



# Probing the Structuralist Analysis of a Selected isiXhosa Short Story, 'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo' (Suicide Is Not the Solution), as a Literary Work

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## Abstract

**M**ental health crises and suicide continue to plague young men and women in South Africa, and not irrefutably secluding other age groups. While scholarly and non-scholarly dialogues pivot to address this conundrum, isiXhosa short stories as a literary art are no exception. As a result, this article aims to conceptualise how mental health crises and suicide are mirrored in 'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo' (Suicide Is Not the Solution). The objective was to unravel the interplaying

meanings in respect of the phenomenon of interest. This particular short story was further appreciated as a source of data while structuralism as a theory was elicited as an instrument to enact reasonable and empirical debates. Ultimately, it became evident that mental health and suicidal thoughts and behaviours are acutely entrenched in the South African milieu, and that necessitates an extensive scholarly discourse beyond the limitations of this particular article.

## Introduction and contextual background

*'Take a shower, wash off the day. Drink a glass of water. Make the room dark. Lie down and close your eyes. Notice the silence. Notice your heart. Still beating. Still fighting. You made it, after all. You made it, another day. And you can make it one more. You're doing just fine.'*— Charlotte Eriksson (2013)

Language is a primitive component of human communication and is an essential instrument for expressing thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Cele, 2021; Ngcobo and Mvuyana, 2022). The multitudinous cultures and languages found in the world offer prototypical insights into the experiences and perspectives of different communities, and isiXhosa as an indigenous language in South Africa is no exception (Baty, 2022). IsiXhosa has a rich or exquisite literary tradition, with many authors using the language to express their ideas, and stories as well as direct and indirect experiences. Short stories are an integral part of isiXhosa literary production, with many authors using the format to delve into themes and issues relevant to their communities. For example, Zengehwa (2014) pronounces that before the official end of colonialism in South Africa, authors of isiXhosa short stories predominantly contested themes relating to traditions and customs, religion, and politics. To this, Diko (2023d) outlines that the pre-colonial era within the arena of isiXhosa short stories or literature wholeheartedly challenged political discourses and practices such as the struggle for liberation and illiberality, tensions between rural and urban life, among many other pertinent subjects. However, in the current dispensation, authors of isiXhosa short stories, like any other genre, demonstrate pertinency by challenging post-colonial discourses and practices such as the Covid-19 era and its politics, education, economy, and many other relevant matters (Letlala and Zulu, 2022).

By the same token, themes or issues prevalent in isiXhosa short stories are not invariably clear and coherent on account that isiXhosa literature is habitually constructed and produced using viral matrixes that are not always fathomable (Cakata and Ramose, 2021). Ultimately, structuralism, which this article pursues to employ, is one of the literary transpositions that prove to be consequential in the

process of probing isiXhosa short stories and other genres. Briefly, structuralism<sup>1</sup> focuses on the oblique structures and praxis of meaning in a literary text (Naji, 2022; Knack et al., 2023). Structuralists accept that all literary texts have a set of implicit binary dichotomies that configure their meaning (Sewell, 2018; Mutekwa, 2023). For instance, in a short story, these binary dichotomies could be things like life or death, heaven or earth, love or hate, good or evil, and order or chaos (Appiah, 2017). By probing the way these duels are engineered and modelled in the literary text, a structuralist approach can unravel the fathomless meanings and themes of the short story.

And by the way, what is an isiXhosa short story? An isiXhosa short story is a work of fiction or faction (fact plus fiction) written in the isiXhosa language and typically comprising fewer than 10,000 words (Musila, 2019). It also has a limited number of characters—largely, less than ten. It is a literary form that has a long tradition in amaXhosa culture and is used to express the experiences, belief systems, and perspectives of amaXhosa people. IsiXhosa short stories can be located in a variety of formats, including published collections, magazines, newspapers, and online platforms (Mutekwa, 2023). These stories submerge a hierarchy of themes and issues, from traditional cultural practices to contemporary social and political concerns. Some isiXhosa short stories elicit oral storytelling traditions, while others are universally influenced by Western literary modes (Chapman, 2019).

In terms of structure and style, isiXhosa short stories often incorporate vivid descriptions of people, places, and events, as well as dialogue and character development (Diko, 2023c). They can be humorous, satirical, or serious, and may contain elements of fantasy or magical realism (Chapman, 2022). Some isiXhosa short stories are explicitly political, while others explore the complexities of interpersonal relationships or the challenges of everyday life. In simple language, an isiXhosa short story is a story that is 'short' in length and less complicated when compared to other literary pieces of art such as novels and dramas. The atomicity and less complication of isiXhosa short stories should not be misconstrued to denote the deficit in ingrained meaning(s) that require extensive examination.

Bearing this introduction and contextual background in mind, the article presents a structural examination of one preferred isiXhosa short story: 'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo' (Suicide Is Not the Solution). This specific short story is found in an anthology of Monwabisi Victor Macabalea titled *Kuba Mnyama Kube Mhlophe* (From Darkness to Light) which was published in 2021. The structuralist examination concentrates on identifying and illuminating the themes and patterns of dominant meaning in the short story. The implicit and fundamental meaning contested herein pertains to suicide, and *how* and *why* suicide should be continued to be acknowledged and accepted as a pertinent problem today and tomorrow in South Africa, and probably, elsewhere in the world.

In fact, the rationale for this scholarly discourse lies in the veracity that issues related to suicide in South Africa are a significant public health concern. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), South Africa has one of the highest suicide rates in Africa and elsewhere in the global village (Morgan et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2023). By discoursing issues interconnected to suicide in South Africa, one can better comprehend the factors that contribute to suicidal behaviour and develop effective interventions to intercept suicide and promote mental health and welfare in the country. Inevitably, this article interrogates the following research questions that it pivots to address in the final assessment:

- i. How suicide is mirrored in 'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo'?
- ii. How and why the conundrum of suicide should be understood in the South African milieu?
- iii. To what extent does 'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo' provoke pertinent matters *vis-à-vis* mental health and public health in South Africa?

With these research questions in mind, the principal objectives are:

- i. To ascertain the complex and multidimensional nature of suicidal behaviour and to comprehend how it is represented and portrayed in the preferred isiXhosa short story.
- ii. To reasonably identify patterns and trends that may help inform suicide prevention and intervention strategies, and improve human

understanding of the social, cultural, and psychological factors that contribute to suicidal behaviour.

Before gratifying and addressing the phenomenon of interest hereunder, it is consequential that existing literature is acknowledged through the review process. Therefore, the following section attempts to conceptualise and contextualise what has already been determined by other scholars and non-scholars.

### Literature review

This section is dual in that the first subsection provides particular deliberation on existing dialogues on what suicide is, and how it predominantly manifests itself in the South African context. Other mental health issues are not overlooked in this endeavour. The second part (which is the last part) acknowledges scholarly views in respect of African literature on the issue of suicide. Conclusively, an observable gap is pointed out.

### Comprehending suicide in the South African context

Suicide is a major public health concern in South Africa. According to the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), as referred to by Miric and Ancer (2022), suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 24 years in the country. This does not entirely seclude young adults and other age groups (Modest et al., 2022). The high prevalence of suicide in South Africa can be pinned on a number of factors, including poverty, unemployment, crime, violence, substance abuse, and mental illness (Davies et al., 2023). In South Africa and other parts of the African continent, suicide typically starts with feelings of dejection, impotence, and despair (Khan et al., 2023). Needless to say, people who are considering suicide often feel over-exhausted by their challenges and problems, and conclude that there is no way out (Miric and Ancer, 2022). In support of the previous claim, Masango et al. (2008) report that over-exhausted people may feel like they are a burden and tonnage to others, and that their loved ones would be better off without them. In addition, people who are considering suicide may experience prognostics of depression, anxiety, or other mental health disorders, which can further aggravate their feelings of despair (Omari et al., 2023).

Frequently, suicide in South Africa is also linked to the country's high rates of violence and crime (Modest et al., 2022). People who have faced violence or trauma may be more probable to consider suicide as a way to circumvent their pain and suffering (Modest et al., 2022: 601). Additionally, substance abuse is also a major risk factor for suicide in South Africa (Zolopa et al., 2022). As a result, Omari et al. (2023) determine that people who abuse drug substances or alcohol may experience significant transmutations in mood and behaviour, which can accelerate their risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviours. In a nutshell, suicide in South Africa is a multifaceted phenomenon that requires a multi-collaborative approach, including increased access to mental health care, social support, and economic opportunities.

In addition to the scholarly discourses outlined above, there have also been some non-scholarly dialogues. For instance, in his 2020 State of the Nation Address (SONA)—which is a political discourse—President Cyril Ramaphosa<sup>2</sup> acknowledged that mental health is a major public health challenge in South Africa (Venter, 2022). He vocalised the high rates of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicide in the country, particularly among young people. The president promised to augment investment in mental health services and to improve access to care for all South Africans. Cyril Ramaphosa has also made statements specifically addressing suicide (Venter, 2022). In 2019, after the deaths of several high-profile South Africans

by suicide, Cyril Ramaphosa called for a national consultation about mental health and suicide in South Africa. Among other prescripts, he challenged South Africans to dismantle the stigma around mental illness and to seek help if they are struggling (Venter, 2022). In his political address, an emphasis was that mental health is a priority for his administration, and he has affirmed working with stakeholders to improve mental health services and raise awareness about mental health issues in the country. Therefore, this is enough to indicate that mental health and suicide continue to receive the attention of the national government in addition to scholarly attention for the very reason that it sabotages the welfare of many young men and women.

In the same fashion, the University of Cape Town's (UCT) former Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, has vocalised the importance of addressing mental health concerns among university students and staff (The Citizen, 2022). In a statement released in 2021, she emphasised the necessity for a holistic approach to mental health, one that includes counselling and other support services as well as efforts to address the root causes of stress and anxiety, such as financial hardship, academic pressure, and social isolation (Dhiman and Kaur, 2023). Phakeng also underlined UCT's covenant to promote mental health and well-being on campus, citing the availability of counselling services, mental health awareness campaigns, and initiatives to reduce ignominy around mental illness. She encouraged students and staff to seek help if they are struggling, and stressed the importance of addressing mental health concerns in a timely and proactive manner. Phakeng's statement reflected a growing recognition of the importance of mental health and suicide in the higher education sector, and a commitment to creating a supportive and inclusive learning and working environment for all members of the university community. The nature of these dialogues underlines the ongoing crisis concerning mental health and suicide in South Africa and elsewhere in the global village. It is prudent, therefore, that these dialogues are viewed and accepted as an attempt to eliminate the problems of mental health risks and suicide.

#### ***Depictions of suicide in African literature***

Depictions of suicide in African literature, isiXhosa literature included, vary widely depending on the

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context, culture, and time period in which they were written. Suicide has been a censored topic in many indigenous African societies (Marangu et al., 2014), often seen as an ignominious and dishonourable act (Venter, 2022). Nevertheless, some African authors have addressed the subject of suicide in their works as a means of exploring issues such as colonialism, cultural turmoil, personal and societal trauma, and mental health (Diko, 2023d).

For example, in Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), the character Okonkwo commits suicide after the arrival of Christian missionaries disrupts his traditional Igbo way of life (Wilson, 2009). This act is observed as an epitome of the obliteration wrought by colonialism and the erosion of traditional African culture. In Wole Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman* (2002), the character Elesin commits ritual suicide in accordance with Yoruba tradition, but is prevented from doing so by colonial authorities. The play explores themes of cultural clashes and the consequences of colonialism. In Buchi Emecheta's novel *The Joys of Motherhood* (1979), the main character named Ego attempts suicide after struggling with poverty and the loss of her children. The novel traverses the challenges faced by women in African societies and the impact of colonialism on traditional gender roles.

Other African authors, and in particular South African writers, who have depicted suicide in their works include Witness K. Tamsanqa in *Ukuba Ndandazile* (Had I Known) (1971), Archibald C. Jordan in *Inqumbo Yeminyanya* (The Wrath of the Ancestors) (1940), and many more. These authors have used suicide as a means of exploring complex issues facing African societies, including mental health, identity, and cultural trauma. With these discourses in mind, it is coherent that suicide in South Africa can be viewed as a pandemic that requires scholarly attention. Also, it is evident—based on the literature review—that '*Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo*' has not been accorded any scholarly and/or non-scholarly attention hence this article views it as consequential to hinge on this particular short story using the very same phenomenon alluded to previously. To undertake such a pursuit of delineating the phenomenon of interest herein, reasonable research techniques are elicited, hence the section below.

## Research approach and theoretical framework

This article utilises '*Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo*' as a primary source of data. Using a short story as a source of data involves examining the short story in order to segment information or insights that can be used to answer research questions or to explore a particular topic (Sufanti et al., 2021). In this context, the short story is treated as a primary source of data, and the researcher uses various methods of analysis to extract meaning and gain a deeper understanding of the story and the themes it addresses. For instance, repeated reading of the short story has been used as one of the research methodologies, while note-taking has been appreciated for underlining pertinent segments that will be used to gratify the aims and objectives of the article. Diko (2022b) welcomes this approach in unravelling isiXhosa literature by overtly stating that isiXhosa literary texts must be appreciated for their propensity to provide primary insights—insights that must be accepted as a source of data. Similarly, Winkel et al. (2023) affirm that written and spoken literary material cannot be overlooked as an essential source of data given that it habitually provisions covert meanings that necessitate extensive scrutinising.

It is within these scholarly determinants that isiXhosa short stories can provide valuable data for researchers in a wide range of fields. For example, literary scholars might use short stories as a source of data to investigate the use of literary devices and techniques by authors, or to analyse the representation of particular themes or ideas in literature (Winkel et al., 2023). Social scientists might use short stories to explore cultural value systems, social norms, or power dynamics within a particular community or society (Diko, 2022b).

Fundamentally, the procedure of using a short story as a source of data typically involves close reading and analysis of the story, identifying central themes and concepts, and extracting relevant data or information that can be used to answer the research question or explore the topic of interest. This might involve techniques such as thematic analysis, structural analysis, content analysis, or discourse analysis, depending on the specific research methodology being used. Essentially, using a short story as a source of data underscores treating the story as a rich and

complex source of information that can provide valuable insights and deepen our understanding of a wide range of topics. Correspondingly, Dick (2022) advises that a theory must be appointed to uncover hidden meanings in a literary text. In this article, structuralism as a theory has been preferred.

This theory focuses on the underlying structures and patterns of meaning in a literary text (Sanusi, 2012). Structuralists believe that all literary texts have a set of underlying binary oppositions or dichotomies that configure their meaning (Sanusi, 2012: 125; Zhang, 2020). The structural theory articulates that a literary work is a complex system made up of interwoven features, and that understanding the relationship between these features is essential to understanding the work as a whole (West, 2020). Owing to the reality that isiXhosa short stories are produced using language, a language that is complex in its nature, the selected short story is governed by cardinal structures and conventions, and uncovering these structures can propound important insights into the work's meaning and significance. One of the exclusive merits of a structuralist theory is that it makes it permissible for the reader to move beyond surface-level interpretations of a literary work, and to explore the rudimentary systems and structures that shape the text.

The use of a structuralist theory in this article further encompasses identifying the deeply entrenched structures and patterns that shape suicide as a social occurrence. For example, and in respect of this probe, the cultural facets and value systems that contribute to feelings of isolation or hopelessness, or the power dynamics within a particular community or society that might lead individuals to consider suicide as a viable option are deliberated. Essentially, using the preferred isiXhosa short story and this particular theory is a purposive strategy that empirically proves to yield desirable outcomes.

### Findings and discussions

Categorically, the short story *'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo'* commences with the idea that no one holds a legal and/or Biblical right to murder others or murder themselves. This is evidenced in the extract below:

*'Umntu akangowakhe kuba akazidalanga kodwa udaliwe. Umntu ngamnye udalwe nguMdali weento zonke. Njengoko kungekho mntu unelungelo lokubulala omnye umntu, akakho umntu onelungelo lokuzibulala.'*

(‘Human does not belong to themselves because they did not create themselves but were created. Each person is created by the Creator of all things. Just as no one has the right to kill another person, no one has the right to commit suicide.’) (Macabela, 2021: 104)

Based on the excerpt above, the question of whether an individual has the right to end their own life is an intricate and provocative issue that subsumes religious, philosophical, ethical, and legal considerations. However, it appears that Macabela (2021) only imposes the religious component given that reference to the Creator is recurrently made, and other belief systems and notions are not explicitly entailed in the literary text. This may be a point of controversy for those who do not necessarily believe in the referred Creator. However, that cannot pose any problematic judgments about the short story on account that short stories are open to any scrutiny—depending on the potential meaning that may be enacted by different readers.

The short story's position in the view just above can be allied to the religious philosophy owing to the reality that some religious traditions, such as Christianity and Islam, consider suicide to be sinful or a violation of God's commandments (Potter, 2021). Others, such as Buddhism, take a more nuanced view that recognises the importance of ending suffering but still dissuades against suicide as a means of doing so (Potter, 2021). Given that, the short story's standpoint on suicide may prove to be valid and consequential for those who believe in either Christianity and/or Islam.

Similarly, and from a philosophical perspective, some schools of thought, such as existentialism, elucidate that individuals have the right to end their own lives if they choose to do so (Soyinkwa, 2002). This view is based on the idea that individuals have the ultimate freedom to determine the course of their lives and that they should be able to exercise that freedom even in matters of life and death. It is these dichotomies that a structuralist theory appreciates in the examination

of literary texts—the dichotomies between life and death, or survival and demise. Similarly, from an ethical standpoint, the issue of suicide provokes questions about the value of human life and the responsibilities of individuals and society to prevent unwarranted harm. For instance, Macabela (2021: 104) covertly states that life is characterised by vicissitudes. Let us observe the analects below:

*'Ubomi bunzima, akasoloko ehamba ethafeni umntu kuba kunamaxesha okuba azibhaqe engqubeka kwiziphunzi nakumatye axananazileyo. Ezi zinto zimshiya egruzukile engxwelerhekile ngamanye amaxesha uyawa athi folokohlo emahlahleni naselubobeni aze avuke enemikrwelo engasokuze iphele. Inene ubomi bungamahlandinyuka.'*

('Life is hard, one does not always walk on the plain because there are times when one finds oneself bumping into stumps and scattered stones. These things leave one bruised and injured, sometimes he or she falls and cuts their wrists and legs and wakes up with scars that will never fade away. Indeed, life is full of ups and downs.') (Macabela, 2021: 104)

Inevitably, it remains prudent that it is acknowledged that suicide is a personal decision that should be respected, while on the other hand should be viewed as a tragedy that should be prevented by those affected directly and indirectly. This denotes that individuals and society must recognise suicide as an integral part of humanity, and must then pivot towards eliminating it using reasonable and proactive approaches. It would be incoherent and obtuse to recoil from the realities of social ills. From a legal and structuralist perspective, the question of whether suicide should be a crime is a matter of debate (Violanti et al., 2019). This is because it has been recognised and acknowledged as one of the constituents of human and social formation. The structuralist theory provisions for the assessment of a literary text in context; hence, it must be contextualised that in some countries, suicide is still considered a criminal offense (Lew et al., 2022), while in others it is not. The assessment of this particular isiXhosa short story further induces the conventional idea and ideology that aided suicide or euthanasia is legal under certain circumstances (Lew et al., 2022), while it can fairly be agreed that Macabela (2021)—the author—rejects it.

On the same wavelength, it must be glorified that *'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo'* continues to prescribe that mental health crises and suicide require proactive efforts such as speaking, and having someone who is willing to listen, thereupon making the victim valuable and honoured. Speaking up about mental health challenges and suicide is crucial to addressing mental health disasters such as harm and death. Mental health and suicide are a fundamental aspect of overall health and wellbeing, and affect how individuals feel, think, and behave. Unfortunately, mental health issues are often stigmatised, which can make it difficult for people to speak up about their struggles or seek help. By encouraging people to speak up about their mental health, humans can help deconstruct the stigma surrounding psycho-social issues and create a more gratifying environment for individuals who are struggling. This can include talking openly about mental health, sharing personal stories and experiences, and providing information and resources about mental health and welfare. When people feel comfortable speaking up about their mental health, they are more likely to seek help when they need it, which can lead to earlier intervention and better outcomes. The proactive measure of *speaking and listening* is explicitly evident in the extract below:

*'Qhuba ndimamele Sthandwa sam. Kuyacaca ukuba baninzi abantu abazifumana bengamaxhoba ngenxa yeenkxwaleko nezivubeko eziveliswe zabhentsiswa yimingeni yobomi.'*

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('Continue, I am listening, my love. It is clear that there are many people who find themselves victims because of the sufferings and injuries caused by the challenges of life.') (Macabela, 2021: 104–105)

Pertinent to the above debates, Macabela (2012), through the preferred short story, progresses to certify the complexities that exist in the phenomenon of suicide and mental health. In fact, the entire short story proves that suicide is a manifestation of deeply rooted mental illnesses. For instance, one of the principal characters, Mthuthuzeli, reports on the beginning of his mental pressures while his wife, Simangele, makes an interesting objection to the dialogue:

*'Ndaqala ukubona ukuba umhlaba undijikele ngowe–1987. Ndandivela kwiyunivesithi yaseKapa apho ndandisenza unyaka wokuqala. Ngaloo nyanga yeNkanga, ndandilindele ukwenzelwa itheko kubhiyozelwa usuku lwam lokuzalwa nanjengoko ndandigqiba iminyaka engamashumi amabini ananye. Uyazi ke nawe Sthandwa ukuba elo liphupha labo bonke abantwana...'*<sup>13</sup>

*'Ndingakubethanga emlonjeni Sthandwa, kwimizi efumileyo abantwana bathengelwa imoto banikwe nesitshixo esingumqondiso wokuba bangenza nantoni na ngobomi babo, thina ke bantu bahlelelekileyo, loo mathuba asinqabele njengezinyo lenkuku.'*<sup>14</sup>

('I first realised that the world has turned around me in 1987. I was from the University of Cape Town where I was in my first year. That month of November, I was expecting a party to be held to celebrate my birthday as I turned twenty-one. Do you know, my love, that is the dream of all children...')

('Without disturbing you, my love, in rich families, children are bought a car and given a key as a sign that they can do anything with their lives, but we are poor people, those opportunities are denied to us like hen's teeth.') (Macabela, 2021: 105)

The above statement from Mthuthuzeli certifies that

suicidal thoughts, as a mental illness, are profoundly rooted. For instance, Mthuthuzeli continues to express his discomfort about the fact that he was not accorded the 21st celebration that ordinarily takes place for some young men and women in South Africa. At this time, he was an undergraduate student at the University of Cape Town (UCT). Subsequent to that, his mother, father, uncle, and mother-in-law departed this world in a short space of time that is not explicitly stated in the short story, but it does appear that they all died in less than three to five years—in other words, Mthuthuzeli suffered multiple traumas. This empirically underlines that suicide is a complex and deeply troubling phenomenon that can have a significant and adverse impact on individuals, families, and communities. It involves the premeditated taking of one's own life, often in response to overwhelming emotional pain, tribulation, or misery.

In conjunction with the previous claim and observing the earlier extract, the interjection by Simangele is embrative of a fascinating understanding of life in general. It suggests that in life, it is common for people to battle challenges and experience catastrophes. While it is natural to yearn for certain things, it is important to be cognisant that not everything is within human control and that we may not always get what we want. Instead of focusing solely on what we want, it can be thoughtful to cultivate a sensory faculty of gratitude and appreciation for what we do have. This can include things like health, relationships, opportunities, and personal strengths. It is also significant to develop fortitude and coping skills to help circumnavigate difficult times and to cope with calamity. This can involve seeking support from friends or family (such as in the case of Mthuthuzeli and Simangele) and learning to reframe human thinking in more positive, corroborative, and constructive ways. While it can be challenging to accept that people may not always get what they desire, it is equally significant to exhibit consideration that life is full of meteoric opportunities and experiences. In so doing, people can cultivate a greater sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, even in the face of adversity. Ultimately, mental pressures such as family stress, social stress, academic stress and so forth can be tranquillised.



## Conclusion

This article underlined that suicide is a complex and multifaceted issue that can have an extraordinary impact on individuals and communities. While the portrayal of suicide in isiXhosa short stories may not be appropriate or helpful in all contexts, it can provide a valuable opportunity to explore and raise awareness about this important issue. Additionally, it was stressed that isiXhosa short stories can provision a powerful means of exploring the emotional and psychological experiences of individuals who may be struggling with suicidal thoughts or behaviours. It further became evident that by portraying characters who are grappling with mental health challenges and contemplating suicide, isiXhosa short stories can help to promote affinity and understanding for those who may be experiencing comparable difficulties.

In addition, isiXhosa short stories can provide a floor for discussing the social and cultural factors that contribute to suicide, such as stigma around mental illness, social isolation, and access to lethal means. 'Ukuzibulala Akusiso Isisombululo' further outlined that by raising awareness about these issues and promoting dialogue, isiXhosa short stories can help to reduce defective misconceptions and increase support for individuals who are at the peril of suicide. In closing, while the portrayal of suicide in South African short stories must be done sensitively and responsibly, it can be a valuable means of exploring and addressing this complex and deeply rooted issue.

## Notes

1. A detailed explanation of structuralism as a literary theory, and its role in the examination of isiXhosa literature, will be provided later.
2. It is important to notice that at the time of constructing and assembling this article, Cyril Ramaphosa was the South African president.
3. It is Mthuthuzeli uttering these words.
4. It is Simangele uttering these words through interjection.

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