




Nicknames among Swati clans: A socio-cultural analysis

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Nicknames are common in African societies. In Swati families, the use of nicknames is widespread and almost every member of a family possesses one. The nicknames are given to people in addition to their personal names from a young age until adulthood. This paper aims to explore nicknames bestowed on people within Swati families. This study is qualitative and adopts a socio-onomastic approach. The researchers used participant observation to collect data to gain insight into how nicknames are bestowed on family members and to establish their meanings. A total of 51 nicknames were collected and analysed. It was established that nicknames are given based on the socio-cultural traits of the family and society. It was also ascertained that nicknames are derived from an individual's character, physical appearance, prominent people's names, remarkable events, and short forms of personal names. Some nicknames are meaningful while others are meaningless. They are used as informal identities within the family setting and in the community.

Contribution: This study contributes to the body of knowledge in Siswati onomastics, specifically Swati nicknames. It reveals how nicknames are formed and bestowed on nickname bearers within clan or family settings. The study also reveals cultural nuances associated with nicknames given in Swati families.

Keywords: nicknames; Swati; clan; socio-cultural; socio-onomastic; nickname bearer.

Introduction

Siswati is a Bantu language belonging to the Nguni language family, and it is mostly spoken in Eswatini as well as in certain regions of South Africa, Lesotho, and Mozambique (Malambe & Harford 2021). This language belongs to the Nguni group code S40 in the classification of Bantu languages with three other languages, wherein Siswati is assigned code S43 while isiXhosa, isiZulu, Zimbabwean isiNdebele, and Southern isiNdebele which is spoken in South Africa are classified as S41, S42, S44, and S407 respectively (Gunnink, Chousou-Polydouri & Bostoen 2022). These languages are mutually intelligible.

It is imperative to note that naming has been studied by several scholars in Siswati such as Thwala (2017, 2018), Ngobeni (2018), Thwala and Mayisela (2020), and Matfunjwa (2022). They dealt with naming patterns of personal names, clan names, and praises. The research problem of the study is that despite the fact that Siswati nicknames are predominately used and almost every member of society possesses one, very little research has been conducted on nicknaming practices. A greater understanding of the Siswati socio-cultural perspective of nicknames is hindered by the absence of in-depth study in this area. Peterson (2019:89) posited that 'nicknames exist everywhere and can be found in all cultures at all times'. This implies that assigning nicknames to specific individuals is a universal practice. Nicknames are always imposed on people (Morton 2001). These nicknames are acquired throughout a person's life in addition to the personal name that is given at birth. Nicknames can be studied from different perspectives such as socio-historical, socio-cultural, structural, functional, and psychodynamic viewpoints (Holland 1990). This study aims to understand the use of Siswati nicknames. The objectives are to investigate how nicknames are formed, and to establish their meaning and significance within clans or families from a socio-cultural perspective. This article is organised as follows. Firstly, the article briefly reviews the literature on nicknames. Secondly, a brief overview of the theoretical framework is provided. This is followed by methodology, findings and discussion, and finally, conclusion.

Related work

Dianitami, Widyastuti and Setiawan (2022) examined the nicknames of Javanese people to establish whether they express shame or affection. It was noted that nicknames are used for both good and bad purposes in society. Some people use nicknames to express closeness and amity between two individuals. However, others use nicknames to ridicule, intimidate, and humiliate

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those they nicknamed. Dianitami et al. (2022) also noted that nicknames are bestowed on individuals by family members, intimates, and colleagues. They emanate from people's peculiar behavioural habits, physical looks, and brief histories.

Otlogetswe and Ramaeba (2022) discussed how nicknames are formed in Setswana by shortening personal names. Primarily, Setswana nicknames were created according to Setswana phonotactics. However, nowadays Setswana nicknames are influenced by English because they are formed following English phonotactics. The authors argued that this threatens the historical practice of creating Setswana nicknames which form the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Batswana. This study determined that nicknames were formed through a variety of strategies such as duplicating a base or syllable of a name. Some nicknames were constructed by translating Setswana names directly into English. Keeping the initial syllable of a name and the following consonant was also a strategy used to create nicknames, for example, *Keneilwe* becomes *Ken*. Some nicknames were formed by keeping the initial syllable of the name and the following consonant and adding a terminal [s], for instance, *Baboloki* becomes *Babs*. The nicknames were also created by reducing a name to a number or combining a letter and a numerical. Other nicknames were formed by retaining the initial syllable of a name and the following consonant, and then the terminal /i/ or /za/ was added to create a second syllable which is pronounced like an English name; for instance, *Bonang* is represented as *Bonny* /bo:ni/ while *Tumelo* is shortened to *Tumza*. Some nicknames were created by abbreviating names to one or two characters such as *Gofaone* to *G*.

Mensah and Ndimele (2022) explored nicknames for lecturers at the University of Calabar and Abia State University which were coined by students. The authors established that nicknames are secretly used by students to refer to lecturers. The nicknames assigned to the lecturers were influenced by how they conducted themselves in the lecture room, the way they taught, how they spoke, and their physical appearances. For example, the nickname 'Dictator', was attributed to a lecturer who just came to class to read out notes to students without offering further explanations that could boost comprehension. Contrarily, nicknames such as 'Fine Boy', and 'Mr Handsome' were bestowed on male lecturers for dressing well and being attractive. These nicknames were mainly used to surreptitiously ridicule the lecturers. It was deduced that most of the nicknames bestowed on the lecturers were derogatory and few were endearing.

Chauke (2016) investigated Xitsonga nicknames and their importance. He noted that nicknames are terms of reference that are used as vehicles of communication to convey what society approves or despises in a person. The nicknames are informally used interchangeably with a person's names, especially in informal settings. Most Vatsonga age groups use nicknames including young adults, teenagers, and

children. They use them mainly among their peers. However, adults seldom use nicknames among their peers; they usually use them when addressing young people.

Ndimande-Hlongwa (2015) examined isiZulu nicknames within the Ndimande clans. She observed that nicknames were given by members of the family, friends, and companions at schools. People received nicknames in the early stages of childhood, during school as well as when they reach the stage of maturity. The author also established that nicknames, rather than personal names, were commonly used to address prominent persons in South Africa. Some nicknames emanated from people's clan names, physical looks, the way individuals conducted themselves, and their skin colour. Other nicknames were derived from English and animal names.

Kuranchie (2012) investigated nicknames for learners in a senior high school in Ghana. He determined that nicknames were derived from actual names of people, personal characteristics, and abilities of learners as well as common errors that they made in a classroom. The study established that learners' nicknames that originated from their physical features had negative effects because when their classmates addressed them using those nicknames, the learners felt ashamed and degraded. Nicknames derived from learners' abilities also had a negative impact as the learners preferred to abstain from participating in class to avoid negative nicknames should they make mistakes as they learn. It was concluded that the nicknaming practice has negative effects on learners' performance in school.

De Klerk and Bosch (1997) examined how nicknaming among Xhosa children and adolescents occurs. The authors found that the nicknaming practice entails linguistic creativity and playfulness. Nicknames of children between the age of 5 years and 6 years which the authors referred to as pet names and those of adolescents of approximately 18 years were taken from internal features of their first names. A substantial number of pet names and nicknames were a result of phonetic manipulation of the first name through alliteration, rhyme, and assonance. The study established that pet names are certainly coined by only family members while nicknames for adolescents could be coined mainly by themselves, friends, groups, and teachers at schools. Pet names were found to be non-derogatory as they are used within group communication by family members to express affection. Nicknames for adolescents serve a variety of functions such as essential indicators of belonging to a group and easy recognition. They are also utilised to convey disapproval and rejection.

The consulted work showed that nicknames have been studied in some societies from different settings. However, there is a gap in the study of nicknames in Swati communities, especially in family settings. Therefore, this study fills the gap and contributes to the body of knowledge in terms of how nicknames are coined and used in Swati families.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical underpinning of the study is the socio-onomastic theory. Hough (2016) described socio-onomastics as a subfield of onomastics that studies all types of names in society, focusing on name variation as names vary depending on the social, cultural, and situational areas within which they are employed. It is through socio-onomastics that we get insights into the cultural, social, and situational setting in which names are practically utilised (Ainiala 2016). This theory considers names as meaningful labels of identification that reflect socio-cultural nuances such as status, authority, success, and privileges, as well as significant social structures in a specific social setting (Leslie & Skipper 1991). Ainiala and Östman (eds. 2017) also emphasised that socio-onomastics is significant in analysing names as it examines the common usage of all forms of names, including personal names and nicknames, in societal, cultural, and contextual contexts. This theory is helpful in this study in understanding the use of Siswati nicknames in family settings and their functions.

Methodology

This study is a qualitative research that provides insight into Siswati nicknames within family settings. Participant observation was utilised as a data-collection method from the researchers' extended families in rural areas namely Endzingeni, Emgungundlovu, and Vuvulane in Eswatini. This method involves the researcher taking part in several events within a longer time frame to observe community members as they go about their everyday tasks and to engage in what they do to gain a deeper understanding of their habits, culture, and activities (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011; Kawulich 2005). Therefore, the use of participant observation has enabled the researchers to collect nicknames from family settings and to understand how these nicknames were coined and used to address specific individuals. Data were purposively sampled and analysed using thematic analysis. Out of 60 nicknames, 51 were chosen for analysis because of their usefulness in answering research questions, while those without specific themes and meanings were not used.

Findings and discussion

This section presents a discussion of the findings. It looks at how Siswati nicknames are coined in family settings and their purpose.

Siswati nicknames are often used as informal forms of reference and identity for individuals within families and in society. They are bestowed on people in addition to their formal names by family members, schoolmates, playmates, colleagues, and community members. These nicknames may be acquired at any age, and anybody can bestow them on a specific individual. Swati people often live in extended families, especially in rural areas in which they share socio-cultural, religious and economic activities (Ngobeni 2018). Their interaction within the family settings provides a good platform wherein nicknames are coined and bestowed on

TABLE 1: Nicknames originating from a person's daily duty.

Nickname	Connotation	Gender
<i>Matfota</i>	Firewood collector	Male
<i>Mathole</i>	Calves (calf herder)	Male
<i>Mavuligede</i>	A person who opens a gate	Male
<i>Sigulumba</i>	Tractor (Tractor driver)	Male
<i>Citsumgcoma</i>	Empty the dustbin	Female

each family member. The nicknames discussed in the following subsections are categorised thematically depending on their origin and formation.

Nicknames derived from home duties

Some Siswati nicknames are assigned based on the chores and duties a person usually performs. In Swati family settings, each member is expected to perform specific duties that are mostly based on gender roles. Women are regarded as caregivers and perform more chores in the family (Mathunjwa-Dlamini, Magagula & Gary 2022). In rural areas, boys usually look after cattle, milk cows, and chop firewood while girls help their mothers in performing domestic chores such as fetching water and cooking (Dlamini 2008). However, modernisation has resulted in a shift of roles within the family (Lubambo 2015). This is the major reason that nowadays most duties are no longer based on gender. The duties that family members execute have a major influence on the coinage of nicknames and are assigned to bearers reflecting the kind of duties they normally do as presented in Table 1.

In Table 1, the nicknames are given based on the duty that the bearers usually perform. The nickname *Matfota* [firewood collector] expresses the type of duty that this person performs. *Matfota* in this particular context refers to a male adult who is mainly responsible for collecting firewood from time to time. Unlike in many Swati families where women are still expected to collect firewood, in this homestead, the man uses a chainsaw to cut wood in the forest and bring it home. The primary task of gathering firewood has shifted as a result of modernity as men now employ modern tools to perform this duty in some Swati families. Lubambo (2015) noted that because of modernisation in Swati societies, there has been a shift of roles within families. Therefore, the collection of firewood is one of the role shifts observed in this case. Hence, in this family, the nickname aptly describes the man's duty.

Mathole literally means calves. In this context, the nickname refers to a boy child who is instructed to herd calves regularly. This is a duty that is primarily assigned to young boys in most rural homesteads. *Mavuligede* refers to a person who frequently opens a gate. This means that *Mavuligede* is expected to open the gate daily. *Sigulumba* literally means tractor; in this context, the nickname *Sigulumba* was assigned to the driver of the tractor. In some contexts, the nickname *Sigulumba* could also be attributed to a person who likes riding a tractor. *Citsumgcoma* means empty the trash bin; this nickname is bestowed on the girl whose duty is to sweep the

TABLE 2: Nicknames derived from people's behaviour.

Nickname	Connotation	Gender
<i>Matitila</i>	Someone who likes to complain	Male
<i>Makhalanjalo</i>	One who often cries habitually	Female
<i>Madzedzesa</i>	Cry-baby	Female
<i>Malobhane</i>	Someone who likes to dodge others	Female
<i>Sigcebhe</i>	Someone who likes to wear mini skirts	Female
<i>Sikhindi</i>	Someone who likes to wear shorts	Male
<i>Mafobela</i>	A person who eats a lot of food	Male

home yard and empty the trash bin every day. The nicknames *Matfota*, *Mathole*, *Mafuligede*, and *Sigulumba* are all conferred on males while only one nickname, *Citsumgcoma*, is conferred on a female. This suggests that male nicknames are dominant in this category. Therefore, all these nicknames allude to the tasks each person undertakes frequently and they emanate from the continuous performance of the duties, sometimes on a daily basis in the family.

Nicknames derived from behaviour or habit

Some Siswati nicknames are drawn from how individuals behave. Nicknames reflect the way other people perceive nickname bearers in a certain group (Mensah 2016). They are conferred on people to appreciate or mock them (Sobane 2008). Nicknames serve as a means of communication in which people express what they despise in a person's character (Chauke 2016). Therefore, with the use of a nickname, individuals can express their opinions and sentiments about the recipient of the nickname. For this reason, nicknames that ridicule bearers primarily have negative effects as they are not amiable (Khetoa & Mokala 2022). Table 2 presents nicknames given to family members based on how they behave or interact with one another.

In Table 2, the nicknames are drawn from how people behave within their family. The nickname *Matitila* refers to someone who likes to complain, *Makhalanjalo* alludes to a person who cries habitually and *Madzedzesa* refers to an individual who sheds tears frequently. The nickname *Malobhane* describes someone who likes to dodge others. *Sigcebhe* means a mini skirt and refers to an adult female who likes to wear short skirts, while *Sikhindi* means shorts and refers to an old man who likes to wear shorts. Lastly, the nickname *Mafobela* refers to a person who eats a lot of food. This nickname is used to dissuade greed among family members in situations when sharing is encouraged. All these nicknames condemn the actions and behaviour of the people in the family.

Nicknames after a person's physical appearance

Nicknames are often associated with the bearers' physical features (Starks & Taylor-Leech 2011). Siswati nicknames bestowed on bearers are derived from their physical features such as skin colour, head type, body shape, and posture. Examples of nicknames that are related to the bearer's physical features are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Nicknames related to the physical characteristics of the bearer.

Nicknames	Connotation	Gender
<i>Mbesheshe</i>	Big buttocks	Female
<i>Mabefu</i>	Fat person	Female
<i>Bhumubhumu</i>	Someone who is fat	Female
<i>Sipoko</i>	Ghost	Male
<i>Nyalitsi</i>	Needle	Male
<i>Mgcwigcwi</i>	Chinese grasshopper	Female
<i>Ntongontongo</i>	A tall person	Male
<i>Magwegwe</i>	Curved	Male
<i>Zembe</i>	Axe	Male
<i>Gudzagudza</i>	Big head (big stone)	Male
<i>Mbokodvo</i>	Grinding stone	Male
<i>Ngobolwane</i>	Grain weevil	Male
<i>Logwaja</i>	Rabbit	Male
<i>Mlungu</i>	White person	Female
<i>Jahelibovu</i>	Red lad	Male
<i>Mangoza</i>	A bright female (mangoes)	Female
<i>Ncozi</i>	A dark-skinned person (wild blackberry)	Male

Table 3 shows Siswati nicknames that express the physical characteristics of nickname bearers. The nickname *Mbesheshe* refers to a person who has big buttocks. *Mabefu* and *Bhumubhumu* both refer to a fat person. The nicknames *Sipoko* [ghost] and *Nyalitsi* [needle] refer to a very thin person. *Ntongontongo* means tall and is used to informally address the tallest person among the family members. *Mgcwigcwi* literally means Chinese grasshopper and refers to someone's posture who leans forward when standing and appears as if she is standing on her toes. *Magwegwe* denotes a person with bowlegs. The nicknames *Zembe* [axe], *Gudzagudza* [big stone], and *Mbokodvo* [grinding stone] refer to the shape of the head. *Zembe* refers to an individual with a head shaped like an axe at the back, *Gudzagudza* refers to someone with a big head, and *Mbokodvo* refers to a person with a big head shaped like a grinding stone. *Ngobolwane* [grain weevil] refers to an individual with an aquiline nose like that of a weevil, while *Logwaja* [rabbit] describes a person with big ears. The nicknames *Mlungu* [white person], *Jahelibovu* [red boy], *Mangoza* [mangoes], and *Ncozi* [black wild berry] denote the skin colours of the nickname bearers. *Mlungu* refers to the brightest person in complexion, *Jahelibovu* refers to a boy who is light-skinned, *Mangoza* refers to a girl with a very light complexion, while *Ncozi* refers to a black-skinned person. It is important to note that most of the nicknames coined based on a person's physical appearance are derogatory. They can be used openly or discretely depending on the bravery of the speaker (Khetoa & Mokala 2022).

Nicknames that originate from names or surnames of prominent people

Nicknames can also be derived from names of prominent people either within the Swati society or abroad. This is determined by various factors such as the nickname giver being fond of the famous person and deciding to pass it on to the person to whom he or she confers the nickname. Such

TABLE 4: Nicknames that originate from names and surnames of prominent people.

Nickname	Connotation	Gender
<i>Tsangarayi</i>	Morgan Tsvangirai, former Prime Minister of Zimbabwe	Male
<i>Mandela</i>	Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa	Male
<i>Gadafi</i>	Muammar Gaddafi, former President of Libya	Male
<i>Tholeni</i>	Sipho Tholeni Nkambule, former Mbabane Highlanders football player	Male
<i>Bhashini</i>	Albert 'Bashin' Mahlangu, former Orlando Pirates player	Male
<i>Mabhedla</i>	Chief Mabhedla	Male
<i>Mshelevu</i>	Prince Mshelevu	Male
<i>Mandvulo</i>	Mandvulo Dlamini, former Prime Minister of Eswatini	Male
<i>Brenda</i>	Brenda Fassie, South African musician	Female

nicknames are derived as is or modified to sound more like Swati. Table 4 presents nicknames that have originated from the names and surnames of famous people.

In Table 4, the nickname *Tsangarayi* is derived from the surname of the former prime minister of Zimbabwe, Morgan Tsvangirai. It has been borrowed and modified to conform to the Siswati writing system and phonetics. The nicknames *Gadafi* and *Mandela* have also been taken from the surnames of former presidents, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya and Nelson Mandela of South Africa. *Tholeni* and *Bhashini* respectively originate from the name of the former Mbabane Highlanders football player, Sipho Tholeni Nkambule, and Albert Bashin Mahlangu, a former Orlando Pirates player. *Mabhedla* and *Mshelevu* are nicknames derived from the names of a chief and prince respectively. The nickname *Mandvulo* is also taken from the name of the former prime minister of Eswatini, while *Brenda* is derived from the name Brenda Fassie, the late South African singer.

People in Swati families give their children or family members nicknames derived from prominent people for various reasons. Some individuals give family members nicknames when they look like prominent and famous people in society. For instance, *Tsangarayi* was nicknamed after the former prime minister of Zimbabwe, Morgan Tsvangirai, because he resembles him. Others give nicknames because they admire the success and personality of the person whom the nickname has been taken from. They also confer nicknames to show approval of the prominent person's leadership skills; for example, the nickname *Mandvulo* is bestowed on an adult male family member because his leadership skills in the family are similar to those of the former prime minister Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini. Mdluli (2020) explained that this prime minister was a visionary leader with exceptional skills which people must imitate. Therefore, nicknames that emanate from the personal names of public figures serve various social functions.

Nicknames after historical events

Some Siswati nicknames are coined after historical events. These nicknames are then given to children in addition to

TABLE 5: Nicknames derived from historical events.

Nickname	Event	Gender
<i>Zakumi</i>	Soccer World Cup 2010 Mascot	Male
<i>Fotifoti</i>	40 years of independence and the 40th birthday celebration of King Mswati III	Female

TABLE 6: Nicknames derived from surnames.

Nickname	Surname	Gender
<i>Khubana</i>	Makhubu	Male
<i>Mshibana</i>	Shiba	Male
<i>Mvutjana</i>	Mvubu	Male
<i>Sigamejana</i>	Gamedze	Male

their personal names. Borzykh (2021:43) argues that 'notable historical events or some real-life situations provide a basis for historical nicknames of states or cities'. This phenomenon is also applicable in the context of nicknaming family members among Swati societies. The historical events create a platform to coin nicknames and associate the nickname bearers with such events. Table 5 provides examples of historical nicknames of people.

In Table 5, the nickname *Zakumi* [mascot] originates from the soccer World Cup 2010 Mascot called Zakumi. The nickname bearer was born in the year 2010 during the soccer World Cup and he was nicknamed *Zakumi* in relation to the historical event that took place for the first time in the African continent. The nickname *Fotifoti* originates from the double celebration of 40 years of independence and the 40th birthday celebration of King Mswati III in Eswatini held on 06 September 2008 which was known as the 'Forty Forty' celebration. These nicknames are also used to commemorate the historical event conferred on the bearer.

Nicknames derived from surnames of bearers

Surnames are used as sources of Siswati nicknames. The nicknames are usually bestowed on male children and are diminutives of their surnames. They are created by attaching the diminutive suffix /-ana/ to the surname of the bearer. These diminutives (nicknames) formed express 'little or young' (Doke 1990). In this context, it implies that the boy is young and not yet ready to be addressed by his surname in the family. Only elders in the family are eligible to be addressed by their surname instead of their first name because of the *hlonipha* [respect] custom (Herbert 1990). Table 6 presents nicknames derived from surnames.

In Table 6, the nickname *Khubana* [small Makhubu] is derived from the surname Makhubu by deleting the first syllable /Ma-/ of the surname and suffixing the /-ana/, Makhubu + -ana > Khubana. *Mshibana* [small Shiba] is derived from the surname Shiba; the basic prefix /M-/ of class 1 was used and the morpheme /-ana/ was suffixed to the surname. *Mvutjana* [small Mvubu] and *Sigamejana* [small Gamedze] come from the surname Mvubu and Gamedze respectively after being suffixed by /-ana/ and undergoing morpho-phonological processes that result in the change of /b/ to /tj/ and /dz/ to /j/. Doke (1990:74) explained that in the formation

TABLE 7: Nicknames derived from personal names of bearers.

Name	Nicknames	Gender
<i>Gcinaphi</i>	Gci	Female
<i>Siphosethu</i>	Se	Female
<i>Mduduzi</i>	Mdu	Male
<i>Nkanyiso</i>	Nkanyi	Male
<i>Phiwokuhle</i>	Phiwo	Male
<i>Jabulile</i>	Jabu	Female
<i>Nonjuliso</i>	Njuli	Female

of diminutives, 'when the consonant of the final syllable is bilabial, that consonant gives place to a corresponding prepalatal sound, and *-ana* is suffixed'. All these nicknames indicate that the bearers are young.

Nicknames derived from names of bearers

Nicknames can be derived from personal names. These nicknames are usually referred to as pet names in other circles. The nicknames are formed by taking syllables from the name. Such nicknames are used to show affection for the name bearer (De Klerk & Bosch 1997). These nicknames are forms of identity for individuals in a family. Some speakers choose to use the nickname when the personal name is considered long. Table 7 shows nicknames coined from personal names.

In Table 7, the nickname *Gci* has been derived from the personal name *Gcinaphi* by taking the first syllable. The nickname *Se* comes from the name *Siphosethu*, and it has been formed by taking the third syllable of the name. *Mdu* is formed from the name *Mduduzi*, *Nkanyi* is formed from the name *Nkanyiso*, *Phiwo* is derived from the name *Phiwokuhle*, and *Jabu* comes from the name *Jabulile*. These names have been formed by taking the first two syllables of the personal names in that order. Lastly, the nickname *Njuli* comes from the name *Nonjuliso*, and it has been formed by taking the two syllables that follow the initial syllable of the name. Some of the nicknames derived from personal names are meaningless especially those that are monosyllabic. However, they are used as terms of reference and to address specific individuals in the family.

Conclusion

This study has revealed how Siswati nicknames are coined in family settings. It has been established that nicknames can be coined by any person, and they are derived from various categories. They are derived from home duties, a person's behaviour or habit, and physical appearance. Some nicknames originate from names or surnames of prominent people, historical events, and names and surnames of bearers. Some of the nicknames derived from people's behaviour and physical appearance are negative and derogatory. Nicknames that emanate from the physical appearances of the bearers are used to body shame them. The nicknames that originate from historical events are amusing and commemorate the events, while those that originate from the surnames of the bearer are positive and

have socio-cultural functions. Nicknames that are derived from the personal name of a bearer can either be meaningful or meaningless, yet they are used for identity and reference in the family setting. By demonstrating the above, this article contributes to bringing insight into how nicknames are formed and used in Siswati family settings.

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Authors' contributions

M.M. was responsible for the conceptualisation, formal analysis, and funding acquisition. R.M. and N.S. together contributed to the methodology, formal analysis, writing, review and editing.

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Disclaimer

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