership over the things that it produces. In the same manner, an ATM machine cannot claim ownership over the money that it keeps. The above joke, however, polarises men and women as the male gender is considered superior to the female gender. This kind of depiction bears male hegemony and it thwarts every effort towards the liberation of women as well as it strips women of ownership or custodianship of their own children.

5.3 Women as Talkative and Domineering

The jokes that are analysed in this section imply that women make marriage a droning and boring institution. The woman is depicted as domineering and talkative. She does not give her husband enough room to express his views and there is no proper communication between husband and wife. She is depicted as a chatterer who talks a lot of nonsense. Jokes in this category seem to depict the marriage institution as men's ultimate prison and women are presented as evil and void of love. Below is a joke that confirms the point that women are domineering and difficult.

55. *Tino: Baba, ndasarudzwa kuti ndiekite padrama ratichaita pakupera kwegore!*

Baba: Uri kuekita sani?

Tino: Semurume, sa baba vemba!

Baba: Zibenzi remunhu! Sarudza chimwewo chinzvimbo chekuekita, chinokuita kuti ukwanise kuitawo nhaurirano!

[Tino: Dad, I got selected for a role in a play for annual day!

Dad: What role are you playing?

Tino: A husband!

Dad: Stupid, ask for a role that will enable you to make dialogues!]

The father's displeasure with the role his child is playing is what makes the joke comical. Whilst the reader would expect the father to cheer up his child, instill some confidence in him and express some interest, the father actually scolds his child and this incongruity calls for humour. The father expresses his dismay with women through discouraging his son from acting as a husband in the play and wants him to ask for a role with dialogues. The father is saying there is

no rapport or dialogue between a husband and wife as wives tend to be domineering and talkative.

Joke 55 therefore confirms Shifman & Lemish's (2010:183) assertion that sexist humor not only emphasizes that men and women have different features, in doing so it indicates that there is a clear hierarchy positioning women as inferior to men. In Shona it is said, "*Murume ndiye musoro wemba*" (The husband is the head of the house), meaning that he makes most, if not all the decisions. Generally, women are disempowered and they do not contribute much in matters that affect the family, as women are generally considered *vatorwa* (foreigners) in the families to which they are married. If a woman displays some domineering tendencies, the husband is repudiated by his family and friends and he would be accused of having been bewitched by the wife. They would say "*Akadyiswa*" (He has been given a concoction which makes him dull), which shows that Shona does not allow women to dominate in the house/family. The joke, therefore, presents some complexities in the presentation of Shona women as, in some jokes, women are presented as reserved, cold and frigid and, in other jokes, as domineering and talkative.

The joke below presents women as domineering:

56. *Mumwe murume achitaura ari panze pe phone booth: "Pamusoroi baba, mabata phone iyoyo kwenguva refu chaizvo. Patove ne 29 minutes makangobata phone asi hapana kana chinhu I chamataura!"*
Murume, ari mukati mebooth; "Ndiri kutaura nemukadzi wangu."

[Man outside phone booth: “Excuse me sir, you have been holding the phone for the last 29 minutes and you haven’t spoken a word”.
Man inside: “I am talking to my wife”.]

The above narrative is comical in that the man who had spent 29 minutes holding the phone without uttering a word claims to be “talking” to his wife. The above joke depicts the woman as talkative and loquacious. The wife controls the conversation and she does not give her husband the chance to talk. She is talking endlessly and the husband is just listening. This is similar to joke (21) where the wife is compared to a TV which does the ‘talking’ whilst the husband simply watches and says nothing. This negative presentation stereotypes women.

The joke depicts men as prisoners and marriage is portrayed as a prison and a nightmare for men. Men have unhappy marriage relationships because their wives are troublesome, talkative, frustrating, and uncaring. Men are depicted as saints whilst the woman is depicted as the devil. In the above joke (56), the man patiently listens to his wife who does not give him the chance to talk and there is no conversation or dialogue at all between husband and wife. The joke’s implied meaning, therefore, is that married men suffer and they have a torrid time with their talkative wives. For men, marriage then becomes arid and sterile. The jokes appear to glorify and consecrate men and demonise women. The joke below stereotypes women as troublesome.

57. *Mumwe murume akaenda kuchurch. Pastor akaparidza kuti munhu wese ngaasimudze dambudziko rake kuna Mwari, rinopera. Asvika kumba, muface akasvikonyamura madam ndokuvasimudza mudenga. Madam vakanyemwerera vakati; “Thanks sweetie, wandiitira zvandanga ndisingambofungire. Madzidziswa kuti kudiiko nhasi kuchechi?” Zvikanzi*

nemuface, "Pastor vati munhu wese ngaasimudze dambudziko rake kuna Mwari kuti ripere."

[A man went to church and the pastor preached that everybody should lift his/her problem to the Lord and the problem would end. When he got home, the man lifted his wife and the wife smiled joyously and said, "Thank you sweetheart, you have surprised me today. I never thought you would ever do that. What did the pastor preach on today?" The man then replied, "The pastor said everybody should lift his problem to the Lord and the problem shall end."]

Kusimudza is an ambiguous word which may mean lifting/raising something or to take up a challenge. The man makes a literal interpretation of the word/sermon *kusimudza dambudziko kuna Mwari*, which was supposed to mean "Say/present your worries to the Lord," and he literally lifts his wife, who in this case niggles and agitates him. The disparity of awareness between the reader and the wife is what makes the narrative humorous. The wife thinks that the lifting is an endearment and yet the husband was literally lifting his wife to the Lord so that she stops tormenting him. The incongruous response that the man gives to his wife and the imagined wife's embarrassment evoke laughter.

The jokes' underlying meaning is that women make marriage sterile and arid. The joke, therefore, depicts the marriage institution as men's ultimate penal complex. Men do not enjoy their marriages because their wives are troublesome as the man in the above narrative considers his wife as *dambudziko* (affliction) which he consequently 'lifts' to the Lord for it to end. Women are, therefore, presented as nagging, talkative, and frigid. The same point is expressed in the joke below:

58.

Mu

mwe mukadzi akatenga new sim card, akati regai ndisurprize Daddy, ndivafonere. Apa Daddy vainge vakagara pasofa mulounge, so the wife went mukitchen, kwakufona. Murume akaona that new number, wife kwakuti "Hallo darling!" Murume nevoice riri pasi pasi hanzi; "Cutter, ndokufonera back later. Dhongi rangu riri mukitchen!"

[A certain woman bought a new sim card and wanted to make a surprise call to her husband. The husband was sitting on the couch in the lounge; the wife went to the kitchen and called. The husband saw that new number and the wife said, "Hallo darling!" With a very low voice, the husband answered thus, "Hang up, I will call you back later. My donkey is in the kitchen!"]

Though there is possible embarrassment on the part of the man after discovering that he was actually talking to his wife, the butt of the joke above is the woman whom the husband referred to as a donkey. The reason she is called a donkey could be her intransigence, frigidity and coldness. The general trend in the jokes in this category is that wives make marriages hell for their husbands such that the two end up detached and distant. The husband does not see any qualities of a wife in his wife and it is probably because of her habits that he calls her a donkey.

The joke does not scoff at the husband who seems to be having an extra marital affair because Shona men in particular are pardoned for, if not allowed to cheat on their wives. In Shona, men are spared the moral whip and they are, in most cases, justified for their promiscuity. The woman earns herself scorn and she is condemned for failing to treat her husband well. This can be supported by Marshal Munhumumwe's song "Rudo Moto" (Love is Fire) which contains the lyrics "*Chokwadi munosiiwa mumba umu makatamba mhai. Rudo moto runotokuchidzirwa vanaamai*" (You will certainly be ditched by your husband. Love is like fire, it needs to be

rekindled). The task of making sure that the marriage is pleasurable is assigned on the woman and she has to do all means necessary to please her husband, lest she be jilted for ‘better’ women.

The woman is presented as ‘sexual but dispensable; unable to take charge of her life and, therefore, needs the man to survive’, (Makina, 2013:52). Society condones men for abandoning their wives for other women who know how to please men, yet the same society condemns women who desert their homes for better men. The man in the above joke no longer enjoys his marriage and his love for the wife has since died a natural death. This kind of scenario may also be caused by men who cannot contain their libido. Some men, even when they have arguably the most beautiful woman, or perhaps a wife who is excellent in bed, will still search for variety elsewhere but still heap all the blame on the woman, which in itself is unfair for women.

Mc Fadden (1992:173–174) observes that the media tends to play an active and often misogynist role in the construction and perpetuation of sexist stereotypes. This is true of Shona as the humorous narratives that are circulated on social media stereotype women. The joke below demonstrates the stereotypification of women as troublesome.

59. *Mukadzi: Kwakanaka here sweetie?*

Murume: Ko indava mai mfana?

Mukadzi: Wabvira makuseni wakabata marriage certificate iroro indava...?

Murume: Ndiri kutsvaga pane Expiry Date!

[Wife: Is everything alright sweetie?

Husband: Why do you ask?

Wife: You have been holding that marriage certificate for the whole day now, why?
Husband: I am looking for the Expiry Date!]

What evokes humour is the husband's search for the marriage certificate's expiry date. The yearning for an expiry date is a sure indication of how remorseful, disgruntled and unhappy the husband is with his marriage. The above joke confirms that women are presented as cold and frigid. Women make their husbands regret their marriages. Married women are presented as incapable of giving love and showing affection to their husbands. The husband in the above joke wishes the marriage certificate had an expiry date so that he may leave his wife and probably get a new one. This also shows the objectification of women, as women are likened to shelf products, which, beyond their shelf life should be cast off the shelf and destroyed or got rid of. The joke implies that once a woman is married, she becomes obdurate and troublesome. This kind of depiction demonises women and justifies men's infidelity.

In Shona, there is a common saying; "*Iri mudanga haivhimwe*" which loosely translates to "You cannot hunt an animal that is in the pen, (as the fun of hunting is in the chase)". The statement means that a man looks for love outside marriage because the wife is no longer appealing. This promotes infidelity in men, as men are perpetual 'hunters' who cannot be satisfied by their wives at home. Wishing for an expiry date on a marriage certificate is impossible and impractical and, among the Shona, the marriage union is solid. Once a person marries, he/she cannot freely walk out of the union before and without engaging the elders from both parties. African women are, like what has been highlighted above, male compatible. They strive hard to make the home

liveable and happy, and presenting women in a negative way only creates a negative picture about marriage and women in particular.

The joke below presents women as troublesome:

60. *Mumwe mukadzi akamuka pakati pehusiku achishamisika kuona murume wake asipo pamubhedha pavanga vakarara. Akamuka akapfeka, ndokuenda kukitchen. Akawana murume wake akagara patable mukitchen, aine cup ye tea pamberi pake. Airatidzika kuti ari kufunganya zvakananyanya sezvo ainge akangodzvokora madziro. Mukadzi akabva aona murume wake achipukuta misodzi, ndobva adzvuta tea yake. Mukadzi anobvunza kuti, “Chiiko nhai dhiya? Uri kuitei muno usiku huno?” Murume ndokuti; “Uchiri kurangarira here 20 years dzapfuura, pataidanana paya, paya pawanga uchirine 16 years?” “Hongu, ndinoparangarira”, mukadzi anopindura. Murume ndokuti, “Uchiri kuziva here patakasvikirwa nababa vako tiri ku back kwemota yangu?” “Hongu, ndichiri kurangarira”, mukadzi anopindurazve. “Uchiri kuziva here payapaya baba vako pavakandibudisira pfuti ndokundinongedzera pamhanza vachiti; “Sarudza zvaunoda, kuroora mwana wangu, kana kuti woita 20 years mujeri?”” “Hongu, ndichiri kuzviziva” mukadzi anopindura. Murume uya anopukutazve misodzi ndokuti, “Unomboziva chii? Ndingadai zvangu ndatobuda mujeri nhasi.”*

[A woman awoke during the night to find that her husband was not in bed. She put on her robe and went to the kitchen. She found her husband sitting at the kitchen table with a cup of tea in front of him. He appeared to be in deep thought, just staring blankly at the wall. She saw him wipe a tear from his eye and take a sip of his tea. “What’s the matter dear? Why are you here at this time of the night?” She asked. “Do you remember 20 years ago when we were dating and you were only 16?” “Yes I do.” She replied. “Do you remember when your father caught us in the back seat of my car?” “Yes I remember.” “Do you remember your father when he shoved that shotgun in my face and said: “Either you marry my daughter or spend twenty years in jail?” “Yes I do” She replied. He wiped another tear from his cheek and said, “You know, I would have gotten out of prison today.”]

The incongruity that lies in the man's last remark makes the narrative comical. The joke implies that men regret marriage. The man in the joke regrets choosing to marry his wife because, by now, he could have been released from prison and could have saved himself the trouble of having a wife. The joke also seems to present an analogy of two types of prison – where the man, out of fear, unwittingly chose life imprisonment where he could have opted for a shorter term of twenty years. So, the issue that pervades across this discourse is that of the husband yearning for utmost freedom from entrapment as a result of marriage. The joke therefore shows how much men detest marriage because of troublesome wives.

Most of the jokes in this section present women as malicious and troublesome and marriage is depicted as a form of entrapment for men. This is an unfair presentation of women as it implies that men are perfect beings while women are evil. The joke implies that all men live amicably with their wives while women are the complete opposite and this again shows some chauvinist tendencies in Shona humour. The narrative below presents women as niggling.

61. *Mumwe murume akange achibva kunoisa maruva paguva ramai vake ndobva afamba achidzokera kumotikari yake, ndipo paanoona mumwewo murume akapfugama pane rimwe guva. Murume uya airatidza sekunge munhu ari kunamata zvine simba achingoramba achiti, “Wakafireiko kani? Wakafireiko kani?” Murume wokutanga uya ndobva aswedera pedyo ndokubvunza kuti, “Nhai baba, handisi kutsvaka hangu kuzivisisa maererano neupenyu hwenyu, asi machemero amuri kuita aya handisati ndamboana. Ndianiko wamuri kuchemera zvakadai? Mwana here kana kuti mubereki?” Murume aichema uya akambotora kanguva kuti anyarare ndokuzoti, “Ndiri kuchema murume wokutanga wemukadzi wangu.”*

[A man placed some flowers on the grave of his dearly departed mother and started back toward his car when his attention was diverted to another man kneeling at a grave. The man seemed to be praying with profound intensity and kept repeating, “Why did you have to die? Why did you have to die?” The first man approached him and said, “Sir, I don't wish to interfere with your private grief, but this demonstration of pain is more than I've ever seen before. For whom do you mourn so deeply? A child? A parent?” The mourner took a moment to collect himself, then replied, “My wife's first husband.”]

Normally, because of jealousy, one does not mourn or regret the loss of their spouse's ex, but the man in the above joke is so much troubled by his wife that he wishes his wife's first husband was alive. It is this incongruity that evokes laughter. The first man asked whether the departed was a child or a parent, and not necessarily a wife, which implies that men do not consider their wives as people who are so dear to them and a man cannot mourn so deeply for the loss of a wife. The joke implies that women are bad, cold, and they are the cause of their husbands' melancholy. The man has probably digested his situation and concluded that he is only in it because the first husband died – if he were still alive then he would not have met this woman to marry her subsequently, and that is why he mourns.

The woman in the above joke frustrates and inhibits her husband. Such kind of images could be a result of male supremacy where men want to prove that women are evil, inhuman and should, therefore, be oppressed or even dumped for better ones. The joke below presents women as troublesome.

62. *“Sei vakadzi vachirarama upenyu hurefu, hwakanaka?” Mumwe mwana ainge ari shangwiti muchikoro akadavira achiti; “Nekuti madzimai havana vakadzi.”*

[“Why do women live a better, longer and peaceful life?” An intelligent student replied; “Because women don’t have a wife.”]

The ‘intelligent student’ in the above joke serves to validate the fact that, indeed, women are the source of men’s problems. The joke is a polemic against women as it shows that women are dangerous for they lead to the premature death of their husbands. The joke sounds like a campaign against heterosexual marriage. The joke stereotypes women as troublesome and it implies that women cause their husbands’ psychological, emotional distress and trauma, which then cause the premature death of their husbands. The joke implies that women tend to have long lives, not because of good lifestyles or something but because they do not have wives. This joke, therefore, undermines and stereotypes women as troublesome. A similar English joke that presents women as troublesome is given below:

- i) If you want to change the world, do it when you are a bachelor. After marriage, you can't even change a TV channel.
- ii) Listening to a wife is like reading the terms and conditions of a website. You understand nothing, still you agreed...
- iii) Chess is the only game in the world which reflects the status of the husband. The poor King can take only one step at a time...While the mighty Queen can do whatever she likes.
- v) All men are brave. Horror movies don't scare them...But 5 missed calls from wife...surely...

The joke above undermines a woman’s worth. Wives are presented as domineering, nagging, confused and loud mouthed. According to the joke, women make the marriage institution

horrible. On item (iii) above, marriage is likened to the game of chess where the king is poor and the queen is mighty. It presents women as domineering and men as sufferers in their marriages.

The women in the above jokes are in no way loving and affectionate towards their husbands and this depiction serves no purpose except to undermine women and the marriage institution. Below is a joke that shows that men value their material possessions more than they do their wives.

63. *Mumwe murume akaenda kuPolice Station achinisa report ye missing person nekuti mukadzi wake anga asina kudzokera kumba.*

Murume: Ndashayawo mukadzi wangu. Aenda kumashops asi nanhasi haasati adzoka.

Mupurisa: Akareba sei?

Murume: Ndofunga akareba zviru pakati nepakati.

Mupurisa: Mutete here kana kuti mukobvu?

Murume: Haana kuonda, asi ndofunga haana futi kusimba.

Mupurisa: Colour yemaziso ake yakaita sei?

Murume: Aaah, handisati ndambozvitarisa ini.

Mupurisa: Bvudzi rake rakaita sei?

Murume: Handizivi, asi anongogara achingochinja chinja.

Mupurisa: Anga akapfeka zvakaita sei?

Murume: Umm, handizivi, pamwe anga akapfeka dhirezi kana kuti suit hameno.

Mupurisa: Anga achidriver here?

Murume: Hongu.

Mupurisa: Mota yacho ine colour ipi?

Murume: I Audi yeblack, ine supercharged 3.0 litre, V6 engine generating 333 horse power, ine eight speed tiptronic transmission uye ine manual mode. Ine maheadlights, inoshandisa light emitting diodes for all light functions, plus yakamarika kascratch katete-tete padoor rekuleft rekumberi....murume uya anotanga kuchema.

Mupurisa: Musanetseke henyu baba. Mota yenyu tinoiwana!

[Husband went to the Police Station to file a “Missing person” report for his wife.

Husband: I lost my wife, she went shopping and she hasn’t come back yet.

Inspector: What is her height?
Husband: Average, I guess.
Inspector: Slim or heavy?
Husband: Not slim, but probably not too heavy either.
Inspector: Colour of eyes?
Husband: Never noticed.
Inspector: Colour of hair?
Husband: Not quite sure, but she's always changing.
Inspector: What was she wearing?
Husband: Not sure, either a dress or a suit.
Inspector: Was she driving?
Husband: Yes.
Inspector: Colour of car?
Husband: Black Audi A8, with supercharged 3.0 litre, V6 engine generating 333 horse power, teamed with an eight speed tiptronic transmission with manual mode. And it has full LED headlights, which use light emitting diodes for all light functions and has a very thin scratch on the front left door...and the husband started crying...
Inspector: Don't worry sir, we will find your car!]

Instead of assuring the man that the police will help find the missing woman, the police officer assures the man that the police will indeed find his car. It is this incongruity that calls for humour.

The joke speaks on the relationship between husband and wife. The husband does/did not even notice the colour of his wife's eyes, her hair or even her dress, and he does not know the physical structure of his wife but surprisingly he is familiar with even the finest details of his car. It seems the man is devastated by the loss of his car rather than his wife. The police inspector does not say anything about finding the wife either. Instead of focusing on the missing person, the police inspector focuses on the car. The impression here is that even the police inspector understands that a car is more valuable to a man than a wife is. This kind of depiction is a devaluation of a

woman's worth as she is presented as a nonentity. The joke also speaks to the inferior status of women, as they are presented as less valuable and less important to men than a motor vehicle.

5.4 Women as Stupid

One characteristic of women as depicted in Shona humorous narratives is that of stupidity. Besides being hypersexual, adulterous, talkative and domineering, women are also depicted as stupid, dumb and insensate. They make stupid decisions, which may put them, their husbands, or their children's lives in danger. Below are examples of jokes that point to the fact that women are idiotic and fatuous.

64. *Ko yakazoitika. VaChisvo vakanyimwa pakati one day nawifers. Vakazama kukumbira, madam ikati mayazi ndakaneta. Saka munoketa kana yamira yaSamanyika yamira...so SaChisvo dzikati "Adzimai woye, ini hangu handingazvikuriri. Onai zvekuita." Mai Bhoi ikati "No, torai \$50, mukadzika neraini, handifungi kuti mungashaya wekukwira." Chisvo dzakamhanya, after 1hr ndokuzodzoka. Madam ikarova inquiries zvikanzi: "Ko baba, mawana here zvamafambira?" SaChisvo ikasasa kuti "Ndazokiya mai vanogara panhamba 5." Chopazi madam yakabvunza kuti abhadhara marii, SaChisvo dzikati yese \$50. Zvikanzi namadam; "Asi Mai Mutasa chii nhai? Vakuitirai \$50 asi SaMutasa ndinosovaitira \$20... Asi chii?"*

[What happened is this; one day Mr Chisvo was denied the middle portion by his wife. He tried to beg for sex but the wife insisted that she was tired, plus she was not in the mood. And you know, when Samanyika is sexually aroused, he totally cannot suppress the feeling...so Mr Chisvo told his wife that he cannot control his desire so she had to find something she could do to help the situation. The wife then asked her husband to take a \$50.00 note and go down the street and find someone to quench his sexual desire. Mr Chisvo then quickly took the money and went out. He

came back after an hour and the wife asked; “So daddy, did you find a solution to your problem?” Mr Chisvo then told his wife that he had sex with a woman who stayed at house number 5. The wife then asked how much he had paid for the sex and Mr Chisvo said he had paid \$50.00. Then the wife fumed, saying; “How can Mrs Mutasa do that really? She charged you \$50.00 for the service yet I normally charge Mr Mutasa \$20.00 only. What is this really?”]

The joke makes use of a euphemistic term *pakati* (the middle portion) to refer to the female sex organ. It also makes use of slang words like *kukiya* (to have sex with a woman), *mayazi* (no), *kusasa* (to tell) and *chopazi* (quickly) to make the narrative appealing to the ear and this is also typical of contemporary Shona humour. The joke makes use of SaChisvo, a man of Manyika origin. Men of Manyika origin are stereotyped for their obsession with sex and beer as the Manyikas say “*Mhamba ingonaka nawamai*”, (Beer goes well with a woman by the man’s side). The statement *Saka munoketa kana yamira Samanyika yamira*, (You know, when Samanyika is sexually aroused, he cannot suppress the feeling) evokes humour and it sounds as if only men of Manyika origin have a high libido.

Whilst one would not expect the woman (Mrs Chisvo) to ask her husband to have sex with another woman, it is amusing to hear how she actually fumes over the price Mrs Mutasa had charged Mr Chisvo for the sex service yet she (Mrs Chisvo) normally charged Mr Mutasa just \$20 for sex. The woman in the above joke denies her husband his conjugal rights and asks him to seek the services of other women. She even gives her husband some money to pay the woman in return for sex and upon her husbands’ return she has the temerity to ask if he has found somebody to quench his sexual thirst. Though women, as represented by Mai Mutasa, are

depicted as adulterous, the underlying aspect is that of stupidity, mindlessness and deficiency in sense because she is the one who is actually promoting promiscuity in her husband.

The joke also presents women as prostitutes in nature. The woman whom SaChisvo had sex with is married and, out of dismay, Mai Chisvo also exposes her prostitution because she says she charges SaMutasa \$20 for a sex service. With the HIV and AIDS pandemic, partners are urged to be faithful and the kind of woman that is depicted in the above joke is highly unjustifiable and unheard of. Such presentation only serves to stereotype women as stupid, immoral and responsible for spreading sexually transmitted diseases. The joke below also presents women as stupid.

65. *Vamwe mai vaida kunyadzisa murume wavo pamberi patezvara navamwene. Mai ava vaigara kumusha, murume achishanda kutaundi. Murume wavo aidanana nemusikana wepanext door. Mai vaiti vakabuda kuenda kuchitoro, murume wavo odana sisi vaya opinda navo mumba. Mai ava zvavaienda kuchitoro vaisiya kamwana kavo kadiki kakomana, ako kaiuya kachiudza mai vako zvaisara zvichiitika vabuda. Saka mai ava vakafunga zano rekunyadzisira murume pamberi pevabereki vake. Vakadana vamwene natezvara vavo kumba kwavo, vakati vave kudya vakatsonya mwana wavo kuti achitaura zvaiitika kana mai vaenda kuchitoro. Mwana akatanga achiti “Mhamha, pamunoenda kumagirosa baba vanosara vachipinza sisi vepaimba iyo voita zviya zviya zvamunosiita nemabhiridha kumusha.”*

[A certain woman wanted to humiliate her husband in front of his parents. The wife stayed in the rural area, whilst the husband stayed in the city. The husband had an extra-marital affair with a girl who worked next-door. Whenever the woman went shopping, the husband would call the girl and have sex. When the wife went shopping, she would leave her son behind and the son would witness the father’s illicit behaviour and then say everything to his mother. The wife then called her in-laws and then signaled the child to say out everything that the husband did when she

was away. The son then said, “Mom, whenever you go shopping, daddy calls the girl who works next-door and they do exactly like what you do with the builders at home in the rural area.]

The child’s statement is incongruous with what the reader would have expected. The child’s statement means that the father had sex with the girl who works next to their house, in the same way the mother had sex with builders back home in the rural areas. The joke is deriding the woman who had wanted to make a show over her husband’s infidelity in front of her in-laws. What is humiliating is that the woman who had intended to disgrace her husband ended up being humiliated instead because the innocent child exposes her sexual escapades with men in the rural areas where she stays, and all the same, even though the husband was having an extra-marital affair, it is the wife who now has a case to answer because Shona society does not allow women to have sex outside marriage. The joke points towards infidelity, stupidity and idiocy on the part of women.

The woman is presented as lacking in communicative skills. She cannot manage to engage her husband and discuss the issue of his infidelity but chooses the wrong platform to address her issues and, as a result, she lands herself in trouble. The joke tends to stereotype women for their stupidity and for their habit of heralding their issues, which are supposed to be private. The joke below also presents women as stupid:

66. *Sando kuna Joze. Joze came back very late from the bar ndoku knocka padoor. Wife: Dzokerai kwamanga muri. Inguva dzekupinda mumba here idzi? Joze: Handisi kupinda. Nditambidzeiwo mari iri mujacket rangu*

reblue. Kwaita mahure akachipa kwaMereki. Wife: Tibvirei apa! Pindai mumba murare! Hamunyari here murume mukuru?

[Thumbs up to Joze. Joze came home very late from the bar and knocked on the door. The wife responds: Go back to where you were. Why do you come home so late? Joze: No. I am not coming in. May you hand me the money that is in my blue jacket's pocket. I want to go to Mereki where there are cheap prostitutes. Wife: Nonsense! Get in and sleep! Are you not ashamed of yourself? Old as you are!]

It is the trick that the man uses to get his wife to open the door for him that makes the joke exhilarating. The woman uses her emotions and her husband uses wit to let the wife open the door. After having turned the husband away to spend the night out, the woman asks him to get in and sleep because she cannot stomach the idea of having her husband go and enjoy the night with prostitutes at Mereki. Mereki is a popular hangout in Warren Park, Harare and it is associated with booze and prostitution. It is only out of jealousy that the wife opens the door and let the husband in.

Women in Shona humour lack reason. They are presented as stupid and foolish. The woman does not want to tolerate the husband's habit of coming home late in the night but she uses the wrong technique. Imagine what could have happened had the husband not mentioned that he actually is not staying but wants to get some money to spend with prostitutes. Probably the woman was not going to let the husband in and that would be stupid and cruel of her.

From what is presented in Shona humour, as part of their stupidity, women do not trust their husbands. They also do not want to be told the truth. They always think that their husbands lie to

them and whenever their husbands tell them the truth, women always accuse them of lying and the same is presented in the joke below.

67. *Mumwe murume aidanana nasecretary wake kubasa. Mumwe musu, vaviri ava vakakiyiwa nezemo heavy, ndobva vaenda kumba kwasecretary ndobva vanokwirana masikati ese. Vakabva vanetesana, ndobva vabatwa nehope, ndokuzoti pepu na8pm usiku. Murume uya paaipfeka hembe dzake, akabva ati kuna secretary, tora bhutsu dzangu udzipukutire pamasora nepane tsvina. Secretary vakashamiswa nazvo asi vakangoita saizvozvo. Murume uya akapfeka bhutsu dzake ndokumhanyira kumba. Mukadzi wake akabvunza; “Manga muri kupi kuzosvika kumba time ino iyi?” Zvikanzi nemurume, “Darling, handingadi kukunyepera wena. Ndanga ndakarara nasecretary wangu. Tanga takarara tese kumba kwake masikati ose. Tazobatwa nehope ndobva tazopepuka na8 O'clock.” Mukadzi anobva atarisa bhutsu dzemurume wake ndobva ati, “Iwe bharanzi iwe! Unonyeperei kudaro! Ingoti chete wanga uchitamba golf!”*

[A married man was having an affair with his secretary. One day, their passions overcame them and they took off for her house where they made passionate love all afternoon. Exhausted from the wild sex, they fell asleep, only to startle awake around 8 PM. As the man threw on his clothes, he told the woman to take his shoes outside and rub them through the grass and dirt. Mystified, she nonetheless complied. He slipped into his shoes and drove home. “Where have you been?” demanded his wife when he entered the house. “Darling, I can't lie to you. I've been having an affair with my secretary and we've been having sex all afternoon. I fell asleep and didn't wake up until eight o'clock.” The wife glanced down at his shoes and said, “You lying bastard! Just confess that you've been playing golf!”]

In the above joke, instead of believing what the husband said about his affair with his secretary, the wife actually accuses her husband of lying and calls him *bharanzi* (fool). The woman is presented as scornful and audacious. The husband was for sure having an affair with his secretary and had spent the whole night with her. Interestingly, the wife does not accept that her husband was with another woman. The joke implies that women have ready answers to

problems, and the answers are always wrong and this in itself is stupidity on the part of women. The woman is, therefore, depicted as a know-it-all, foolish and stupid person.

5.5 Women as Irrational

Besides the issue of stupidity and idiocy, Shona humour also presents women as irrational. Women lack good judgement and they lack reason. The joke below supports the point.

68. *Pamuchato waShingi. Tete Nyadzisai vapihwa mukana wekutura:*
“Dzimba dzinoda kushinga mwana wehanzvadzi. Kushinga chaiko, sekushinga kwawakaita pawakaita 17 sittings kuti uzoitawo 5 O’ levels. Wakaramba wakashinga. Ndozvazvinoda. Usazonetsaka murume Shingi. Ndinoona akazvityora chaizvo mukwasha wedu. Ndinokuziva uchitaurisa saka ndati ndikuudze mwana wehanzvadzi. Zvekusageza zvawakarambirwa naMuchena ubva wasvipa muzukuru. KwaMunetsi ndofunga wakadzidza kuti nungo dzinorambisa munhu, usazvipamhidza muzukuru. KwaGore ndofunga wakazvionera kuti vamwene havakandwe zvibhakera. Mukupedza rega nditi ndadzidza chinhu chitsva nekuchata kwako kuti tsumo iya yekuti tsuro haiponi rutsva kaviri ndeyekunyepa. Wave mukana wechingani uchingowana mumwe murume? Naiwaya ndinoti ndatenda.”

[At Shingi’s wedding: Aunt Nyadzisai was given the opportunity to give a speech: “Marriage takes perseverance, my niece. Real determination is required, like the determination you exhibited when you had to make 17 sittings just to get your 5 O’ levels. You remained bold. That is what is needed. Do not trouble your husband, Shingi, I see he’s such a humble young man, this son-in-law of ours. I know you to be a chatterbox, which is why I am cautioning you like this. Drop your habit of not frequenting bathing which caused Muchena to divorce you. I am sure your stint with Munetsi taught you that laziness will cause you to lose your marriage, so do not repeat the same mistake. Moreover, I am sure that you learnt from your experience with Gore that your mother-in-law is not a punching bag. Lastly let me say that I have learnt a valuable lesson through your

wedding my niece – that the old saying that a hare cannot survive a veld fire twice is just a bluff. How many times have you divorced and remarried? With this I thank you.”]

Whilst the reader would expect *tete* (aunt) to praise Shingi, *Tete* Nyadzisai makes a very dangerous speech that tarnishes her niece’s image and this makes the narrative comical. *Tete* Nyadzisai presents Shingi as a failure in every respect, i.e. socially, academically and morally. Where *tete* is supposed to be the fountain of wisdom, what she portrays at the wedding of her niece is an obtuse, irrational and foolish woman. The aunt who, in this case, should be speaking highly about her niece is, in fact, making dangerous statements, which may destroy the marriage.

In Africa, “proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe, 1959). Where she uses the proverb, *Tsuro haiponi murutsva kaviri* (lit. a hare cannot survive a veld fire twice), where in Africa the use of proverbs shows intelligence and wisdom, *tete* uses the proverb to destroy her niece’s image. In Shona culture, it is the *tete* who plays a pivotal role in the marriage of her niece though, with the advent of westernisation, her role has been usurped by professional marriage counsellors as well as Christianity.

All the same, these factors do not give the aunt the impetus to destroy her niece’s marriage because she is actually the centrepiece who unites her niece and the husband. Generally, in Shona culture, *tete* is the one who teaches her niece real life issues and prepare her for marriage. The mother cannot freely counsel her daughter on matters of sex and sexuality because, from an African perspective, there has to be some social distance and respect between the mother and her

daughter. In such a scenario, therefore, *tete* becomes the rightful candidate to do the task. The above narrative demonstrates the destructive nature of women. The joke is an attack on the *tete* figure and this can be used to justify why in modern day Zimbabwe, some parents now prefer having a person from church to act as their child's counsellor in matters of sex and marriage because of the belief that blood relatives, the *tetes* in particular, are jealous and destructive. Through the bride, the joke also presents women as talkative, dirty, dull and loose. The humorous narrative below presents women as irrational.

69. *Pamuchato waRudo. MC: OK, tave kukumbirawo mumwe chete wekumhuri yemuroora wedu auye ataure nezvenhoroondo yemuroora wedu. Tete: "Pamusoroi. Ini ndini tete vaRudo. Ndiani akati mahure haaroorwe? Manje kwedu isu vanotochata. Tarisai muone, tiri kupemberera nhasi. Rudo uyu akamitiswa kwaMoyo, akazopihwazve matwins ekwaChoga, akaroorwa neimwe mhondi yekwaBushu. Ipo pavaiita masteps epamuchato iwoyu, anga atsviridza naBest man uyo! Mirai! Hazvina kutanga naiye Rudo. Ini tete vake, ndakatorwa nemuchato naMatemai ndokupinda mumba straight nemuchato. Asi hapana murume wemuno muDZ wandisingazive, including murume waRudo uyu ari pano. Ndatenda!"*

[At Rudo's wedding. MC: Now, may we have somebody from the bride's family to come and say something about the bride's history. Aunt: Excuse me. I am Rudo's father's sister. Who said whores do not find themselves husbands? In our family, bitches do marry and wed. Look here, we are celebrating our niece's wedding today. Rudo was once impregnated by a man from the Moyo family; she also has some twins from the Chogas. Again she was once married by a brutal man from the Bushu family. When they were practicing the bridal dances for this wedding, she was also dating their Best man over there. Wait! There is more to that. Rudo is not the first one to do this. I, here, am married to the Matemai family and I also had a white wedding, but I tell you, there is no man here in Dzivarasekwa whom I haven't slept with, including Rudo's husband here. Thank you.]

The rhetorical question, *Ndiani akati mahure haaroorwe?* (Who said whores do not find themselves husbands?) makes the narrative jocular. The aunt says all whores from her family have white weddings and this declaration evokes even more laughter. The above joke confirms the destructive nature of women as is presented in Shona humour. Women are portrayed as unreasonable. Their lack of reason costs lives; in this case, Rudo's life and marriage are wrecked because of *tete's* foolish speech.

In Shona culture, like what has already been noted, the *tete* plays the role of moulding, nurturing and culturing her brothers' daughters and, in all cases, she is expected to speak highly about her nieces. In the jokes above, the *tete* openly proclaims that her niece is a habitual concubine, and a prostitute is not an ideal candidate for marriage among the Shona people in particular. Among the Shona, virginity for brides is very crucial and for one to marry a woman who has children from a previous marriage is quite a shame. Men are discouraged from marrying *mvana* (single mother(s)) and what is disgraceful in the above joke is the fact that Rudo was a *mvana*. The *tete* also confesses that she was dating a man in the groom's team, which, therefore, points to the irrationality and bitchy character of women. The joke below also presents women as irrational.

70. *Chimwe chisikana chidofo dofo chakanga chakazvipengera nokunaka, chakawana 5 out of 100 kusvomhu. Murairidzi, uyo aive munhurume, ndokunyora mubhuku kuti "See me!!" achiti achibatsire. Asi chisikana chiya chakafunga hacho zverudo, ndokunyorawo mhinduro mubhuku imomo chichiti: "Hapana muuyu unovinga shiri! Iwe huya undione...kana uri serious nezvangu!!"*

[A dull school girl who was very beautiful got 5% in Mathematics. The teacher, who was male, wrote "See me" in the girl's book, with the

intention of assisting her. Unfortunately the girl thought that the teacher wanted her to be his girlfriend, and she wrote a reply in the same book, saying: “No baobab tree would take itself to the birds! (i.e. Nothing comes to a man unlaboured for). You come and see me...if you are really interested in me!!”]

What makes the narrative comical is the girl’s response to the teacher. Where the teacher had intended to assist the girl, the girl mistook the teacher’s statement for a love proposal and she says, *Iwe huya undione...kana uri serious nezvangu* (You come and see me...if you are really interested in me!!). In Shona, when one is speaking to an elder, she/he uses the honorific *imi*, instead of *iwe*, which marks collegiality, friendship or is used to address a minor. The girl uses *iwe* because she thought the teacher loved her. It is the imagined embarrassment on the girl’s part, after learning the teacher’s intention, which makes the narrative humorous.

The joke above devalues the woman’s intellectual abilities. The girl, who is said to be very beautiful (*chakazvipengera nokunaka*), is unintelligent and lacks determination towards her education. Because she is dull and foolish, she thought maybe the teacher was courting her because of her beauty. This joke undermines the woman and devalues her reasoning capacity. The joke goes in line with the common statement; “Beauty and brains is a rare combination”. There is a general misconception that a beautiful woman cannot be intelligent. A woman can either be ugly and intelligent, or beautiful but dull in mind. In Shona there is the sexist adage, *Mukadzi mutsvuku kusaroya anoba* (lit. If a light skinned woman is not a witch, then she is a thief) which means that women can never be flawless. The joke is, therefore, an attack on the woman’s worth and it is also a critique on her intellectual capacity.

5.6 Women as Incompetent

Shona jokes display tendencies of devaluation of women's professional abilities. The woman is confined to the domestic sphere and this trend is not only found in novels and drama but it is also prevalent in Shona humour. Women are depicted as inferior to men. They lack strong reasoning capacity and they are incompetent. They cannot effectively participate in the public domain and, hence, they should spend most of their time at home with their children.

Women are depicted as incompetent. This is so because their place is believed to be the kitchen. No matter how educated a woman can be, it appears from her treatment in analysed humorous narratives that she can never effectively and competently perform the same task as men. Below is a joke that demonstrates that women are presented as inept and unprofessional.

71. *Teacher vanyuwani pachikoro vakapinda muClass vakadrawer heart paboard but haina kubuda mushe kunyatsoshaper seheart, ndobva vabvunza vana kuti ichi chii chandadrawer. Vana vese vaingoti magaro. Madam ava ndokubuda ndokuenda kwaHead kundoreporter kuti vana vari kundidherera. Vakaenda vese naHead, Head ndokubvunza vana kuti sei muchidherera madam, vana vakati hatina kumbovadherera isu. Zvikanzi naHead "Saka adrawer magaro aya ndiyani?"*

[A new lady teacher at a certain school got into her classroom and drew a heart on the board. Unfortunately the drawing did not come out properly; it did not look like a heart. She asked the pupils to name what she had drawn on the board and all the pupils said the drawing were buttocks. The teacher got out of the classroom and went straight to the headmaster's office to report that the children are being rude and offensive to her. The two came back to the classroom, the headmaster then asked the children why they were being rude to the new teacher. The pupils said they were

not in any way rude and offensive and the headmaster then said; “So who drew these buttocks on the board?”]

The headmaster’s question, “*Saka adrawer magaro aya ndiani?*” (So who drew these buttocks on the board?) is meant to show how poor the female teacher is at drawing and probably to demonstrate her incompetence in the subject itself. The Head himself thought the drawing on the chalkboard was actually some buttocks, which is what the school children thought as well. The joke derides the female teacher’s incompetency. Even though she is a qualified teacher, she cannot draw a human heart on the board. She is bad at drawing and one can even doubt her competence in the subject area itself. It is surprising how the female teacher failed to draw a human heart on the board. She is worse than the school pupils that she teaches.

The female teacher also lacks class management skills and one questions her credibility as a good teacher. She is weak and too soft for a teacher and it points to the fact that female teachers are incompetent and this is a devaluation of women’s professional ability. The joke also points to the domestication of women. Another joke that presents women as incompetent is given below.

72. Pasi rino ringadai rakanaka dai raitongwa nevanhukadzi. Pamwe munyika mungadai musina kana hondo nekurwisana kunokonzerwa nehurume. Asi zvichakadaro, kungadai kungorinenyika dziri kuitirana shanje, dzisingatombomhoresane kana mbijana.

[This world would be a much better place if it was run by women. Sure, maybe there wouldn't be violence and territorial conquests fuelled by male testosterone. But instead, we'd have a bunch of jealous countries that aren't talking to each other.]

The joke above tends to limit the woman's performance in the private space. By sexually objectifying women and demeaning their personal and professional abilities, jokes support a patriarchal culture that continues to oppress and subordinate women, (Wesely, 2002). The joke above is meant to ridicule women who want to step out of the supposedly traditional spaces. Women are depicted as jealous of each other and they lack communicative competence. They always bear grudges and they cannot forgive and forget, as is indicated by *kuitirana shanje nekusatombomhoresana kana mbijana* (being jealous of each other and not talking to each other at all).

In fact, the joke implies that women cannot hold critical positions because they are hysterical and state affairs cannot be solved by emotions. Women are, therefore, depicted as irrational, weak minded and lacking in vision and foresight and, thus, unfit for the public domain. They cannot administer national or public affairs because they lack professionalism. The joke presents women as passive and docile. Such kind of humour undermines the potential that women have and the depiction is sexist in nature.

The above joke does not resonate with the classical Shona/African position on women as politicians, economists, and spiritual leaders. In traditional Shona societies, women held influential political and spiritual positions. For example, women like Mbuya Nehanda commanded the whole Shona group and directed it spiritually and politically. Even up to now the phrase "*Mapfupa angu achamuka*" (My bones shall rise), which is believed to have been said by her when she was hanged by the white settlers is still used in today's politics and this confirms

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the woman's major contribution and influential position in Shona politics. Although women in classical Shona in particular held influential positions, it was not every women who could do that. Only those women who were spirit mediums were allowed to hold political and spiritual leadership positions because the Shona believed in *midzimu* (ancestral spirits), otherwise no ordinary woman was allowed to lead. On the other hand, men did not have to be spirit mediums in order for them to hold influential positions. That state of affairs demonstrates the inferior status of women among the Shona. The same status quo is depicted in Shona humour. The above joke (72) has patriarchal innuendos, which are meant to domesticate women and present them as inferior. The joke below points towards the subordination of women.

73. *Mai vachibva kumusangano wemaequal rights vakasvikoona baba vachiverenga zvavo newspaper vari pasofa. Mai vakati kuna baba, "Tabveyo kumusangano wemaequal rights. Taitwe taught kuti hanzi tiite zvakaenzana." Baba ndokuita sevasina kunzwa. Mai vakatizve, "Hanzi tichinjane kubika, kutsvaira mumba, hanzi zvekare kana pasex tikwirewo pamusoro." Baba ndokutarisa mukadzi ndokuti: "Saka mboro dzacho mapihwa here?"*

[A certain woman was coming from a meeting on equal rights when she found her husband sitting on a sofa, reading a newspaper. The woman said to her husband, "I am coming from a meeting on equal rights. We were taught that we should do things equally." The husband pretends not to have heard anything. The woman then said, "We were told that we should even take turns to do the cooking and clean the house. It was also said during sex we should also be on top of the husband." The husband then looked at the wife and asked: "So were you given the penises then?"]

The husband's response-cum-question, *Saka mboro dzacho mapihwa here?* (So were you given the penises, then?), makes the narrative comical. Whilst it is not bad for the woman to be on top of the man during sex, the man thought it was impossible for the wife to do so because she is a

woman and she also does not have a penis. From the man's perspective, being on top of a woman during sex is a sign of dominance and superiority and the man cannot allow his wife to dominate him. The joke suggests that no matter how hard women try to liberate themselves and fight for equal rights, equality can never be achieved because of their gender. Because men have the phallus, they are 'naturally' superior to women.

Crawford, (2000) and Bemiller & Schneider, (2010) have theorized that sexist humour helps to maintain a sexist social order. The above sexist joke seems to suggest that Shona men cannot accept women's empowerment because women do not have a penis. The man is implying that for as long as the woman does not have the male sex organ, she will always be under male dominance and this patriarchal perspective entrenches the subordination of women and reinforces unjust cultural practices. In Shona, there is the common saying, *Mukadzi mukadzi chete*, (A woman is a woman, no matter what), which means that she can never be and should never aspire to be equal to men. This is probably why the husband pretended not to have heard what the wife was saying because issues to do with equality among the Shona are totally unacceptable. This shows the patriarchal tendencies engrained in the Shona people, where men are superior and women are regarded as the other.

Ford (2000), cited in Bemiller & Schneider (2010:460), posits that sexist humour is powerful language that should be viewed through a critical lens, given its potential to legitimise prejudice in society. The joke above is a good example of humour that fosters prejudice and subordination of women. Women are denied an opportunity to emancipate and liberate themselves from male

oppression, simply because they are women. The joke suggests that abuse and violence against women should be used in order to put women in their place and any effort to liberate themselves should be thwarted.

The joke below points to the domestication of women.

74. *Ndege yanga yakuda kudonha, mumwewo mukadzi anga arimo ndobva asimuka achiti, "Kuri kuti ndaakufa, ndoda kufa ndichinyatsonzwa kuti ndiri mukadzi zveshuwa." Anobvisa hembe dzake dzose ndokubva ati, "Mundege muno mune munhu here anozviti murume, anokwanisa kundiita kuti ndinyatsonzwa kuti ndiri mukadzi?" Mumwe murume anobva asimuka, ndokubvisa shirt yake ndokumuti, "O, ayina hembe iyi!"*

[As an airplane is about to crash, a female passenger jumps up frantically and announces, "If I'm going to die, I want to die feeling like a real woman." She removes all her clothing and asks, "Is there someone on this plane who is man enough to make me feel like a woman?" A man stands up, removes his shirt and says, "Here, iron this!"]

The incongruity of the above joke makes it humorous. One would expect the man who had removed his shirt to probably make love to the woman for the very last time but the man in the joke hands the naked woman his clothes and asks her to iron them. Ironing symbolises domesticity. The joke fosters the domestication and devaluation of women by identifying them with the private sphere. The joke reinforces and perpetuates African women's subjugation and subordination as they are viewed as homebound. Women are also depicted as sex obsessed as by implication the woman chose to have sex for the very last time before she dies. The woman is not even ashamed of stripping before everybody who was in the plane because she wanted sex before she dies, as if to suggest that a woman's sole purpose is to have sex. This kind of

depiction is sexist in nature. The implication of the joke is that women lack rationality and dignity, and they are immodest and sex addicts.

Sporting activities are not an exception insofar as the issue of gender is concerned. There are certain activities that are considered male and some are considered female. Soccer, for example, has for long been considered as a male game. Soccer was brought to Africa by British colonials in the mid-1800s. In Zimbabwe, male soccer was played from as early as 1939 and the team was known as the Southern Rhodesia National Football Team from 1939 –1964. The Zimbabwe women's national football team was formed in the early 1990's and their first international match was played in the 2000s, though the African Women's Championship was first contested in 1991.

In light of the history of football in Zimbabwe, women were viewed as incompetent insofar as soccer is concerned. Women in traditional Shona society were denied access to public play and it was and still is considered indecent for a dignified woman to participate in soccer or athletics. Sporting activities are regarded as male activities and women should not participate in them. Even to go out and watch a soccer match is undignified for women because women are not expected to be outgoing. The appreciation of soccer and other outdoor games is acceptable for men and yet unacceptable for women, which is also a sign of domesticity on the part of women. The joke below confirms how women are viewed insofar as the appreciation of soccer is concerned.

75. AFCON games begin...nhamo iya yatangazve.

Wife: Nhai baba Deny, ibhora ripi iri?
Husband: IAFCON yemaAfrican countries!
Wife: Hoo? Saka ndedzipi dzaqualifier?
Husband: Dzakawanda, kusanganisira anaGhana, Ivory Coast, Zambia, South Africa nedzimwewo asi Equatorial Guinea ndiyo iri kuhoster.
Wife: Ko Brazil yadini futi?
Husband: Inga ndati maAfrican chete!
Wife: Saka kuhoster kune basa here?
Husband: Hakuna but Brazil haisi muAfrica, paya yanga iri World Cup.
Wife: Ok. Saka World Cup yemuAfrica vachaita futi ka? Pamwe izvozwi team yaMessi inohwina chete.
Husband: Haah, imi! Ndati iAFCON mhani...mablack chete ari kutamba!!
Wife: Ah, ko avo vanenge varungu vari kutamba vakasangana nevatema, asi vakatengwa? Husband: Ehe iSouth Africa. Varungu vacho vakaberekerwa ikoko.
Wife: Ko yedu Zimbabwe?
Husband: Horaiti regai ndimbosvika pabhawa. Ndiri kudzoka kana bhora rapera.

[AFCON games begin...the problem now begins
 Wife: Father of Deny, what match is this?
 Husband: Its AFCON games for African countries!
 Wife: Is that so? So which teams are qualifying?
 Husband: Quite a good number, including Ghana, Ivory Coast, Zambia, South Africa, and many others, but the host country is Equatorial Guinea.
 Wife: So what happened to Brazil?
 Husband: Did I not tell you that it's for African countries only?
 Wife: Is hosting any special?
 Husband: No, it's not, but Brazil is not in Africa, those competitions where Brazil took part were for the World Cup.
 Wife: Alright. So they will also have the World Cup for Africa, right? Probably Messi's team will also win.
 Husband: You! I said its AFCON...it's the blacks only who are playing!!!
 Wife: Is that so? But there are also whites there who are playing together with blacks, were they bought from Western teams?
 Husband: Yes, it's South Africa. Those whites are South African citizens.
 Wife: How about our own Zimbabwe?
 Husband: Alright, let me get to the beer hall. I will come back at the end of the soccer match.]

The inquisitive woman's incoherent and silly questions and the husband's leaving for the bar to come back at the end of the soccer match make the narrative jocular. The joke suggests that because of their simple minds, women cannot appreciate and follow soccer. The woman does not have an idea of what the World Cup is and she also does not know that Brazil is not in Africa. The kind of portrayal expressed in the above depicts women as simpletons. The woman lacks reason, she is dull and stupid. The woman is depicted as naïve, simplistic and idiotic, and these are the reasons why she does not understand complex games. She is inquisitive and the way she asks silly questions is just disgusting and that actually drives the husband away. Shona humour, therefore, presents women as inferior to men.

5.7 Women as Compulsively Jealous

Besides being talkative, domineering, incompetent and irrational, women are also depicted as compulsively jealous. Women overprotect their husbands and this is what makes them jealous and somehow apathetic. The narrative below is an example of how jealous women are as presented in Shona humour.

76. *Vakadzi vakaoma! Mumwe murume anofonera mukadzi wake achiti, "Ndaita accident panze peoffice. Linda ndiye andimhanyisa kuhospital. Vaita matests nekunditora x-ray. Pandakuvara musoro pari kurwadza zvakanyanya asi hapana hapo kunyanyokuvara. Ndatyoka mbabvu 3, neruoko, uye ndaita fracture pagumbo rekuleft. Vati futi vanogona kundidimbura gumbo rangu rekuright."* Mukadzi anopindura achiti, "Linda ndiani?"

[Women are something else. A man calls his wife and says, “I was involved in an accident outside the office. Linda brought me to the hospital. They have been making tests and taking x-rays. The blow to my head, though very strong, will not have lasting damages. I have three broken ribs, a broken arm and a compound fracture in the left leg. They also may have to amputate my right leg.” Wife replies, “Who is Linda?”]

Instead of the woman sympathising with her husband and maybe worrying about the husband’s condition, the wife is eager to know who Linda is. As is depicted in the above joke, women have a fear of being cheated probably because they are of unfaithful tendencies. The joke implies that women are compulsively jealous and indifferent and that they do not pay attention to critical issues.

The joke presents women as heartless and uncompassionate. Women overprotect their husbands such that they fail to choose what to prioritise. The kind of suspicion that the woman in the above joke demonstrates is irrational in nature. In this case, there is no reason for the suspicion that the wife has over her husband. The woman is not even concerned about the damage and injury that happened to her husband. The wife is irrationally and compulsively jealous that she does not feel sorry for her husband because she wants to know who Linda is, which is stupid of her. As the narrative suggests, married women are threatened by fellow women whom they regard as potential husband snatchers and they pay attention to trivial matters and neglect critical issues.

5.8 Women as Rumour-mongers

Because women are depicted as incompetent in the public domain, they are then presented as idle. Jokes in this category suggest that idleness makes women spend most of their time in gossip and rumour because they do not have anything to keep themselves busy with. Below are jokes that depict women as rumour-mongers.

77. *Kusada kusarira*

Hehehe kusada kusaririra uku!!! Vamwe amai vakati vachera mvura pachibhorani, ndokutsiga bucket ravo, apa kumba hakuna kana donhwe remvura zvaro. Vachingoti pote paseri, vakabva vanzwa chikwee kuti kwetsu kuchibhorani, madzimai avange vasiya kuchibhorani vaisekei? Mai nokuda makuhwa vakati manje ndikadzokera nemvura ana mai nhingi vanozoti handidi kusaririra saka regai ndirase mvura yandiinayo. Pavakasvika pachibhorani vakabva vati, “Ko nhai vasikana manga muchisekeiko?” Zvikanzi nanamai vaye “Aaah zviripiko? Tiri kutoseka nhamo serugare. Chibhorani chafa.”

[Well, a woman who wouldn't allow anything to pass her one day fetched water from the borehole. On her way home – where there was no longer even a drop of water by the way, she heard the other women laughing hysterically back at the borehole. Wondering why they were laughing, she thought of going back to investigate, but knew that the other women would ridicule her for loving gossip too much. So she poured all her water to the ground and rushed back to the borehole where she enquired: “What is it that you were all laughing at, ladies?” to which they responded, “Well, we are just musing at the fact that the borehole has broken down!”]

Though the above joke is didactic in that it tries to discourage rumour-mongering and gossip, it stereotypes women as gossipers. The woman in the above joke cannot afford to miss out on what the other women at the borehole were laughing at so she throws away her water so that she can

justifiably go back to the borehole and share the news with others. The consequences of her actions far outweigh the merits of her curiosity. The joke also presents women as stupid. More often than not, women in literature, particularly written literature, are depicted as tattletales and this is a stereotypical presentation of women, which serve no purpose except to dehumanise and dewomanise the woman. This could be the reason why in traditional Shona society men used to sit at *dare* in the evening where they would discuss important issues and teach young boys life skills whilst women and girls would sit in the kitchen and talk women's issues. *Dare* is a place within the yard where men would sit and discuss issues without the interference of women and children and every homestead had one such place. Women were not allowed to sit with men at the *dare* because women were regarded as perpetual children and their contribution was said to be ineffectual. This, again, shows the inferior status of women in Shona society.

It is because of male hegemony that women are depicted as the other, they are perpetual children and they are second-class citizens, hence they are excluded in the discussion of important issues within the family, village and the nation at large.

In Shona poetry, for example, women are presented as rumour-mongers and Kumbirai (1965:25) says:

*Chawanzwa usaudze mukadzi,
Mukadzi idare rinoti ngwere ngwere,
Chaanzwa achiridzwa kwese.
Chawanzwa usavanze murume,
Murume idare risingamborira,
Chaanzwa charamba kurira.*

[What you have heard, do not tell it to a woman,
A woman is a bell that rings,

Whatever she hears, she heralds everywhere.
What you have heard, tell it to a man,
A man is a bell that never rings,
Whatever he hears, he will keep it secret]

The above quotation from Kumbirai (1965) expresses Shona people's philosophy insofar as gender is concerned. Because women are considered weaker than men, Shona people are discouraged from telling secrets to women because women cannot keep secrets. The juxtaposition of what men and women do is meant to prove how men are superior to women. Men are presented as able to keep secrets whilst women are whistleblowers. The poem above demonstrates the stereotypification of women as rumour-mongers who are unable to keep secrets.

In the play *Ndakambokuyambira*, Chidyausiku has a section entitled '*Guhwa nomukadzi usahwira hwavo*' (Women and gossip are mutual friends) where it is said, *Mandionza ari kubva kukirabhu neshamwari yake Mandifusa. Vanhu vapera nokunyeyiwa.* (Mandionza and her friend Mandifusa are coming from the Women's Club. They are gossiping about everyone.) This stereotypification connotes that women are gossipers and want to poke their noses into other people's affairs and this trend is also found in Shona humour. The joke below presents women as gossipers:

78. *Mai Rudo vakaona pastor vachibuda mumba ma Mai Tau. Vakaendako ndokubvunza kuti, "Ndiani arwara? Ndaona pastor achibuda mumba menyu." Mai Tau vanoti, "Siyana neni! Nezuro mumba mako zvamakabuda musoja maive nehondo?"*

[Rudo's mother saw a pastor coming out of Tau's mother's house. She went there and asked, "Who is not feeling well? I saw the pastor coming out of your house." Tau's mother answered, "Mind your own business! Yesterday I saw a soldier coming out of your house. Was there any war?"]

While it sounds logical and prudent for Mai Rudo to ask whether someone was ill at Mai Tau's house, it is illogical for Mai Tau to ask whether there was a civil war at Mai Rudo's place since she saw a soldier coming out of Mai Rudo's house. Maybe Mai Tau responded rudely to Mai Rudo because she picked from the tone that the inquiry was insincere. The joke presents women as rumour-mongers. This kind of depiction is stereotypical as it paints women as gossipers and as people who cannot keep secrets.

Besides presenting women as rumour-mongers, the joke also presents women as adulterous. The implication of the joke is that Mai Tau is having an affair with the pastor whilst Mai Rudo is in love with a soldier and, hence, Mai Tau says Mai Rudo does not have the right to ask her what the Pastor wanted because Mai Rudo is also having an extra marital affair with a soldier. The joke, therefore, depicts women as adulterous rumour-mongers. This confirms Schmidt's (1992) assertion that women are considered intellectually and morally weak, but sexually dangerous. A similar English joke which depicts women as rumour-mongers is given below:

Why don't women mind their own business?
A. No business. B. No mind.

The two answers that are given in the above joke point to the ineffectiveness and non importance of women. From the joke, it is either women do not have any business to do or they do not have a mind, thus they poke their nose into other people's business. The joke suggests that women are naturally rumour-mongers because they are idle and stupid, and this is devaluation of the female figure. The joke is an example of a sexist joke that undermines women and presents them as a useless lot.

5.9 Conclusion

Jokes analysed in this chapter are sexist in nature. They present women in a negative manner. Women are presented as materialistic and self-centered. They are also presented as talkative and domineering, stupid and irrational. Besides all these vices, women are also depicted as incompetent and, hence, they cannot effectively and competently participate in the business or professional world. Their place is in the kitchen. Shona humour analysed in this chapter also show women as compulsively jealous, uncompassionate and rumour-mongers. All these images show tendencies of patriarchy amongst the Shona whereby the woman is depicted as inferior to men. If the woman is presented as irrational and incompetent, the assumption is that she is measured against the character traits of men who are then perceived to be competent and rational. These are misogynist tendencies that are meant to oppress women and present them as the other and this is typical of sexist humour. The depiction of women in a negative light means

that women's personality, wellbeing and social being are inferior to those of men. The next chapter focuses on women and malevolence.

CHAPTER SIX

WOMEN AND MALEVOLENCE

6.1 Introduction

Besides the devaluation of women's personal characteristic, Shona humour tends to present women as malicious. Selected humorous narratives analysed in this chapter present women as diabolical and wicked. Women are presented as carriers of diseases; old women are presented as witches whilst mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are presented as rivals. Women are also presented as a source of men's problems. These sub-sections are analysed in detail below.

6.2 Women as Carriers of Diseases

Shona humour depicts women as carriers of diseases. They are presented as evil and dangerous and they are responsible for spreading deadly sexually transmitted diseases to unsuspecting men. The joke below illustrates this point.

*79. Vakadzi neroad same same. Kuwanda kwemacurves avo ndiko
kuwandawo kwenjodzi yavanayo.*

[Women are like roads. The more curves they have, the more dangerous they are.]

The above joke makes use of a simile to show how dangerous women may be. The joke compares a woman with a curvy and winding road which may pose hazards to motorists. Though a curvaceous woman is adored, she is considered dangerous since she has the potential to attract many men and, therefore, the chances of her to sleep around, contract and spread diseases are relatively high. The joke suggests that curvaceous women are responsible for spreading and carrying sexually transmitted diseases. The joke also shows the belief that Shona people have on the issue of the transmission of diseases. Women are always blamed for the spreading of sexually transmitted diseases because they are labeled loose and unfaithful, and this is unfair on women as both men and women contribute to the spreading of the disease.

In Zimbabwe, women were arrested for loitering at night for purposes of prostitution or otherwise. Surprisingly, men who solicited for the services of these prostitutes were not arrested. This state of affairs demonstrates that Shona society believes that women are responsible for spreading sexually transmitted diseases. It was the May 2015 Constitutional Court ruling that outlawed the arrest of sex workers found loitering in the streets for purposes of prostitution. It is because of patriarchy and male hegemony that women's sexuality is controlled by men, in the guise of protecting the woman from danger. The joke below also shows women as dangerous, evil and responsible for spreading diseases.

80. *Mukoma Joe vakazvinhongera zvavo bhebhi kubhawa ndokunanga kumba. Vasvika bhebhi rakabvunza zvikanzi “Unonwa here Joe?” Blaz vakati vanotonwa heavy. Vaviri vakanakirwa usiku hwese pasina protection. Kwaedza, mukoma vakaona bhebhi rave kunwa maARV vakati, “Bhebhi haudaro. Sei usina kutaura kuti uri positive?” Bhebhi rikati, “Inga Joe ndakabvunza wani nezuro kuti unonwa here ukati unonwa!”*

[Brother Joe hooked up with a certain lady at a bar and took her home. When they got home, the lady asked “Joe, do you drink?” Joe then told her that he is actually a heavy drinker. They had unprotected sex the whole night. The following morning, Joe saw the woman taking her ARVs then said; “But why are you so cruel, babe? Why did you not tell me that you are HIV positive?” The woman replied; “But Joe, last night I asked you whether or not you drink and you said you are a heavy drinker!]

The joke above confirms that women are evil and they spread diseases. The girl in the joke intentionally infects Joe with the deadly disease. Instead of disclosing her HIV status or directly asking whether Joe is on HIV treatment or not, the woman deliberately uses an ambiguous statement “*Unonwa here?*” (lit. Do you drink?) which in Shona is normally used to mean ‘Do you drink beer?’ and this is meant to prove how wicked women can be. If the woman was genuine and had wanted to protect Joe, she should have used the common statement that is used to refer to someone who is HIV positive and is on treatment, which is “*Uri pachirongwa here?*” (Are you on ARV treatment), instead of using the ambiguous statement “*Unonwa here?*” Although the two consensually engaged in unprotected sex, one can be tempted to blame the woman for intentionally infecting the unsuspecting man.

Inasfar as sexually transmitted diseases are concerned, women are always to blame. It could be because of the anatomy of the female reproductive organ that women are accused of carrying diseases but in fact, both men and women are capable of spreading diseases. There is a general belief among the Shona in particular, that the disease is contained in the female reproductive organ, yet the virus is found in one's blood. In Shona, the female organ may be referred to as *huri/mwena* (hole) and the male organ is *chombo* (weapon), and the analogy of *kuisa* (putting/inserting [having sex]) could have led to the conception that a man contracts the disease from a woman during sex. When a man is suffering from AIDS, people say *akarumwa nemajuru* (he was bitten by termites), meaning that he contracted the disease from a woman, as is implied by the analogy of harvesting termites. This, therefore, speaks to the stereotypification of women as carriers of diseases. The above joke, therefore, presents women as malicious, for the woman in the joke deliberately intended to infect the man with HIV. The joke below also presents women as disease carriers.

81. *Wife: Manheru baba. (husband zii)*
House girl: Manheru baba. (husband zii)
Wife: Asi kwamabva hakuna kunaka?
Husband: Pakati penyu pane akandipa siki!

[Wife: Good evening daddy. (The husband keeps quiet)
House girl: Good evening daddy. (The husband keeps quiet)
Wife: Is everything alright?
Husband: Someone between the two of you infected me with syphilis!]

The interesting part of the joke is the man's response-cum-accusation that one of the two women, between his wife and the house-maid, infected him with syphilis. The husband in the above joke is not ashamed of cheating on his wife with the maid and he has the audacity to accuse the two women of infecting him. He says '*Pakati penyu pane akandipa siki*' (someone between the two of you infected me with syphilis) as if he was not also responsible for the transmission (or contraction thereof) of the disease. The man distances himself from the disease and places the blame on the women. Society approves of men having extra marital affairs and the fact that the husband breaks the role boundaries seems not to matter in this joke. The joke seems to suggest that women are responsible for spreading disease and men just get the disease from women.

The joke also presents women as wicked home wreckers because the house maid had sex with a married man and one can be tempted to blame the maid for infecting the man with syphilis. The joke, therefore, presents women as malicious and it fulfills the hegemonic claim that a woman's number one enemy is another woman, which is wrong anyway.

Most of the jokes in this section present women as unfaithful and, consequently, carriers of diseases. Although the joke below seems to be pointing towards the deadliness of the pandemic, it is also aimed towards depicting the woman as a disease carrier. The woman in the joke below has been heavily devoured by the disease and her organ, 'which carries the disease', has reduced the woman's undergarment to a mere string. Women are, thus, presented as dangerous disease carrying beings.

82. *Paive panyaradzo apo mbatya dzeimwe pfambi dzaigovewa. Yakange yafa neAIDS. Ambuya vaigova mbatya vakabva vaona G-string ndokuti: “Shuwa chirwere ichi chakaipa, kubva chadya bhurugwa remuzukuru wangu kusiya tambo chete!”*

[It was at a memorial service when the estate of a deceased prostitute was being distributed. The prostitute had died of AIDS. The old woman who was distributing the things got hold of a G- string and said: “Surely this disease is so deadly that it devoured my grandchild’s panty and reduced it to a mere string!”]

As is the norm in Shona culture, when some adult man or woman passes on, they have their estate distributed amongst their relatives and, in the joke above, the woman who is doing the distribution comments on and bemoans the viciousness of the disease as it eats away the human being as well as the panty. Humour comes from the old woman’s perception of the deceased woman’s G-string. The old woman, who probably does not know the design of a G-String, thought that the panty was reduced to a mere string by the disease. In this case, it is the female reproductive organ that is depicted as the most dangerous part, the one that carries the disease. It is as if the disease is confined to the female reproductive organ and yet the disease affects the whole body and is found in human blood. Here the joke ridicules the female organ and depicts women as dangerous disease carriers.

6.3 Married Women as a Source of Men’s Problems

Women are depicted as the source of men’s problems for they make their husbands uncomfortable and unhappy in marriage because of their constant nagging and too many

expectations. Women are depicted as difficult to please. The joke below juxtaposes what men expect from women and what women expect from their husbands and this is meant to exhibit the troublesome nature of women.

83. *ZVAUNGAITE KUTI UFADZE MURUME*

1 *Mupe zvokudya*

2 *Rara naye*

3 *Musiyewo nerugare*

4 *Usabate phone yake uchitarisa tarisa kuti ndiani ambotumira mamessage*

5 *Usamubvunze mafambiro ake. Saka chii chakaoma ipapa?*

ZVAUNGAITE KUTI UFADZE MUKADZI

Hazvina hazvo kunyanyooma asi... kuti munhu afadze mukadzi, murume anofanira kuita zvinotevera:

1 *Kuve shamwari*

2 *Kuve sahwira*

3 *Kumuda, (kumupa rudo)*

4 *Kuve hanzvadzi*

5 *Kuve baba.*

Zi list racho rakareba kani, kutosvika kunumber 53.

[HOW TO MAKE A MAN HAPPY

1 Feed him

2 Sleep with him

3 Leave him with peace

4 Don't take his phone to check out messages folders

5 Don't bother him with his movements. So what's so hard about that?

HOW TO MAKE A WOMAN HAPPY

It's really not too difficult but.... To make a woman happy, a man only needs to be:

1 A friend

2 A companion

3 A lover

4 A brother

5 A father.

The list goes on and on all the way up to 53]

While men require just five things from women, women's demands from their husbands are more than tenfold and this is a difficult task to accomplish. The question, "So what's hard about it?" which comes below the list of men's expectation means that men are very easy to please. Above what women expect from their husbands, there is the statement; "It's not too difficult but..." which implies that women are difficult to please. The joke suggests that women can never be content with what their husbands do or give them. Such kind of depiction is an attack on the female figure as it tends to stereotype women as difficult and ungrateful. The joke demonstrates some patriarchal tendencies where the woman is regarded as the other while men are regarded as superior. The joke suggests that women bother their husbands and deprive them of privacy, freedom and happiness yet women want too much attention from men. The joke attests the point that women are complex and they hurt their husbands' feelings, and the same is expressed in the joke below.

84. *Nguva yega yega gara wakaisa picture yemukadzi wako sescreen saver. Pega pega paunowirwa nedambudziko, tarisa picture iyoyo wobva wazviudza kuti: "Kana ndichimbokwanisa zvakadai izvi, ndinogona kutongokunda chero dambudziko ripi zvaro!" Aya ndiwo maonero akanaka eupenyu!!*

[Always keep your wife's picture as mobile screen saver. Whenever you face a problem, look at the picture and say: "If I can handle this, I can handle anything!"... Superb Attitude for Life!!]

The joke implies that married men always face a torrid time with their wives. Women are depicted as a source of men's problems. Instead of putting a wife's face as a screen saver for

love, men are encouraged to use their wives' images as screen savers so that whenever they look at the face, they can have confidence and strength to face any challenge because they are capable of handling the pressure and distress that they get from their wives. Although the narrative evokes humour, the presentation of women is bad and it does not yield any meaningful co-existence between husbands and wives. The joke presents women as an encumbrance to men. The statement "...*kana ndichimbokwanisa zvakadai izvi...*" (...if I can handle this...) means no problem/challenge is greater than that of having a wife. On joke 50 above, it is said women live longer because they do not have a wife. The jokes, therefore, demonise women and present them as wicked, malicious and troublesome.

From an African perspective in general, marriage is supposed to be joyous. In Shona in particular, marriage is an achievement and women are believed to be compassionate, nurturing and caring. Paul Matavire, in his song '*Dhindindi full time*' actually sang thus, *Mukadzi mushonga unorapa, dzungu rinopera kana uchinge waroora*. (A wife is medicine. Foolishness and all wayward behaviour disappear once somebody gets himself a wife). This means that women are actually a pleasure, they are caring, nurturing, loving, loveable, soft and tender, but the presentation expressed in the above joke is stereotypical in nature and it expresses patriarchal hegemony whereby the woman is demonised and depicted as evil.

According to Gray (1992), men are from Mars and women are from Venus and the two sexes are different. Shona humour in particular confirms these sex stereotypes and gender differences between men and women. The way women react and communicate is different from the way

men react. Women use emotions whilst men use reason. Women use sadness and discomfort to seek their men's attention whilst men use joy, happiness to seek a woman's attention. These are mere gender stereotypes, which are meant to prove that women are of a weaker sex and should, therefore, be controlled by men because they lack reason and wisdom.

Shona humour presents women as bad at communicating; one has to read and interpret their feelings whilst men openly express their feelings. Men are presented as predictable, straightforward, and rational while women are unpredictable and emotional. Below is a joke that confirms this view.

85. *Kana mukadzi achida kuti murume wake amuone, anongotsamwa nekuratidza kusafara. Asi kana murume achida kuti mukadzi wake amupe attention, anongoratidza kungofara fara nekusununguka.*

[If a wife wants her husband's attention, she just has to look sad and uncomfortable. On the other hand, if husband wants his wife's attention, he just has to look at ease and jovial.]

The joke above presents women as bad at communication. It is surprising how one would expect someone to give them love and attention by looking sad and uncomfortable. The joke serves to show how stupid and foolish women are. The joke implies that women use the wrong technique as a means of communication maybe because of their 'irrationality'. Women are, thus, presented as unpredictable and emotional whilst men are rational, predictable and use direct ways of communication. The way women behave makes it impossible for their husbands to enjoy their

marriage and women actually turn their marriages into a nightmare. The English joke below further attest to this point.

A Philosopher HUSBAND said:- "Every WIFE is a 'Mistress' of her Husband... "Miss" for first year and "Stress" for rest of the life..."

The word mistress, which is taken as a compound word from 'miss' and 'stress' is used to prove how difficult and troublesome women are. The joke implies that women make their marriages boring and they make it hell for their husbands. As the joke suggests, marriage is only blissful for the first year, when the woman would still be a 'miss,' and miserable for the rest of life, where she becomes a source of stress and misery for her husband. This depiction points to the gender stereotypification of women as troublesome and nagging. Such kind of humour can be used to justify why men end up having extra-marital affairs and abusing their wives because men can easily blame their wives for being cold and callous.

Women are demonised and castigated as evil and devoid of love. They are a source of men's problems, they are presented as difficult people to live with and this is an unfair treatment of women. Humanity cannot thrive without one of these genders.

6.4 Old Women as Witches

Besides being sexually repelling, old women are also depicted as evil and wicked. Old women are presented as witches, not only in humour but also in folktales, novels and plays. In Shona folktales, old women are depicted as man-eaters. Shona humour presents old women as witches, sorcerers and hard-hearted. This is evidenced by the joke below.

86. *Kwakaitika nhamo kwaMurambinda. Yava nguva yebody viewing ndobva mbuya vanzi vanamate. Vakanamata vachiti; "God bless our food. Amen." Hama dzese dzakabatikana.*

[There was a funeral in Murambinda. When it was time for body-viewing, a certain old woman was asked to say a word of prayer and she prayed thus, "God bless our food. Amen." All of the relatives were perplexed.]

The prayer that the old woman makes is incongruous with what is expected at a funeral. Normally, people pray for the transition of the deceased from the material world to the spiritual world but the old woman in the above joke makes a prayer that is made before a meal. The implication of the old woman's prayer in the above joke is that she is a witch and wants the corpse to be blessed before she feasts on it. Among the Shona, old age is normally associated with witchcraft and it is normally the old woman that is associated with sorcery and witchcraft. Old women are also accused of passing on the witchcraft to their grandchildren and/or daughters-in-law (*kutemera vazukuru/varoora uroyi*). The joke confirms that stereotype where old women are viewed as witches.

87. *Vamwe mbuya vakashanyira muroora wavo kutaundi. Mumwe musi muroora akagara zvake pasofa achiona macartoon paTV, vamwene vakabva vapinda vakagarawo pasi. Vakashamisika vachiona muroora wavo achitoramba achiona macartoon akadekara zvake, ivo ndokuti; “Aaah, muroora, unatwowo nhai? Ende unotubata zvakana. Wakabva watotutengera girazi rekuti upote uchinyatsotuona zvako tuchitamba? Manje hatudika kuti ubva watuyanika pachena kudai patunoonekwa nevanhu vose vose. Inga twakatowanda nhai muroora!! Asi twako twashata nekuti twaita tukadzi twega twega. Ini ndine tukadzi neturume. Panodiwawo turume nekuti nditwo tune hashu. Dai ndakaziva kuti unotuda ndingadai ndakakuvigirawo turume nekuti ndinatwo.”*

[A certain old woman visited her daughter-in-law who lived in the city. One day her daughter-in-law was sitting on the couch watching TV and, suddenly, the mother-in-law got in. She was surprised to find her daughter-in-law watching cartoons, unperturbed by her sudden arrival. She then said, “Ah, my daughter-in-law, you also have these? You take so much good care of them I can see. You have even bought a glass cabinet so that you can always see them play. But you must not display them for everyone to see. Wow, you have quite a good number of them, my daughter-in-law! But yours are of one sex, they are all female. I have both the male and female. You may also need male goblins which are more harsh and aggressive. Had I known that you also want them I could have brought you some male ones because I have plenty of them.]

The mother-in-law’s words to her daughter-in-law calls for laughter. By mistaking the cartoons for goblins, the television for a glass cabinet that is used to keep the goblins and pledging some male goblins which are more vicious and aggressive, the narrative becomes even more jocular. Generally, goblins are believed to eat human flesh and cause mysterious deaths and by saying male goblins are more vicious, it means this mother-in-law has also used her goblins to torment, bewitch or even kill people and this makes her evil. The question, *Unatwowo nhai?* (Ah, you

also have them?), shows that the mother-in-law is a witch, for she thought her daughter-in-law also has some goblins. The pronoun *itwo* (them) in this case is used to refer to goblins (*zvikwambo/zvidhoma*). It is believed that goblins look like cartoons and the mother-in-law's ignorance leads her to divulge that she has some goblins. The embarrassment she would face after learning that the 'goblins' were actually cartoons would be unbearable for her, as she had confessed to her daughter-in-law that she has goblins. This kind of depiction is stereotypical in nature and it reflects the deep-seated belief among the Shona that mothers-in-law as well as old women are witches.

6.5 Mothers-in-law and Daughters-in-law as Wicked and Jealous of Each Other

Shona also has daughter-in-law and mother-in-law jokes. Mother-in-law-centred jokes depict evil women whilst daughters-in-law are depicted as threatening, sexy, callous and hateful of their mothers-in-law. Shifman & Varsano (2007) have it that mother-in-law-centred humour employs the stereotype of threatening, castrating, sexless womanhood. The same stereotypes are also found in Shona humour as is illustrated by the jokes below.

88. *Muridzi wemurume ndiani? Mai kana mukadzi wake? Gakava.*

Mai: Mwana wangu anofanira kunditeerera, kunze kwekunge asina kuyamwa mukaka pazamu rangu kwegore rose.

Mukadzi: Anotoyamwa mazamu angu izvozvi, uye akaayamwa kwemakore anotodarika 5, ende nanhasi achiri kungoramba achiyamwa.

Mai: Ndakamutakura ini kwemwedzi mipfumbamwe.

Mukadzi: Ipapo anga achingorine 3.5kg, saka chii chinoshamisira ipapo? Inini ndinomutakura usiku hwese, apa ane 85kg.

Mai: Akabuda nepakati pemakumbo angu apa, ndichirwadziwa futi.

Mukadzi: Hahaha. Akangopfuura nepo kamwe chete bedzi. Manje anotogara pakati pemakumbo angu apa mazuva ese, ndozhamba nemarwadzo usiku hwega hwega.

Ndapota, muridzi wemurume apa ndiani?

[Who really owns a man? His mother or his wife? Debate.

Mother: My son must obey me, unless he didn't suck my breasts for one year.

Wife: He sucks mine now – he has been for more than five years and he is still sucking.

Mother: I carried him for nine months.

Wife: He was only 3.5 kg then, so what's the big deal? I carry him every night and he is 85 kg now.

Mother: He passed between my legs with pain.

Wife: Hahaha, he only passed through there once. He stays between my legs like every day and I scream with pain each night.

Please, who owns a man?]

The argument between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law shows the deep seated rivalry between the two women because of the fight for a man's attention and love. The mother-in-law wants to have total control over her son for whatever she did for him in the process of raising him. The wife (daughter-in-law) wants the man to listen to her because she gives the man some sexual favours everyday, which a mother cannot do in Shona culture. The daughter-in-law feels that whatever the mother-in-law did for the man is insignificant because it was done once. She feels that she is the rightful person to get all the love and attention from the man because she makes him suck her breasts and carries him during sex. The joke depicts women as rivals and the relationship between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law is always tense.

An important aspect that is implied by the above joke is that a woman's enemy number one is another woman. The mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law cannot see eye to eye because of their fight for a man's attention and, possibly, for the control of his resources because women are believed to have a dependency syndrome. Mothers cannot let go of their married sons and, at the same time, the wife cannot take it when the mother-in-law shows such signs of possession. The joke suggests that women cannot co-exist and it is even worse for in-laws. In Shona there is the general saying; *Vakadzi havabikirane/havagarisane* (Women cannot co-exist), and *Vamwene nemuroora havagarisane* (A mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law cannot co-exist) to show that women are evil. The above joke confirms the stereotype that women are enemies and it covertly implies that men have genuine brotherhood and can therefore co-exist

The joke below, which is in the form of letters, further confirms the feud between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law.

89. *Gwamakunguvo Primary School*

P.O. Box 55

Chivi

28 February 2015

Wadiwa muroora mai Tanyaradzwa

Ndanyora tsamba yangu kwamuri ndichiti makadii nekurwara kwamakambotaura muna November? Takazoona munhu kuti zii pamaiti muchauya kuzotibatsira kurima. Ndinovimba mave kuhwa zviri nani.

Ndangoti ndikuzivisei kuti kuno zhezha tave naro zvedu. N'ombe dzakabereka nhatu, mukaka tiri kukama, uye mabhuroyira tinawo. Sezvo imi muchirwara musazvinetse kuuya kumusha, mungazonyanya kurwara.

Pamaiti munoda kuuya paEaster tinenge tisipo, tichaenda kumusungano weSvondo kuGokwe saka hapana wamunozoona.

*Garai zvakanaka kudhorobha kwenyu, tozoonana nguva yekurima.
Ndinovimba unenge usati ucharwara muroora.*

Ndapedza ndini

Mbuya va Wedze

.....
Mhinduro kubva kumuroora

Makadii mbuya vaWedze? Kuno kuBorrowdale tinofara. We landed yesterday from Dubai, tange tanotenga hembe dzevana. Aaaah, iye zvino mukandiona muchandiziva here? Kusimba kwandaita here ikoko? Kungoti you don't have a phone inopinda paWhatsApp, dai ndakusenderai one of my optics that we took nababa Tanya during our Dubai trip. For now we are busy nekuvaka other two of the stands dzatakatenga muBorrowdale makare muno, zvekutoshaya nguva yekukuisirai 5 dollaz yekutenga sugar paEcocash.

Plus kuEaster tanga tatogara tisingachauye. Instead, we wanted you to come to the function yekuvhura one of the houses inenge yapera. Since you are going kuGokwe, tichatoivhura musipo.

Isu tichazouya November, but we will not be able to sleep over, tinenge tichidzoka kuHarare zuva rakare because this year we are kind of busy sezvandambotaura.

Farisai vamwe vose.

Muroora Mai Tanyaradzwa.

.....
Mhinduro kubva kuna vamwene

Kuna mai Tanyaradzwa

Ndaizviziva kuti makaenda kuDubai. Baba Tanya vakatobva kuno vachimhanyira ikoko, vakanga vari kuno nomukadzi wavo mudiki. Kana iri \$5 regera. Mazuvano ndigere. Ndinoitirwa zvose nemuroora mutsva. Anoziva. Mwana akabva kuvanhu. Akatotumidza mwana zita rangu ufunge. Uye anga akatosara kuno kumusha achidya zhezha achiti kuHarare ndoenderei mhai ivo baba Tanya vakafamba, regai ndikubatsirei basa.

Akatohwa shoko rekudzoka kwenyu zuro akatouya kuHarare nezuro. Pamwe anotokwira ndege nhasi kuendawo kuChina. Akandivimbisa zvinhu hobho. Baba Tanya vakatoti dai ndakaziva ndakarooro mukadzi wepiri kare. Pamwe unomuziva nokuti ari kuvakisawo dzake dzimba muBorrowdale imomo.

*November ndinenge ndisiko. Mwedzi wese ndiri kumuroora, ndotozouya mvura yanaya. Mugare zvenyu zvakanaka muBorrowdale
Ndapedza*

Ndini mbuya vaWedze

[Gwamakunguvo Primary School

P.O. Box 55

Chivi

28 February 2015

Dear daughter-in-law, Mother of Tanyaradzwa

I write this letter to you saying how are you. You once said you were not feeling well sometime in November last year. We did not see you when you had promised to come and help us with ploughing. I hope you are feeling better now.

I just want to inform you that we had a bumper harvest here. Three of our cows have calved. We have plenty of milk, plus we also have broiler chickens. Since you said you are not feeling well, do no trouble yourself coming here, you may be affected by the conditions here and deteriorate health-wise.

You have also said you would be visiting us during the Easter holiday. I want to take this opportunity to tell you that we won't be around. We will be having a church conference in Gokwe, so you won't find anybody home.

Stay well in the urban area of yours, we will see you during the ploughing season. I hope by then you would be fit, my daughter-in-law.

Let me end here.

Grandmother of Wedze

.....
Response from the daughter-in-law

How are you grandmother of Wedze. Here in Borrowdale we are very fine. We landed yesterday from Dubai, where we had gone to buy clothes for our children. Oh, if you see me now you won't even recognise me. I have gained so much weight. It's only that you don't have a phone with WhatsApp, I could have sent you some of the optics I was taken together with Tanyaradzwa's father during our Dubai trip. For now we are so busy constructing houses at two of our new stands we bought here in Borrowdale that I can't even spare time to send you some \$5 via EcoCash to buy a packet of sugar.

We also didn't have any plans for coming there during the Easter holiday. Instead, we wanted you to come for the official opening of one of our houses. Since you said you would be going to Gokwe, we have no choice but to open it in your absence.

We will only be able to visit you in November but, unfortunately, we won't be able to sleep over. We would be returning to Harare that very same day because this year we are very busy like I said earlier on.

Greet everyone.

Daughter-in-law, Mai Tanyaradzwa

.....

Response from the mother-in-law

Dear mother of Tanyaradzwa

I know that you went to Dubai. The father of Tanyaradzwa was here with his new wife the day before you left and he left in a hurry in order to prepare for that journey. As for the \$5, you may as well not bother yourself sending it. These days I am enjoying life, the new daughter-in-law does everything. She knows her role as a daughter-in-law, she is a cultured woman, she has been taught how to please and take care of her in-laws. She has even named her child after me. She was also here and she said she can't come to Harare when Baba Tanya had gone to Dubai. So she decided to stay behind and assist us with harvesting. She heard about your return so she came to Harare yesterday. Probably she is also flying to China. She promised to bring me a lot of presents. The father of Tanyaradzwa was regretting delaying getting himself a second wife. Perhaps you even know this new woman because she is also constructing her houses in Borrowdale.

I won't be around in November. I will spend that whole month at my new daughter-in-law's place, and I will only return home when the rains come.

Stay well in Borrowdale. Allow me to end here.

Yours

Grandmother of Wedze]

The above joke portrays the dynamics between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law and it highlights the tension and rivalry that exists between the two in-laws as a result of their fight for one man who is involved as the central figure, i.e. the husband and son. What is humorous in the above joke is how the mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law try to annoy each other (*kusvotesana*). The mother-in-law uses mockery masked as sarcasm to show her daughter-in-law's laziness by saying *mungazonjanya kurwara* (you will become very ill) and the daughter-in-law mocks her mother-in-law for being poor and backward. The mother-in-law says Baba Tanya married a second wife who is well mannered and has a good relationship with her, which

is meant to hurt the daughter-in-law's feelings. By saying the new daughter-in-law *mwana akabva kuvanhu* (is well cultured), the mother-in-law is actually insulting her daughter-in-law and is saying Mai Tanya lacks manners and is, therefore, a bad daughter-in-law.

Likening a mother-in-law to such a figure does not empower her, rather the advocating or authorizing this aggression does quite the opposite. Jokes such as these create an image of a mother-in-law that is malicious wicked and hated. The most dominant representation of the mother-in-law had some level of harm involving her character. The use of humor advocating these views helps to sustain a climate of gender inequality and causes a great deal of harm to the group being portrayed, (Morris, 2006:8). The tense relationship that is depicted in the above joke and the kind of ridicule, mockery and sarcasm present women as evil. The two women seem to draw pleasure from hurting each other's feelings. Although we acknowledge the fact that there could be tension between these two in-laws, the degree at which they fight and hurt each other's feelings is just too much. The joke shows that there is an undeclared war between the mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law. The daughter-in-law code mixes Shona and English whilst the mother-in-law uses pure Karanga dialect of Shona. Generally, Karanga people, especially the mothers-in-law and their daughters, are stereotyped for abusing and harassing the daughters-in-law. The Karanga mothers-in-law are stereotyped for exercising excessive control over the daughter-in-law and their sons' marriage.

The joke also depicts the daughter-in-law as arrogant, mean and insensitive to the plight of her mother-in-law. The joke is, thus, attacking daughters-in-law, particularly those who stay in towns

with their husbands for being mean and arrogant. They forget that, as Africans, they have to take care of their in-laws as a way of showing appreciation, respect and love.

In Africa, children are a source of security, as the Shona say “*Chirere mangwana chigokurerawo*” (lit. Bring it up well, tomorrow it will look after you), which means one has to invest in his/ her children so that they would take care of him/ her in old age. The daughter-in-law in the above joke is only concerned about her immediate family’s welfare. The mother-in-law, of course, manages to outdo the daughter-in-law by using hurt language and revealing hurtful truths that her husband was harbouring as secrets. The ‘evil’ mother-in-law managed to crush the daughter-in-law’s feelings and make her feel useless and incompetent in marriage, and this is the worst attack on a married Shona woman. Such presentation of daughter-in-law-mother-in-law relationship suggests that women are evil and malicious.

The joke below confirms the evilness and ingratitude on in-laws towards their daughter-in-law.

90. *Nhamo yemuroora:*

Aite mudiki- Haa kakanyanya kuita kadiki, kachamuhurira.

Akure- Mukadzi uyu mukuru achamutonga.

Anyarare- Mukadzi waGoddie akati kwindi.

Ataure- Akachenjeresa. Pamuroromo pake hapamharwe nenhunzi.

Awonde- Mukati Goddie haana kutitorera murwere imi?

Asimbe- Ringatadze nei kufuta richiswera rakangoti pweshe?

Agare natete- Akatorera mwana wangu Angela kuti amuite musikana webasa.

Arambe kugara natete- Haridi vanhu kumba kwaro kunge ndiro rinoshanda.

Abikire muenzi tea- Asi anopenga nhai imi? Tea, isu taswera nayo kudai?

*Abike riri sadza- Zvakaoma asikana, munhu wandanyatsoudza kuti ndamukira bhazi? Ari kuti tea ndainwira kupi?
 Abvunze kuti ndokubikirai chii?- Kunyima ka uku, mweni anobvunzwa?
 Atumire vana kumusha- Ho, isu tisu tisina zvekuita?
 Atumire vana - kuti iye asare achibatei?
 Arege kutumira vana- Ah, anomboda kuti vana vake vauye kuno?
 Pamwe zvinonzi tingazovaroya.
 Agare mazuva mashoma kumusha- Maiwe kanomboda zveruzevha?
 Nungo dzega dzega. Agarise kumusha- Anotozoenda ameka shuwa kuti tushuga twaakauya natwo twapera. Atumire grocery- Anoziva sei zvandisina? Adii kutumira iri mari ndatenga ndega?
 Atumire iri mari- Shuwa munhu anonyatsoziva kuti kuno zvinhu zvinodhura asi ndopaanotumira mari. Adii kutenga ikoko otumira riri grocery?
 Ashaure panhamo- Aiwa kuvhengezera tinokuziva isu, apa kuimba kwacho haakugone. Anyarare panhamo- Iii, makaonawo makwindimariro aange akaita parufu rwasekuru Agripa akati dzvondo kutarisa chitunha?
 Auye kuzobikawo doro nevamwe kumusha- Zvakaoma. Munhu wechurch anosanganisa? Arege kuuya- Haadi kubatirana nevamwe.
 Aite tsika- Ummm mukati haana kumbenge akaroorwa kumwe iyeye? Zvese izvi anozvizivira kupi?
 Arege kuita tsika- Haana kana kurairwa. Saka muroora oitawo sei nhai?*

[The plight of a daughter-in-law:

If she is small bodied- Shame, this one is just too young, she will certainly cheat on him.

If she is big bodied- This woman is just too old for him, she will bully and subordinate him.

If she is reserved- Goddie's wife is not sociable.

If she is sociable- This woman is too wise, she is garrulous and voluble.

If she is slim- Don't you think Goddie married a frail woman?

If she is stout- What can stop her from gaining so much weight when she spends most of her time idle?

If she stays with her husband's sister- She took my child Angela in order to enslave her.

If she refuses to stay with her husband's young sister- She doesn't want to stay with her in-laws as if she is the one who works for the food.

If she prepares tea for her visitors- This woman is crazy for sure! How can she prepare us some tea when we haven't had anything since morning?

If she prepares some *sadza* (thick porridge) for the visitors- This woman does not understand! But I told her that I woke up very early in order to catch the bus! How can she assume that I have had some tea already?

If she asks the visitors what she can prepare for them- This woman is mean! How can she ask a visitor what to prepare?

If she sends her children to the village- How can she think we don't have anything to do?

Why did she send her children here? What exactly does she want to do there in the absence of her children?

If she doesn't send her children to the village- Do you think she wants her children to come here? Probably she thinks we may bewitch them.

If she spends a few days in the rural areas- This woman does not want to stay in the rural areas. She is very lazy.

If she spends more days in the rural areas- She will only go back to the city after making sure that all the groceries that she brought us is completely finished.

If she sends some groceries- How does she know what we need? Why did she not send the money so that we can buy the goods on our own?

If she sends some money- Really, this woman knows very well that things are expensive here but she sends us some money. Why did she not buy the groceries from there?

If she leads a song at a funeral- This woman is overzealous yet she can't even sing.

If she does not sing at a funeral- Oh! Did you notice how gloomy this woman was at Uncle Agripa's funeral and the way she stared at the corpse?

If she participates in traditional ceremonies in the rural area- This is ridiculous. How can a Christian take part in traditional ceremonies?

If she doesn't attend- This woman does not cooperate.

If she is well mannered- Uum, don't you think this woman was married before? How come she knows all this?

If she does not show manners- This woman is uncouth.

So what must the daughter-in-law do?]

The joke above stipulates the vagaries of being a daughter-in-law. A daughter-in-law is depicted as a sufferer. Her standards and her moral standing are dictated by her in-laws. When a woman marries, she is expected to behave in a certain way, but no matter how she may try to please her in-laws, she is always at fault. A daughter-in-law is always under scrutiny and is criticised on everything. For example if she sends her mother-in-law some groceries, they would complain of having been given far less than they require, yet if she sends her some money, the mother-in-law would accuse her of selfishness and cruelty. If she tries to show good manners, she would be suspected of having been married before, yet if she shows ill manners, her in-laws will accuse her of being uncouth – which makes it impossible for her to please her in-laws. The same aspect is expressed in music, for example, Marshal Munhumumwe has the song “*Vamwene vangu vanoshusha*” where the musician sings thus:

*Vamwene vangu vanonetsa nhai vakomana imi.
Nditengerwe mbatya nemurume, hanzi pfuma yemwana wangu
Nditume mwana nepasuro, wandigovera sepwere.
Ndiswere zvangu nemurume, ivo mumadziro kwati.
Kuda kuterera kuti tataureiko.
Kuda kuterera kuti tasekeiko.*

[My mother-in-law is irksome my friends.
If my husband buys me some clothes, she says you are squandering
my child’s wealth.
If I ask my children to bring her some groceries, she says you have
treated me like a child. If I spend the whole day with my husband, she
comes to eavesdrop.
She wants to know everything that we would be talking about. She
would want to know what we would be laughing at.]

The above joke implies that the Shona woman is always at a dilemma in marriage. The daughter-in-law is depicted as a sufferer while the mother-in-law is depicted as evil and castrating. She is also ungrateful and jealous. The mother-in-law does not want her daughter-in-law to enjoy marriage. The daughter-in-law is not supposed to enjoy her husband's wealth, and the mother-in-law is also very ungrateful for what the daughter-in-law does for her. Mothers-in-law are presented as difficult to please for they accuse their daughters-in-law for being selfish, mean, lazy and loose. These are stereotypes that are found in Shona where women are associated with all sorts of vice, where in particular mothers-in-law are presented as troublesome whilst daughters-in-law are frustrated and devastated and Shona humour is not an exception insofar as these stereotypes on women are concerned.

Another joke to further support the feud between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is as follows:

91. *Vamwe vamwene vaigara kumusha, mwanakomana wavo nemukadzi wake vachigara kutaundi. Zvino vamwene vaiti kana mwedzi wave kupera vouya kuzogarira pay yemwana, apa zvichemo hobho. Muroora zvakazosvika pakumusvota ndobva aenda kuMbare akanotenga plate yake ndokuinyoresa kuti "Vakuparakwemwedzi." Vamwene vakauya senguva dzose, muroora ndokuvapakurira sadza mundiyo iya. Vamwene vakabva vaendawo kuMbare ndokunotengawo cup yavo ndokuinyoresa kuti "Zvarawo wako!"*

[A certain woman stayed in the village whilst her son stayed in the city with his wife. So this mother-in-law would visit her son every month-end so that she can be given some money, and each time she comes, she brings with her a long list of issues that would require some money. The wife was disgusted by this habit, so she went to Mbare where she bought a plate and branded it with the words; "Mrs

Month-end”. The mother-in-law come at the next month end as usual, the daughter-in-law served her *sadza* in the branded plate and the mother-in-law did not say anything. The mother-in-law went to Mbare, bought herself a cup and had it branded thus “Bear your own child!”]

The daughter-in-law uses *mavingu* kind of register to express her disgruntlement to her mother-in-law. *Mavingu* is a more subtle traditional register that is used by mother-in-law and daughter-in-law to express their displeasure with each other. It is normally done during pounding millet or grinding where the unhappy person sings or makes a soliloque expressing their unhappiness. The accused may also respond using the same register and this was/is done to avoid confrontation between the two in-laws. Shona does not allow direct confrontation between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, that is why the two women communicated their concerns indirectly, although in the above joke they are somehow rude and blunt to each other.

By right, the wife is supposed to benefit from her husband’s income or resources but the mother-in-law cannot accept it because she is the man’s mother, which is why she branded the cup with the words, “*Zvarawo wako*” (Bear your own child). The mother-in-law is depicted as evil as she is motivated by envy, jealous, greed and possessiveness. The joke is stereotypical in nature as it depicts mothers-in-law as interfering, hostile and wicked and it shows moral degeneracy and selfishness in the mother-in-law.

The relationship between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is supposed to be cordial but, for the two women in the joke, the opposite is true. This kind of portrayal confirms the idea that women cannot peacefully co-exist because of jealous and malice. Such kinds of jokes perpetuate the mother-in-law, daughter-in-law stereotypes and this may influence the society to view women negatively. The kind of joke may even deter women from marriage because of fear of the nasty experiences that they would have to go through with their mothers-in-law. The narrative below stresses the fact that mothers-in-law and their daughters-in-law cannot co-exist.

92. *Dai vari mai vako wainzwa sei? Pafunge.*

Kwakange kwarongwa musangano waana vamwene nevaroora kuHarare kuti vaonesane kuti sei vasingawirirane mumisha. Vana vamwene vakanzi vakwire bhazi ravo vega, varoorawo vachikwirawo ravo vega kubva kwaMutare kuenda kuHarare. Bhazi revaroora raive mberi. Varoora vakasvika paNyanga turn-off, vachibva vafonerwa kuti bhazi raive rakatakura vana vamwene rainge raita tsaona paChristmas Pass vose vakafirapo. Varoora vakapembera vakazora butter kunze kwemumwe chete akachema zvaisiririsa. Driver akabvunza kuti sei iye chete aichema zvaisiririsa kudaro. Driver: “Ko ambuya, sei murimi mega muri kuchema asi vamwe vose vachifara? Ndinovimba mainge muri bhande nebhurungwa chairo navamwene venyu.” Muroora: “Zvaaniko mukwasha. Chandirwadza ndechekuti vamwene vangu vanga vasimo mubhazi macho. Chinono chavo chavasiisa nebhazi. Dai ndatowanirwawo nyasha.”

[If it were your mother, how would you have felt? Think about it.

A meeting was arranged in Harare where mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law would meet and discuss things that make their relationships hostile. The daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law were requested to board different buses. The bus that had the daughters-in-law was leading, so when they approached the Nyanga turn-off, they received a phone call where they were told that the mothers-in-law were involved in an accident and they have all perished on the spot. The daughters-in-law celebrated and made merry, except for one woman who wept bitterly. The driver enquired as to why only this one woman was heartbroken when all the other women were rejoicing.

The driver said: “Why are you the only one wailing when the rest are rejoicing? You must have been very good friends with your mother-in-law I suppose?” The daughter-in-law said: “No, brother-in-law. I am pained by the fact that my mother-in-law was not on the bus. She missed the bus because she is very slow. Otherwise I could have also fallen into such favour by now.”]

The fact that the daughter-in-law wept because her mother-in-law had escaped death due to her sluggishness makes the above narrative comical. While one would expect someone to rejoice because their relative has escaped death, the daughter-in-law actually wept because her mother-in-law had cheated death. The joke above lives up to the deep-seated belief in Shona culture that a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law are always at loggerheads. All the women who were on the bus made merry when they got the news of their mothers-in-law’s death, except for one who wept uncontrollably because her mother-in-law was not on the bus. *Kuzora butter* is a slang expression that is used to refer to celebrating and this expression is used in the above joke to show the wickedness of the daughters-in-law.

The implication of the above joke is that women do not wish each other well. They always plot each other’s demise. Even the meeting that was going to take place in Harare to try and resolve the misunderstanding and ill feelings between these in-laws does not seem to promise anything good because the daughters-in-law proved that they really resent their mothers-in-law. This is an unfair presentation of the female figure, particularly the daughter-in-law. Even the poor mother-in-law who escaped death seems innocent but the daughter-in-law longs for her death. This kind

of image confirms the ‘patriarchal image of women as being deceitful, violent and dangerous and needing to be monitored and morally guided by men’ (Vambe 2013).

Jokes in this category, therefore, show that both daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law are equally wicked, cruel and jealous of each other, which can generally be taken to mean that all women are presented as wicked.

6.6 Women as Unforgiving

Shona humour also depicts women as unforgiving. Women hold grudges and they always punish their husbands for ‘inappropriate’ behaviour. Women do not absolve issues and they penalise their husbands through denying them sex, infidelity or verbal abuse. The jokes below attest to this fact.

93. *Mumwe musii Jonso akarongedzerwa lunch box nemukadzi wake mangwanani asati aenda kubasa. Asvika kubasa, palunch akati regai ndichidya, ndokuvhura lunch box wanike mune sadza rega nekapapa kakanzi; “Hero sadza, gugula muriwo.”*

[One morning Jonso’s wife packed lunch for him and gave him before he left for work. At lunch time Jonso opened the lunch tin and found plain *sadza* and a note which read; “Here is your *sadza*, surf the internet for the relish”]

It is amusing to see the woman expect her husband to surf the internet (*kugugula muriwo*) in order to get some relish with which to eat *sadza*. Although Jonso could have angered his wife,

probably by not helping her with household chores because of playing with his phone and surfing the internet, the wife does not forgive him. The joke, therefore, suggests that women hold grudges and they always want to punish their husbands.

Although we may laugh at the man, it is the woman who is depicted as wicked for she is the one who denies her husband food. This act of denying her husband food is tantamount to witchcraft. In Shona there is the saying, *Ukama igasva hunozadziswa nekudya*, (a relationship is a half-measure which is filled by being given food). It is not expected of a wife and a mother to deny someone food as a woman is supposed to nurture.

Traditionally, among the Shona, when a woman is preparing to go and stay with her husband, she undergoes some form of tutelage from her aunties and grandmothers where she is taught to be kind, patient and loving. One important point that is stressed upon her is “*Uzive murume paura*” (You should see to it that your husband is well fed). This means that it is the wife’s duty to make sure her husband is well fed. The woman in the above joke denies her husband some food, which is wickedness on her part – and it shows that she is vengeful and unforgiving. The supposed inability of the woman to forgive her husband points to the inferiority of women as they are perceived as emotionally wanting. The same point is expressed in the next joke.

94. *Mukadzi: Mudiwa, ndigadzirirewozve magetsi.*
Murume: Papi pandakanyorwa logo yeZESA?
Mukadzi: Mudiwa, ndigadzirirewoka firiji.
Murume: Papi pandakanyorwa logo yeCapri?

Murume akabva abuda achienda kubhawa asi akazofunga ave ikoko kuti akanganisa ndobva adzokera kumba.

Murume: Mudiwa, rega ndichigadzira zvinhu zviya.

Mukadzi: Zvose zvatogadzirwa kare.

Murume: Nani?

Mukadzi: Shamwari yako yauya pano ikandiona ndichichema. Ndabva ndaiudza nyaya yacho ndobva angondigadzirira zvinhu zvacho akati semuripo ndinomubhekerwa keke kana kuti ndorara naye.

Murume: Saka wabheka kekeka?

Mukadzi: Aah!! Keke futi? Papi pandakanyorwa logo yeBakers' Inn?

[Wife: Darling can you please fix the lights?

Husband: Where on me do you see a ZESA logo?

Wife: Darling can you please fix the fridge?

Husband: Where on me do you see a Capri logo?

The hubby then went to the bar but he felt guilty and returned home.

Husband: Honey let me fix those things.

Wife: It's all sorted.

Husband: By who?

Wife: Your friend came by and saw me crying. I told him the story then he fixed everything but he said in payment I should either bake him a cake or sleep with him.

Husband: So you baked a cake?

Wife: What! How can I bake a cake? Where on me do you see a Bakers' Inn logo?]

What calls for laughter in the above joke is how the man expected the woman to have baked a cake for the person who had fixed their fridge when he knows very well that the wife is also not a Bakers' Inn employee. Bakers' Inn is one of the bakeries found in Zimbabwe. The woman in the above joke trades her sexual favours as a vector for getting what she wants. The joke presents women as emotional, dangerous and unpredictable. The joke suggests that a woman can do the worst thing if confronted with challenges. In the above joke, blame is shifted from the husband who in the first place runs away from responsibility and the reader may be tempted to sympathise

with the husband and rebuke the wife for being impatient, loose and piqued. This, therefore, highlights the whorish nature of women that is portrayed in most Shona humorous narratives.

6.7 Jokes That Support Violence Against Women

There are jokes that support violence against women. Shona as a patriarchal society views women as subordinates and, in most cases, the woman is treated at almost the same level with the child. In fact, a woman in Shona society is a perpetual child; hence she should be treated as such. Women are always accused of irresponsibility, cruelty, witchcraft and malice and, hence they should be punished or undergo some form of violence in order for them to think properly and to act responsibly. There are humorous narratives that seem to support psychological and physical violence against women. The joke below supports sexual violence against women.

95. *Kwahi panyaya dzeservice idzodzi-idzi, vamwe kule-kule vakanga vagarisa saka vakazopindwa nemunyati wekubata kazukurusikana chibharo. Time-time yakazoketwa kuti ndiyo yavajingirisa, vachibva vabatwa ndokukandwa zandazi. Zuva recourt rasvika kule-kule vakajamuka vakati “Mayazi, kazukulezi kakadonhera pamunyati.” Majasitiriti vachibva vati, “Ko zvamakaona kadaro makadii kukadzinga?” Zvikanzi nakule-kule, “Aaah, ko iwe ukaiswa sugar mumukanwa haunanzviri?”*

[On this issue of sex, a certain old man who was sex starved thought of raping his granddaughter. It was later on discovered that this is what happened, and was consequently arrested. On the judgement day, the old man tried to vindicate himself and said the child just ‘fell’ on his penis and the magistrate then asked, “When you realised that the little girl has fallen on your penis, why then did you not ward her off?”

The old man responded; “Ah, you! If some sugar is put on your lips, will you not lick it?”]

The joke makes use of street lingo where words like *kule-kule* (uncle/grandfather), *munyati* (plan/the male genitalia), *time-time* (later on), *kunjingirisa* (doing/did), *zandezi* (prison), *kujamuka* (to deny) are used in order to add the aesthetic aspect to it. The analogy of sugar being placed on one’s lips to refer to exposing the girl child to rape is tantamount to abuse and violation of the girl child’s rights. The joke supports sexual abuse against women, in this case the girl child. The accused is justifying his cause by insinuating that no man can resist the temptation of raping a woman who has exposed herself to his manhood. This kind of picture promotes gender-based violence against women because it is implying that women are sex objects whom no man can resist. Though the analogy of sugar placed on a man’s tongue and how he cannot resist licking it is comical, the joke implies that no man can resist the temptation of raping a woman if she ‘exposes’ herself to rape and this is unfair on the woman. Instead of protecting his grandchild, the old man raped her because he was sex starved. The objectification of women is typical of most of the jokes that were analysed in this study. The joke below supports physical and emotional violence against women.

96. *TSAMBA YERUDO*

Wadiwa Mai Nhamo.

*Andina akawanda, zvinhu hazvina kumira zvakanaka kuno kuJoni.
Hazvindishamise kuti zvinhu zvangu hazvisi kufamba mushe nekuti
muri kungozhamba nakuzhamba. Gore nemwedzi mitatu chete ndabva,
ndoriwanepi basa racho ndisina kudzidza? Ndinzwireiwo tsitsi purizi.*

Ko dhongi ramakatengesa mari yacho yakatopera? Nyaya dzekugovera vanhu siyanai nadzo. Bhajeti purizi.

Sugar isirai mutiipoti. Ndiri kudzoka ikoko anytime, zvinhu zvakaoma, muJoni munoda varume. Zvauriwe woudza raini rese kuti zvinhu zvakandipresser anditi? Ndokutsatisa musoro iwowo. Ndanzwa uchiti mabhurugwa ese apera kubvaruka. Aaah! Chero riya rekufambisa rine teddy- bear? Aaah! Ko zvandakasiya richakasimba wani?

Mbuya mai Tirivanhu variko here? Ndiri kuvarota siku nesikati. Ndevamwe vari kuita kuti zvinhu zvangu zvisafamba. Uti vana Nhamo vamire kuendako. Zvauriwe une musoro unopisa uvarege. Musadimburira vatete sipo purizi. Ndatambura kuno. Chitupa changu chiya cheZ.J.C chakarasika saka itight, plus ndakarohwa nemurungu mbabvu dzese dziri kurwadza. Akandibvisa mazino 2. Zvauriwe ugondiseka ndasvika ndiine mavende. Kana uchitumidzira tsamba nanamaraicha dziisewo mu-emvuropu kani. Ndakasekwa ndaenda kunogamuchira tsamba izvo vatodziverenga. Ndakanyara chaizvo. Unozhambei sekuti ndiwe wega usina bhurugwa? Raini rose harina. Ndinzwireiwo tsitsi purizi. Garai makaringa nzira, ndosvika anytime. Farisa Nhamo naToendepi.

Anokuda nemoyo wese

Baba Nhamo

[A LOVE LETTER

Dear mother of Nhamo

I don't have much to say, things are not rosy at all here in Joburg. It does not surprise me that life is not well with me here because you are always complaining. I came here barely 15 months ago, where do you think I'd get employment when you know very well that I am not educated? Please have mercy. Did you use all the money that you got from selling that donkey? Desist from your habit of carelessly giving other people food. You must learn to budget and be economic.

You should make sure that when you make tea, you put the sugar in the tea pot. I will be coming there anytime, things are tough, Joburg requires strong men indeed. I don't want you to broadcast it to everybody in the community that life is difficult for me here. Alright? I will smash your head if you ever do that. You have also said that all of your panties are torn. This is surprising. Even that special one with a teddy bear, that one which you put on when you are travelling is also torn? Ah, it's unbelievable! But the panty was still new when I left. What is happening?

Is Tirivanhu's mother there? I am dreaming of her every night. She is one of the people who are casting bad spells on me. You must tell Nhamo to stop going to her place. You must not let them go there

please, you hot headed woman. Do not share soap with your aunt. I am suffering here. I lost my ZJC certificate so it's very difficult for me to secure employment, plus I was beaten by my white employer and all my ribs are aching. I lost two of my teeth when he beat me up. You must not laugh at me when I come there. When you send some letters with the *malaicha* (illegal cross-border transporters), put them in an envelope please. I was laughed at when I went to pick the letters that you sent; the *malaichas* had read the letter along the way. I was so much ashamed. Why do you complain so much, as if you are the only woman who does not have any panties? The whole neighbourhood does not have panties. Give me a break please. You must look forward to seeing me, I will be coming there anytime. Greet Nhamo and Toendepi.

Your ever-loving husband
Father of Nhamo]

The orders that the husband gives to his wife, from as far as Joburg, make the joke comical. The joke shows emotional and psychological violence against women. The wife is criticised for endless complaints and this is what the husband claims to be causing him bad luck and his failure to getting employment. The husband tells his wife what to do and not what to do, and he denies her the opportunity to ask for what she wants. For example, she should not complain that her panties are torn because the whole neighbourhood does not have panties. The husband places all the blame upon the wife and he does not see the reason why for just one year and three months the woman is already complaining that the husband has not come home. The woman is supposed to suffer in silence and endure all the pressures that she faces in her marriage. She is deprived of her conjugal right and freedom of expression in the home. She is told how she should prepare meals, how (not) to share things and who to talk to and this is a form of emotional abuse.

Ford *et al.* (2013:73) suggest that sexist humor aids in the establishment of gender imbalances by tacitly affirming beliefs that justify a social system that disadvantages women. The above joke presents the image of a woman who is too dependent on the husband. The woman cannot buy herself some underwear and she has an acute dependency syndrome. Her husband even knows the condition of her panties and he knows all the panties by their design and this evokes humour. The woman is hopeless and helpless and she is a victim of abuse. This kind of portrayal comes from the patriarchal view that women are commodities and that they are a liability. Shona as a patriarchal society dictates that the husband has to take care of, control and provide for the family. The husband controls everything, including food and food distribution within the family and this reduces the wife to a mere object that lacks agency. This practice tends to give the husband power over his wife and the leeway to abuse emotionally and physically the wife.

The joke also presents women as witches. The husband says he always dreams of Mai Tirivanhu and he suspects that she is the one who is bewitching him and causing him all the misfortunes. The husband is trying to justify his failure to support the family by pointing fingers at others and in this case he is blaming the women (his wife and Mai Tirivanhu) for causing all his adversities. The salutation that the man makes calls for laughter. After all the threats that he has made in the letter, the husband has the audacity to say *anokuda nemoyo wese* (your loving husband). This is quite comical because what the husband has said in the letter does not show any traces of love.

The joke below also supports violence against women.

97. *Padare ramambo. Mambo akagara pachigaro cheushe. Kuright kwakamira ambuya vakazvimba kumeso zvaipisa tsitsi. Kuleft kwakamira mukomana wechidiki. Vanhu vari kuti vakatarisa ambuya votarisa mukomana. Zvakava pachena kuti mukomana uyu anenge iye ane chekuita nekukuvara kwaambuya ava. Mambo: (Nezwi riri pamusoro) Taura tinzwe nyaya yako mukomana. Mukomana: Nezuro ndaiva mubhazi rinoenda kwaMutare ambuya avo (achinongedzera ambuya vekukuvara), vanga vakagara paseat remukati ini kuwindow. Ndokubva pauya munhu wemafreezit, ambuya ndokuti “Ndipeiwo” ndokupiwa zvikanzi “i1 Rand”. Ambuya ndokutora bag ravo ndokugadzika pamakumbo, ndokuvhura ndokutora bag diki ndokuvhara bag hombe ndokugadzika pasi ndokuvhura bag diki ndokutora wallet ndokuvhara bag diki ndokutora bag hombe ndokugadzika pamakumbo, ndokuvhura ndokutora bag diki ndokuisa mukati ndokuvhara bag hombe ndokugadzika pasi. Ndokuvhura wallet ndokutora 5 Rand ndokupa munhu wamafreezit ndokuvhara wallet ndokutora bag hombe ndokugadzika pamakumbo ndokuvhura ndokutora bag diki ndokuvhara bag hombe ndokugadzika pasi ndokuvhura bag diki ndokuisa wallet ndokuvhara ndokutora bag hombe ndokugadzika pamakumbo ndokuvhura ndokuisa bag diki ndokuvhura ndokugadzika bag hombe pasi ndokudzoserwa change 4 Rand ndokutora bag hombe ndoku... Mambo: (Vachiratidza kubhowekana kukuru) Usatipedzera nguva mhani! Mukomana: Kana muchibhowekana imi manga musipo, ko ini ndanga ndichiona zvichiitika ndopandaitadza kukiya munhu?*

[At the chief’s court. The chief was sitting on his throne. To his right was an old woman with a swollen face. She was looking miserable. To his left was a young man. People were looking at both the old woman and the young man, and it was clear that the young man was responsible for assaulting the old woman. The chief then said: (With a loud voice) Tell us your story, young man. The young man said: “Yesterday I was on a bus going to Mutare, that old woman (pointing to the woman with a swollen face), was sitting on the same sit with me. Suddenly, somebody who was selling freezits got onto the bus and the old woman said, “May I have one please”, and she was given the freezit and the person who was selling the freezits told her that the freezits were 1 Rand each. The old woman then took her bag and placed it on her lap, took out a small bag that was inside the bigger bag, she closed the bigger bag and put it down. She opened the small bag and took out her wallet then she closed the small bag and took the bigger bag and placed it on her lap. She opened the bigger bag and took out the small bag and put it into the bigger bag, she closed the

bigger bag and put it down. She opened the wallet and took out a 5 Rand coin and gave it to the person who was selling freezits, she closed her wallet and took her bigger bag and placed it on her lap. She opened the bigger bag and took out the small bag and closed the bigger bag and put it down. She opened the small bag and opened it and put her wallet and she closed it and took the bigger bag and placed it on her lap. She opened it and put the small bag and put the bigger bag down. She was given 4 Rand as change and she took the bigger bag and... Chief: (Showing so much disdain) May you not waste our time! Then the young man said: "If you are annoyed by this when, in fact, you were not there when all this was happening, how much more would I be disgusted, given that I witnessed all this. I was left with no choice but to smash her thoroughly.]

As suggested by Korsmeyer (1977), sexist jokes undermine sympathy for women and women's rights and dismiss them as not deserving consideration. The above joke supports physical violence against women because of their slowness and the pace at which they do things. Women are depicted as people who lack agility and suppleness. They take their time to do simple things and the manner in which they go round in circles is irritating. The way the boy narrates the events to show how the woman endlessly opened and closed her wallet irritates the Chief; and the boy uses this as justification for the abuse. The joke justifies physical abuse against women as women are presented as gallingly slow and lacking in dexterity.

Even the manner in which the case is handled leaves a lot to be desired. Normally, it is the aggrieved party that is given the chance to speak first but in this case it is the accused who is given the chance to speak first and he manages to use this opportunity to his advantage. The joke implies that men are superior to women, which is why the boy is given the chance to speak first, even though he is the accused.

6.8 Conclusion

Humour analysed in this chapter is sexist. It presents women in a negative manner. Women are presented as malicious. The jokes stereotype women and present them as unforgiving and evil. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law are presented as wicked and jealous of each other whilst old women are depicted as witches. Married women are presented as a source of their husbands' problems and women in general are presented as carriers of diseases. Such negative images of women are also prevalent in other forms of oral literature like in proverbs and folktales as well as in Shona written literature. It can, therefore, be argued that Shona humour expresses deep-seated beliefs about gender and most of the humorous narratives express misogynistic tendencies amongst the Shona, where women are described, named and labeled negatively. Shona humour also justifies violence against women as women are presented as inferior to men and this is typical of patriarchal tendencies. The next chapter presents the research findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the data that was gathered in this study. The chapter provides a summative discussion on the images of women as is depicted in Shona humorous narratives. These findings, conclusions and recommendations are discussed against the theories adopted in this study, which are the Superiority Theory of Humour, Incongruity and Feminism.

7.2 Findings

Following a thorough analysis of the data using the Superiority Theory of Humour, Feminism and Incongruity, it is found that humour is extensively used to depict gender and gender relations in Shona. The incongruity of the selected jokes facilitates the process of promoting gender stereotypes as well as fostering gender discrimination. Humour analysed using the Superiority Theory of humour demonstrate that the Shona people regard women as inferior to men. Shona humorous narratives analysed in this research show the complexities of images of women in humour. The selected narratives demonstrate tendencies of sexual objectification of women.

Women and girls are presented as things that are bought, sold, traded and they are also abused, tortured and raped by men for the sole purpose of victory over them, which therefore makes the researcher claim that women are presented as inferior to men. The female figure is also depicted as enticing, hyper-attractive and bitchy in nature and she is highly sexualised. Mostly, sexist humour demeans and objectifies women as tangible objects that can be bought, used and disposed of. Women are described in terms of their facial beauty and physical stature. Women who are well shaped and beautiful are praised whilst ugly ones are scorned and lampooned. Such presentation is dehumanizing and it demeans women as mere objects.

The findings from this research reveal multifaceted and stereotyped images of women that are engrained in Shona. Women are depicted as prostitutes, they are unfaithful to their husbands, they are nagging, wasteful, spend-thrift and they are mostly concerned with beatification. Some of the jokes selected for this research show tendencies of devaluation of women's personal characteristics. Women are presented as morally decadent, they are obsessed with sex, and they are stupid, irrational and emotional. Women are depicted as perpetual children. They cannot reason on their own, rather they depend on men for almost everything. In that case, therefore, women are depicted as inferior to men. The humorous narratives present women's characteristics as flawed as the jokes suggest that women can never be upright morally, socially and psychologically.

Jokes that present the marriage institution depict women as problematic. According to the jokes, women make their husbands experience hell in marriage. Marriage ceases to be interesting

because wives are cold and frigid. Married women are presented as one of the sources of men's problems. They are depicted as domineering, talkative, unforgiving, and cruel and they also carry and spread diseases to unsuspecting men. The jokes demonise women and portray them as evil. From the Shona cultural perspective, *musha mukadzi*, (a home is a home because of the wife), which means that a family can only be complete when the wife, who happens to be the mother of the house, is there. Though the man is viewed as the head of the house, the home can only thrive when the man has a wife. Jokes analysed in this research present women as wicked; for they strip their husbands of joy, freedom and happiness, which, in the current researcher's view, is a complete devaluation and dewomanisation of women.

In the public sphere, women are depicted as incompetent. They cannot competently execute their duties in the public domain. This is in line with the patriarchal nature of Shona culture where the woman's place is the kitchen. A woman's sphere of influence is the domestic sphere. The jokes suggest that women cannot successfully and competently participate in the public sphere because of their inferior status and dependency on men. Shona humour is, therefore, sexist and discriminatory in nature and such kind of humour presents women as second-class citizens who should always be under men's control. This is a reflection of unjust and oppressive gender relations among the Shona. The kind of Shona humour on/about women delays or rather makes the emancipation and freedom of women impossible.

An analysis of the humorous narratives showed that women use their sexuality to get what they want. The jokes suggested that women can also use sex to fix or manipulate men. Women also

cheat on their husbands for fun, or because it is naturally their nature to prostitute. The jokes suggested that men are promiscuous because their wives are cold and frigid, nagging and chatty. Humour is, therefore, used to justify men's infidelity, polygamy and oppression against women. From a Feminist perspective, Shona humour, therefore, presents male hegemony and patriarchy because the woman, in most cases, is always at the receiving end. This consequently places men as superior to women. By presenting women as emotional, dependent, illogical and incompetent, it emphasises that women and men are different and it also shows that women are naturally hierarchically inferior to men.

Old women are depicted as sexually repelling. They are presented as atrophous and they are not supposed to enjoy sex. The complex part of it is that whilst old women are presented as sexually repulsive, they also have uncontrollable sexual desire. Old women enjoy sex with young men and they also enjoy being raped. Shona humour also presents mothers-in-law as compulsively jealous. They cannot relate well with their daughters-in-law because they cannot let go of their married sons. Old women are depicted as witches and normally they bewitch their daughters-in-law and their sons' children. Shona humour also portrays mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law as rivals. Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law jokes that were analysed in this research show that there is permanent animosity between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. These women are presented as perpetual rivals for they fight and compete for a man's love and attention, thereby depicting women as malicious. Women are also depicted as idle, lazy and, therefore, they spend most of their time in gossip. Women are presented as rumour-mongers.

Men are depicted as good husbands who are kind and loving but the wives menace and trouble them. Where men become fickle and adulterous, the blame is placed on the woman who would be presented as troublesome. These are gender stereotypes that are perpetrated through Shona humour, and these stereotypes are meant to demean and dewomanise women.

There are also jokes that promote violence against women. Since women are depicted as things, they can as well be used and abused by men. Men use violence and force against women. Women are psychologically, sexually and physically abused by men. Such jokes present women as second-class citizens who should suffer in the hands of men.

From the jokes that have been analysed, it is found out that patriarchy and misogyny have facilitated in the shaping of socially deprecating humour that is meant to demean women. Most, if not all of the humorous narratives analysed in this research, display elements of sexism. On sexist humour, Bemiller & Schneider (2010:463) rightly note that what is told as a joke is not really a joke at all, but instead a form of power that is used to oppress and subordinate entire groups of people. Shona sexist humour, therefore, oppresses and subordinates women as women are depicted as inferior to men. Women are depicted as the other. Their sexuality is controlled by men. Society dictates what women ought and ought not to do and this is expressed even in jokes.

7.3 Conclusions

A total of 85 humorous narratives were analysed using the Superiority Theory of Humour, Incongruity and Feminism and it has been observed that most, if not all of the jokes, disparage women. There are elements of superiority in the jokes, as men are depicted as superior to women. Women are presented as sex objects which are meant to be used and abused by men. Women are also presented as morally decadent. They are prostitutes, materialistic, self-centered and irrational. Women are also depicted as malicious, for they are presented as carriers of deadly diseases and they willingly infect men. The selected humorous narratives also depict women as wicked for old women are presented as witches and mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law as rivals. The humorous narratives also present the woman's place as the kitchen. A woman does not have a place in the public domain for she is presented as unintelligent and incompetent. There are also jokes that support emotional, physical and psychological violence against women. Therefore, most of the humorous Shona narratives that have women as the butt are sexist in nature.

From the research findings of this study, it can be concluded that Shona humour attacks and disparages women. Social media have accorded Shona speakers the platform to jokingly express their views about gender, whereby women are depicted as sex objects that should be used and abused by men. Women are believed to be prostitutes and should, therefore, be tamed by men, whilst men cheat and society approves of it. While some jokes present women as irrational,

foolish and childish, there are also humorous narratives that present women as cunning, domineering, manipulative and talkative – which, therefore, demonstrates the complex nature of the images of women in Shona humour. The humorous narratives are based on Shona people's perceptions about life. The themes that are expressed in the jokes that are created and circulated via social media express what the speakers have been socialised to believe, that a woman is inferior to men socially, morally and intellectually.

7.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings from this research, the researcher proposes the following recommendations:

- Society should shun negative stereotypes about women and promote harmony between women and men. In this case, speakers need to desist from circulating neither sexist nor feminist humour and create neutral humour that does not stereotype genders, as Philips (2003:271-272) rightly argues that we should “enhance, and build on the gender ideologies that are most enabling of women”.
- The study of humour should be incorporated into the secondary and tertiary education curricular so that students appreciate the power that humour has on gender politics.
- Research on humour is still at its infancy in Zimbabwe. There are so many possibilities for research on humour in Zimbabwe. The following can be points of departure for future researchers:

- (a) An analysis of how both men and women are presented in Shona humour;
- (b) A comparative analysis of humorous narratives in Zimbabwe's indigenous languages and English (which is the official language in Zimbabwe) to find out whether gender in Zimbabwean cultures and English is perceived in the same manner.
- (c) A similar research on humour and gender can also be done on other indigenous languages in Zimbabwe.
- (d) An analysis of gendered pictorial and/or conversational humour.
- (e) This study has focused on humour and gender, other researchers can also focus on humour and politics, considering the current political situation in Zimbabwe, and this can generate interesting results.

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