

**Nicknaming and Nicknames in Xitsonga Culture:
An Onomastic Study**

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ABSTRACT This paper deals with nicknames and their significance among Xitsonga speaking people. Vatsonga have the tendency of giving nicknames, which act as tokens of appreciation or disapproval. Nicknames are one of the forms of address, which Vatsonga as a nation uses to either praise or show disapproval of a person's behavior. Amongst Vatsonga, in informal situations, first names are often used interchangeably with nicknames. This form of address is commonly used by peers in particular age groups namely, children, adolescents and young adults. This practice is also common among friends. It is rare to find the elderly using this form of address because they prefer to use pet or endearment names when addressing their children. This paper is mainly a semantic analysis of Xitsonga nicknaming and nicknames by bringing to the reader's attention the circumstances that led to the names given to the referents.