Death and Mourning Rituals in the South African Church: Towards a Biblical Model for Counselling Bereaved Families of Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu South, Limpopo Province

By

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A

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Declaration

I Chosana Frans Edwin Modiba declare that the following thesis is my own work and has not previously submitted to any university or institution.

Abstract

Death is an inevitable occurrence that affect most human beings one way or another such that some people engage in several activities in response to its affects and to obtain spiritual healing or closure (Baloyi 2016, 201-216, Itsweni and Tshifhumulo 2018, 11705-11727). Among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south in Limpopo province, South Africa, there were speculations about death and mourning rituals that bereaving members observed which left some who fellowshipped in Emmanuel Assemblies Church not sure as how to respond to the call of rituals. They used the Bible as their guide to evaluate the situation so that their faith would not be compromised. This gave birth to researching these rituals by purposefully sampling 39 participants from *Ga-Motupa*, *Kgwekge, Relela*, *Morutjie* and *Motlhomeng*, to establish the reality of the matter. The objective of the study was to investigate the death and mourning rituals that Balobedu people of Bolobedu south in Limpopo province, South Africa; performed with a view of formulating a biblical counselling model that can assist Emmanuel Assemblies church members residing in the same vicinity to deal with death-related rituals that directly need their engagements.

With an approved consent form signed by the participants, various one-on-one interviews, pre-arranged by the participants recruiter, using semi-structured questions translated into *Khelobedu* (a dialect of Balobedu People) were conducted to collect data after the permission from both the royal house in *Khetlhakong* and their respective headmen were obtained.

The research findings indicate that death and mourning rituals are performed by some nations around the globe, Balobedu included, to honour the deceased, to appease the dead and to obtain healing from the loss. The study also found that, Emmanuel members lack a biblical counselling model to assist them on matters related to death and mourning rituals. The researcher also proposed a biblical counselling model to Emmanuel leadership for adoption and use among their churches for them to obtain guidance in the event of loss. The model combines Magezi's seven approaches of pastoral care and Steward's three steps of counselling.

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I lack words to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr Modisa Mzondi for his patience and discipline. I sometimes felt ashamed of myself when I reflect on the early stages of my chapter writing where I thought he would be very disappointed to supervise a lazy and uncommitted student like me. His supervisory skills and professionalism have taught me much more than the study itself. I waited for months to obtain permission from the royal house, delayed from some headmen and tribal offices which reopened very late, but he gave me courage to keep on waiting patiently. As a pastor and managing a company to supply the economic needs of the family, I often submitted shoddy work to catch-up with his deadlines, but he was always gentle with me. My entire family was struck by the covid pandemic in the middle of my studies and by his

prayers and encouragements God prevented me from contracting covid despite not being quarantined. Thank you, man of God, for an outstanding work that you did for me and my family. Though I never shared these tragic moments where I ran from place to place burying people who succumbed to the pandemic, counselling bereaving families while leaving my work behind, I thank you for your patience and pray that the almighty God will reward you accordingly. Lastly, I thank all the village leaders and for allowing me to freely move around to collect data, and thanks to my participants for being so generous in sharing information on such a delicate subject, which according to custom, is often unfamiliar for men to engage with certain participants, especially widows.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to all Christians, especially those of Emmanuel Assemblies who reside, work, or intend on working among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south providing counselling for bereaved families. I also propose that this model be utilised by Emmanuel members towards counselling bereaved families in their areas of Bolobedu south.

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the background that prompted the study on death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south, Limpopo province, South Africa. It also clarifies some terminologies that may be unfamiliar to the reader. The chapter further provides questions that guided the idea, goals, and objectives. The chapter also provides the design that the research applies to obtain the required data as well as the sampling criteria for the participants. The section motivates the researcher's intention by discussing the significance of pursuing the study, its theological benefits, and its practical application. Finally, the study provides delimitations before outlining chapters and related research methodologies. The chapter contain titles, methodology, and summaries.

1.2 Definition of terms

Whenever a person conducts a study, they use many terms, which may have different meanings according to the use of these terms. Misunderstanding of terminologies occurs in a scenario where words with the exact spelling have a different purpose. On the other hand, some cultures utilise specific terms to refer to things that do not have the same meaning in another culture. Often people will use one phrase to define something utterly different from the one meant by the author. Below is a list that provides meaning for terms:

1.2.1 Emmanuel Assemblies refers to the Pentecostal movement founded in 1977 in Maviljan, Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga province, South Africa (Constitution and General Rules of the Emmanuel assemblies 2007, V).

1.2.2 The "Balobedu (BaLobedu-Ba ga Modjadji) are a Bantu tribe of the Northern Sotho group, with strong affinities to the Venda or Vhavhenda, to the north. They have their kingdom in the district of Balobedu- Limpopo Province- South Africa. It consists of more than 150 villages. Each

has a headman representing the Modjadji, or Rain Queen, and the central Lobedu tribal village is Sehlakong" (Kweku 2013, paragraph 1).

1.2.3 Burial rites refer to "A ceremony or group of ceremonies held in connection with the burial or cremation of a dead person. A burial procession accompanying a person to the grave" (The Free Dictionary, 2018).

1.2.4 Mourning is a behaviour in which you show sadness about a person's death. (Collins Dictionary, 2018).

1.2.5 Grieving is feeling very sad because someone has died. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018).

1.2.6 Death rituals refer to traditionally and culturally driven societal practices, which take drama, sequence, or a specific pattern (Lobar, Youngblut and Brooten 2006).

1.2.7 Funeral rituals refer to, "traditional and symbolic means of expressing our belief, thoughts and feelings about the death of someone loved" (Wolfelt 2016, 1).

1.2.8 Cultural practices on death and mourning rituals refer to the death and mourning rituals from the Balobedu cultural background. Therefore, selecting a particular cultural group rests upon exploring the article that deals with grief across cultures (Rosenblatt 2008, 207-222), which shows that people grieve and mourn according to their cultural background.

1.2.9 Counselling "is a conversation where one party with questions, problems, and troubles, seeks assistance from someone they believe has answers, solutions, and help" (Lambert 2016, 3).

1.3 Background of the study

According to Akin and Pace (2017, 206), a pastor's work often leads to being overloaded. Apart from standing on the pulpit to deliver the sermon, the pastor must provide pastoral care. Sick members need the pastor's assistance. The elderly who can no longer sit for long in the church also need his attention. Those in prison long to hear the pastor encourage them, and those involved in conflict call the pastor to resolve their disputes.

1.3.1 Counselling in times of death and mourning

Pastors of the Emmanuel Assemblies who counsel their members living among Balobedu people of Bolobedu south, Limpopo province, South Africa, face fatigue. Hall and Coe (2010, 57-74) argue that pastoral care relies on the Bible as it opens the way for the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of those in need. As indicated above, the pastor is also involved in conflict resolution within communities. However, the relationship's unsavoury nature becomes evident when the sting of death strikes the family and requires family members to observe death and mourning rituals.

According to Roos-Evans and Schrader (2012), death and mourning practices play an essential role in people's lives even though they seem to have lost their initial purpose. On the contrary, Mönnig (1968, 138) contends that in the event of a member's death, surviving members must perform appropriate rituals to avoid negative consequences.

As a pastor working among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south, the researcher usually visits bereaved families to convey his condolences and provide counselling. He has observed the following death and mourning rituals performed at home before and after the burial - an older woman sprinkling indigenous herbs (*ditlhare*) and uttering some words as supporters carry the coffin into and outside the yard; a widow covered with a blanket to prevent her from seeing the entire burial process; another partially covered to enable her to see the burial process. Family members arguing about the direction the deceased should face when buried. Lastly, a priest was waiting to sprinkle mourners who had returned from the cemetery with water. Some observed the practice while others resisted.

Others were arguing about the procedure of bringing the dead into the yard or compound. One of the deceased had drowned, and some argued that the circumstances did not warrant observing the funeral rituals of death caused by a car accident (this shows that, death and mourning rituals are performed according to how death occurred).

1.3.2 Addressing death and mourning rituals among Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu South, Limpopo, South Africa

One widow sought my advice regarding funeral rituals that her in-laws prescribed. The family instructed the widow to share her conjugal rights with her late husband's younger brother. In one of our churches (Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu South), the youth held their district conference in Bolobedu, Ga-Rapitsi and during the break interval of the convention, the young adults approached pastors for answers to questions regarding death and mourning rituals. The above examples reveal the impact of death and mourning rituals on both believers and non-believers.

1.3.3 Research problem

The abovementioned engagements revealed that there was a problem that was experienced by Emmanuel members such that it needed some knowledgeable pastors to address it. At the same time, those who pleaded for help indicated that pastors who could be tasked with such responsibilities must be equal to the task. According to prospective counselees, the description meant that those pastors who provide counselling should be well versed to assist Christians who find themselves subjected to death and mourning rituals at their homes. Sadly, it was evident that the movement didn't have any biblical counselling model to assist its members.

1.3.4 Research objectives

In many instances, one of the objectives of counselling the bereaved is to obtain healing. This study focuses on (1) searching through the literature to ascertain what theologians and social scientists teach about death and mourning ritual that occur around the globe. (2) It goes on to investigates how the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south, observe death and mourning rituals and the reasons why they observe them. (3) It further investigates what the Bible teaches about death and mourning rituals before culminating in formulating a biblical counselling model to assist Christians within Emmanuel Assemblies who reside in Bolobedu south as the fourth objective.

1.4 Research questions

Every study originates from unanswered questions, identified problems and an identified need. Below is a list of items that propelled the research and served as guidelines to obtain the relevant data.

1.4.1 Main research question

How might a biblical death and mourning counselling model help the Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu south, deal with death and mourning rituals?

1.4.2 Subsidiary questions

1.4.2.1 Historically, how do Balobedu people view death and mourning?

1.4.2.2 What do social scientists and theologians teach about death and mourning rituals?

1.4.2.3 What does the Bible teach about death and mourning rituals?

1.4.2.4 What strategies can one use to design a biblical counselling model to assist the Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies?

1.5 Delimitations of the study

It is impossible to exhaust every avenue when conducting any research. There will always be limitations that confine the analysis to a certain level. In the same manner, this research has a list of constraints. The following are the limitations that restrict this study.

1.5.1 The area of study and population

Rituals are very elaborate and can span a broader range between communities. It was, therefore, necessary to delimit the research to increase the focal point. The study only investigates death and mourning rituals performed by community members except for the royal house. The royal house refers to the queen's immediate family members connected to the head kraal at *Khehlakong* village in Bolobedu south. According to Kweku (2013, paragraph two), Bolobedu has over 150 villages, but the study focuses only on the following places*: Ga-Motupa, Kgwekgwe, Relela, Morutjie, and Mohlomeng*.

1.5.2 Limited access

People treat death and mourning rituals as private and gender-specific in some areas. As a result of the above differences, the researcher cannot witness every practice during the observatory process. The purposive sampling provides a method for such incidents which the participants share.

1.5.3 Limited period of study

The ethnographic research method spans from a few months to a few years. During the research, many pre-arranged things may go wrong and thus increases the length of the study. In the discussions on fieldwork preparations in ethnographic research, Blommaert et al. (2010, chapter 4) tabulate a couple of changes that may affect the study's duration. In addition, the discussions unearth many unforeseen circumstances that can hinder or completely change the research direction, especially when key respondents fail to show up or deny participation, even after they had agreed a long time ago.

Due to the nature of the research on death and mourning rituals, it wouldn't be impractical to spend years observing and interviewing Balobedu people to obtain the required data. However, a few months of a participatory ethnographic study containing the necessary data may prove consistency from one village to another within the same cultural

group. The researcher resides among the participants, understands many cultural factors of the communities involved, and can also address challenges, unlike when a researcher is an alien among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south.

The exploration and study of death and mourning rituals begin soon after the death of an individual. It goes through burial preparation, during the church or home service before it culminates at the graveyard. The study also considers the death and mourning rituals people perform within twelve months after the deceased's burial.

1.6 Presuppositions

Pastoral care engagements within the Balobedu people suggests that death and mourning rituals are practiced by both believers and nonbelievers. However, these death and mourning rituals are not the same for everyone: women observe theirs while men observe theirs.

Pastoral duties like counselling have led me to believe that both Christians and pastors of Emmanuel Assemblies do not have biblical counselling tools that can help them deal with death and mourning rituals. However, the Bible provides records containing death and mourning rituals that people can utilise to develop a counselling model that can help the above people deal with death and mourning rituals.

1.7 The purpose and significance of the study

1.7.1 The purpose of conducting the research

My central purpose is to develop a biblical death and mourning counselling model to help Balobedu Christians of the Emmanuel Assemblies movement deal with death and mourning rituals practiced in their community.

1.7.2 Significance of conducting the research

1.7.2.1 Theological significance

Since death is inevitable and death and mourning rituals are mentioned in the Bible and observed by the Balobedu people, there is a need to investigate and study these people and provide a biblical and theologically sound counselling model. This is based on the knowledge that psychologists have counselling tools to assist their candidates when faced with stressful situation that may lead to depression. On the contrary, Emmanuel assembly members do not have any specific source that can be applied in their lives during death events to reduce or prevent stressful behaviour that may lead some into backsliding from their faith life as it is written that “My people are destroyed because of lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). The Bible, on the other hand provides general counselling sessions that may be too complex for mourners to ascertain relevant passages of scriptures in line with their situation that can be readily and easily be available when Emmanuel members are in such a need. The Bible is also a multicultural-based tool that needs to be disintegrated to meet each sector’s needs and cultural perspective in order for it to be of use by Emmanuel members who might not be familiar with some biblically counselling models.

1.7.3 Practical significance

One might ask why the researcher chose the Balobedu people to study. Researchers such as Krige (1981, 33), Krige and Krige (2018, chapter four), Magubane (1991, 34) and Tyrell (1971, 156) have conducted studies on many tribes in Limpopo province (formerly known as the Northern Province*,* Lebowa and Northern Transvaal, respectively) except for the Balobedu people. However, some researchers conducted studies in the royal house with queen Modjadji, but never among community members unrelated to the royal family.

As mentioned earlier in the problem section, the researcher provides pastoral care and counselling to Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies movement residing at

Bolobedu south. Bolobedu south is one area that forms the movement's northern district and is predominantly a Balobedu settlement. Some Emmanuel Assemblies members who reside in the above-stated area stay with unbelieving relatives who expect them to observe prescribed death and mourning rituals.

During the researcher's pastoral home visits, there were claims that bereaved family members, believers, and non-believers, observe similar death and mourning rituals. Emmanuel Assemblies Christians claimed they do not have a biblical tool to guide them address death and mourning rituals.

Without biblical guidance on death and mourning rituals, Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu south, have no clue what to do when such incidents occur. Some Emmanuel Assemblies pastors come from other areas and are not acquainted with the death and mourning rituals that Balobedu performs. The practices of the death and mourning rituals leave pastors in a tight corner when they are supposed to provide counselling to bereaved members without a practical biblical tool.

Hence, this study aims to develop the biblical counselling model to assist Emmanuel Assemblies Christians of Bolobedu south, deal with death and mourning rituals.

1.8 Research design and method

There are various methods that researchers embark on to collect data. Some of those methods include quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. This study is based on a qualitative approach and employs participant observatory and interviewing techniques. The researcher chose to use Osmer (2008) research method for this study as it assists him to engage ethnographic contexts.

Osmer's (2008) practical theological reflection research methodology focuses on four tasks, namely, the descriptive-empirical task, the interpretive task, the normative task, and the pragmatic task. These four tasks seek to answer these questions: What is going on? Why is it going on? What ought to be going on? And, how might we respond? Osmer's approach is applied as a framework to direct the data collection

method. Thus, the above-mentioned subsidiary question on page 5. The researcher selected the Osmer's model because his steps serve as a window to shape the researcher's observation and interview process. Therefore, his efforts are relevant and will help the researcher to develop a biblical counselling model that will assist Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu south in dealing with death and mourning rituals.

In a nutshell, Osmer's practical theology guides the researcher to establish why people around the globe perform death and mourning rituals. At the same time, the model assists the researcher in the description of the death and mourning rituals that are observed by Balobedu people of Bolobedu south. The model further channels the researcher to engage with the Bible to ascertain its teachings on the same subject before prompting him to take action by formulating an anticipated biblical counselling model that can be used to assist Christians of Emmanuel in Balobedu south in dealing with death and mourning rituals.

And the above reasons align properly with Osmer's (2008) model when put in contrast with the envisaged steps of collecting data. That means, his four tasks are in par with the objectives of the study and pass the limelight of being utilised as a framework.

1.9 Research participants

The researcher applies an observatory and purposeful primary interview sampling method in this study discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.3 in chapter two. Palys (2008, 697-698), argues that this method enables one to select interviewees directly linked to the research's objective. By direct link, it means people with first-hand information instead of a secondary one where an informant provides data that he obtained from others. The participants must also be relevant to the topic. For example, one informant may have experienced death in his home but never saw or went through mourning rituals. Such individuals link directly with the study but are irrelevant because of the lack of the necessary key issue: mourning.

Saldaña (2011, 33) also suggests that only specific persons, especially those with direct experience, which are likely to provide substantive answers and responses during interviews. Hence, the decision to cover a big size of the Balobedu people who have personally experienced the loss and encountered death and mourning rituals so that sufficient and reliable data is obtained from the communities.

A total of 39 participants were interviewed (8 adult males, 11 adult females, 15 youth females, and 5 youth males). The participants were widows, widowers, young males and females, adult males and females. Some are Christians and others are not. The researcher obtained an ethical clearance letter and a letter of informed consent from the South African Theological Seminary (SATS) (Appendix 4). The participants signed the letter of informed consent before participating in the study.

1.10 Chapter outline and research methodology

1.10.1 Chapter 2

Global death and mourning rituals

The chapter present a discussion of death and mourning rituals in selected different communities in the world. The chapter helps to answer what is happening? (Osmer 2008, 1-36) by providing some literature details from social scientists and other scholars' sources on death and mourning rituals.

1.10.2 Chapter 3

Death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

This chapter addresses Osmer's first step, the descriptive task, and asks, what is happening? (Osmer 2008, 1-36). It explores the death and mourning rituals Balobedu people of Bolobedu, perform. The chapter further explains the methodology that was applied to obtain data. It also provides the death and mourning rituals that past generations orally handed down by the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south.

1.10.3 Chapter 4

Biblical teaching on death and mourning rituals

Bible texts form the core Osmer's third step, normative task, which asks what ought to be going on? (Osmer's 2008, 129 -169). This chapter explores the following biblical texts (Gen 23:1-23, Gen 35:19-20, Gen 50:1-13, Deut 14:1&2, Num 20:22-29, 1 Sam 25:1-13, 1 Sam 31:1-13, 2 Sam 11:26-27, 2 Sam 14:2, 1 Kgs 13:1-13, Ezek 24:17, Matt 27:3-5, Mark 5:35-38, Luke 7:11-17, Luke 23:50-56, John 11:1-44, Acts 7: 54-8:2, Acts 9:35-39, Acts 20:9 and 1Thess 4:13) to ascertain passages that address death and mourning rituals. It also includes biblical commentaries and theological scholars who share their views on death and mourning rituals. The section culminates by using the scriptures to formulate lessons deduced from each Scripture to compile a biblical counselling model.

1.10.4 Chapter 5

A biblical counselling model for Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu south, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Chapter five addresses Osmer's fourth step, servant leadership, which asks, how might we respond? (Osmer 2008, 100-122). This part summarises the findings on death and mourning rituals observed by the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south and what the social scientists, theologians, and the Bible, teach regarding death and mourning rituals. It will fulfil its anticipated goal by providing a developed biblical counselling model to assist the Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies in dealing with death and mourning rites.

1.10.5 Chapter 6

Summary and recommendations

This chapter provides an overview of the entire work. In the following chapter, the study's content entails research findings, discussions and teachings from the Bible and social scientists and developed a counselling model. The chapter outlined above serves as a lens through which the entire content gets its shape.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter provided an introduction of the envisaged research, the problem statement, aim and objectives. It further presented the method that the study used to collect data as well as the sampling information of the participants before culminating with the chapter outline of the entire document.

Chapter 2
Global Death and Mourning Rituals

2.1 Introduction

The chapter then presents a literature review on death and mourning rituals from selected communities across the globe. It intends to provide the necessary basis to engage in death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu, south. It also follows Osmer's (2008) two questions: what is going on and why is it going on? By presenting death and mourning rituals of various communities and why they are practiced.

2.2 Literature review on death and mourning rituals

The researcher looks at sources of human and social scientists and theologians regarding death and mourning rituals among different ethnic and cultural groups. The purpose is to continue looking at Osmer's descriptive task and answer his question: what is it going on? Views from human and social scientists and theologians provide the necessary background to understand death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south.

Death affects all facets of life; death brings grief, bereavement and mourning, and subjects many to death and mourning rituals. Martin et al. (2013, 42-62) discusses the significance of studying death and mourning rituals to understand how their role psychologically affects bereaved family members of the deceased. Looking at how the living is eager to perform death and mourning rituals shows the importance and impact of death and people's beliefs. Lobar, Youngblut and Brooten (2006, 44-50) argue that rituals are performed based on being passed from generation to generation. During the researcher's visits, he observed that you could not easily separate death and mourning rituals from belief systems. Makgahlela and Sodi (2015, 542) mentions that whenever he visited the bereaved families to support them, he has noticed that "people's conception of death has as much influence on their grief experiences, as it does have on their mourning and healing from the loss."

Even though death affects all people as mentioned by Shelly (2012, 1), its impact differs from one person to another. According to Kotze' et al. (2012, 746), most people view the loss of a life partner as a personal matter but regards mourning rituals as collaborative practices. Thus, death seems to be more emotional on individuals than the collective. The researcher concurs that these are nation or clan and culture-specific, impacting the immediate family members rather than relatives who observe them. In the following sections, the researcher presents perspectives from human and social scientists concerning how some European, Western, Eastern African, Western African, and Southern African countries observe death and mourning rituals.

2.3 Some European nations

This section describes death and mourning rituals among the Italians, Dutch and Germans. Among the Italians, death and mourning patterns were practised by earlier people and transferred to other generations. In the thirteenth century, people maintained the practice, and these attracted some form of legal intervention. These rituals included women crying aloud and tearing out their hair in public (Lansing 2008, 14). In Orvieto city, Italy, the authorities introduced laws to regulate funeral and mourning rituals for women and excluded men from these practices. Imprisonment or a hefty fine accompanied non-compliance (Lansing 2008, 14).

According to Hope (2009, 86-88), people engage in a feast for eight days after the funeral. The final banquet happens beside the tomb, and it symbolises a union of the living and ancestors. Death and mourning rituals included the household providing a branch of a cypress tree and placing it on the threshold, wearing rags, sweeping clean the deceased's house, refraining from using cosmetics, maintaining a mourning period of not more than ten months. Participation in death and mourning rituals defiles and participants should undergo cleansing rituals using water and fire (Hope 2009, 86-88).

The Dutch have a different form of mourning for the dead. They usually have Roman Catholic shrines in their homes and incorporate them as part of the death and mourning rituals even though they seem to have vanished in the twenty-first century (Maddrell and Sidaway. 2010, 207). Further, the Dutch people also wore black clothes,

showed long faces, sang specific mourning hymns, and placed objects to remember the deceased. They based mourning rituals on their belief that the home is the appropriate place to grieve for a more extended period, whilst the cemetery is suitable for a short mourning period. Hence, rituals at the cemetery involved placing flowers, reciting prayers and spilling alcohol on the grave and throwing a small party.

The third focus on death and mourning rituals shifts to Germany from the nineteenth century. The view of associating death and mourning rituals with women, led to the establishment of the Ladies' Memorial Association, whose task it was to ensure "that the dead were properly buried and mourned" (Anderson 2016, 300). After the establishment of the Ladies Memorial Association, two developments followed. The first was a politicised mourning ritual that included a multitude. It contained choirs from the working class that sang slogans and revolutionary songs. Mourners also put wreaths with red flowers and red flags. All happened to accompany the coffin on its final journey to the cemetery, where bereaving members would lay the deceased to rest (Sewell 2009, 527-548).

The second development was the effect of the Second World War. The German government struggled to identify and record many dead soldiers who needed burial (Claasen 2015, 107-109, Siebrecht 2013, 96, Süss 2014, 430). Cost factors and battle complications made the procedure unmanageable. Hence, some of these dead soldiers were either buried on the battlefields or in specific areas. Consequently, many family members missed the burial of their loved ones. They could not perform their normal death and burial rituals because the government insisted on controlling the burial sites of the dead soldiers (Süss 2014, 430). The government regarded the public display of death and mourning rituals as resembling cowardice practices that should be discouraged (Kuhlman 2012, 156). As a result, mourners discarded the custom of wearing black clothes because of being afraid of the government. Death and mourning rituals became taboo. Instead, families opted to use some objects to substitute the missed practices (Kuhlman 2012, 156).

2.4 Some South American nations.

This sub-section reflects death and mourning rituals practised in Peru, Chile, Bolivia, and Brazil. The type of death determines the appropriate end and mourning rituals that must be performed. In Accomarca, Peru, Goldade (2019, 10) and Rojas-Perez (2017, 51-65) categorise death as natural and unnatural. The former emanates from sickness or collapsing at an old age, while the latter results from suicide, accidents, or disease before old age. Funerals of community members who die naturally get the usual mourning rites that include: the wake for viewing the deceased; (2) people celebrating the deceased's life by sharing interesting stories in the wake house, (3) presenting flowers, (4) holding parties and (5) extended memorial services which depict the joy that the deceased has joined the ancestors.

Close family members usually sleep beside the coffin during the four days of the wake as a sign of saying goodbye to their loved one. Mourners dress in black attire and receive minor funeral gifts such as a flower, bookmark, or photo of the deceased. In some places, the funeral procession contains a grand march with a band, singing with drums, and flutes escorting the hearse to the cemetery. On the contrary, unnatural deaths are regarded as *Malamuerte,* which means tragic, requiring a unique set of mourning rites. In the latter, the wake will be set in the deceased's house for family and community members for viewing, to offer coca leaves, cane liquor and condolences.

In contrast, a family member who resides far away from where the death had occurred is the only one who qualifies to wash the deceased’s clothes. Soft audible laments coupled with murmuring words pointing out how the dead passed on, the role they played, will be coming from mourners in the wake house from one speaker after another. Unlike in a natural death where mourners exchange pleasant stories, they utter painful narratives that cause the mood to be sad rather than joyous for an unnatural death. For both death incidents, the bereaving family members will not attend any celebration in the community for one year as a sign of mourning. Instead, the family will continue to hold their private memorial celebrations for the deceased for one, six and twelve months (Buikstra and Nystrom 2015, 245-266).

A study conducted by Goepfert (2012, 104-120) indicates that some Mochica cultures found in northern parts of Peru sacrificed people and killed animals to bury their sacrificial parts with the corpse as festive rituals that provide food and transportation for the soul of the dead person. The act rests upon the belief that the soul's journey towards the afterlife requires accompaniment such as food and transport catered for by some specified animal parts and organs. The remaining unused meat of the animal may be a dog, bat, camelids, deer or any chosen animal served by the mourners. The same practice exists among the Tucuma where human beings, especially slaves, were strangled or drowned to be sacrificed as rituals to appease the gods or accompany the noble or royal dead person (Toyne 2011, 505-523, Swenson 2012, 167-193, Buikstra and Nystrom 2015, 245-266).

Even though historical literature has proven that death and mourning rituals involving animal and human sacrifices were practised from the pre-Hispanic period and repeated over the years, Rosenfeld and Bautista (2017, 3-20, argue that some practices were lost or prohibited over the years. Forbidding previous sacrifices resulted from civilisation and migration to urban settlement in search of jobs and the establishment of legal clauses that included human and animal warfare. Goldade's (2017, 1) discussion of funeral traditions among Peruvians does not have rituals that involve an animal and human sacrifice. It serves as a piece of corroborative evidence of the disappearance of the practice over the years. It may also mean that some death and mourning rituals that Peruvian communities obey have disappeared as time elapsed.

In Bolivia, among the Chipayas, death is regarded as a beacon that signals the open gate for witches whose aim is to lurk around and kill vulnerable people. As soon as a member dies in urban areas, public buildings like community halls where many people gather are locked by mayors (Rosenfeld and Bautista 2017, 3-20). The above-mentioned authors indicate that by closing the place, there is a belief which states that the process prohibits the witches from continuing with their aim (2017, 3-20). When the public gathering comes to an end, the elderly and prominent community leaders engage in a collective ceremony. Mourners circle around the village pleading with ancestors to protect the people against the witches. After the ceremony, the ritual of cleansing the corpse by sprinkling it with water and salt begin. Meanwhile, younger men take the project of constructing the coffin (Bastien 2012, 156). Members of this community

believe that failure to observe the above rituals subjects the community to multiple deaths.

The Bolivians also believe that human beings continue to live even after burial (Adelman 2017, 1). They claim that only the body grows weak and perishes, and its grave does not represent the end of the deceased's spirituality because the spirit lives forever, it returns typically to visit the living (Rosenfeld and Bautista 2017, 3-20). According to them, the visit occurs on the 1st of November at noon and goes away on the 2nd of the same month. The mourning rituals have particular demands for those bereaving family members who want to celebrate their fellowship with returned spirits (2017, 3-20). They must bake cakes and prepare food and drinks to offer them at the cemetery each year on the date indicated above for a festival called 'Todos Santos', meaning ‘the day of the dead’ (Lougheed 2009, 57). The above practice is like the Peruvians who celebrate their ancestors on 1 November in a feast called: *Dia de Los Muertos*. In Peruvian and Bolivian cultures, people do not see communion with their ancestors as a life-threatening practice (Adelman 2017, 1). However, they recommend that people must perform correct rituals before the burial takes place. Thus, it becomes an annual joyous celebration (Adelman 2017, 1).

Over the years, the Mapuche people of Chile could not accept death as a natural incident but instead ascribed it to acts of witchcraft, demons or evil (Course 2011, 92-114). Their perception of death is like that of the Bolivians (Rosenfeld and Bautista 2017, 3-20). According to Course (2011, 93), because of this belief, the village Shaman usually investigates the autopsy by examining the innards to ascertain whether the deceased suffered from a witch poison. In addition, the funeral rituals require that a close female family relative, who resides close to where death has occurred, wash the corpse and dress it in the best available clothes to prepare it for viewing and mourning. This practice differs from the one found among the Peruvians, allowing only close family members from far settlements to wash and dress the corpse. Finally, the coffin with an open lid will be placed on a wooden platform inside the wake room before the burial for people to pay their last respects to the deceased (Adelman 2017, 1).

Among the Atacameños, the family must wash the deceased's clothes on the same day that death has occurred. And at the same time, the family members undergo a cleansing ceremony facilitated by the *Yatiri* (traditional doctor), who will perform the final cleansing ritual twelve months after the burial (Torres-Rouff 2008, 325-337). Unlike in Peru and Chile, where all community members attend the funeral, the Chileans have a full burial and a second burial. Only married and highly respectable people who also participate in community activities experience a grand send-off. Full-scale funeral encompasses large quantities of cider and slaughtering of sheep or pigs. It signifies an expensive burial that suits the appreciable life which the deceased displayed among the community. Those who do not qualify for a great goodbye get only the wake and a quick farewell that is not costly and attended by a few people.

According to Chileans, the procession of the wake where the corpse lies for viewing is the initial funeral. The burial in the graveside is regarded as the final funeral, thereby calling the entire process a double funeral. Before the final funeral takes place, they believe that the deceased's soul wanders beside the corpse. It waits for the family to carry out the correct rituals to pave the way for its departure without causing trouble to the living. (Course 2011, 92-114, Bacigalupo 2010, 97-119).

Bacigalupo (2010, 97-119) indicates that funeral rituals of ordinary people and Shamans differ. A Shaman or a Machi refers to a person specialising in seeing the spiritual world, telling it, and providing healing. Before the Machi dies, through spiritual insights, they will have a revelation about the approaching death. The vision helps to prepare them for the funeral beforehand. The preparations include buying food for mourners, inviting mourners, drawing the funeral program, slaughtering an animal for meat, and appointing the successor. The appointee must facilitate the process of conducting the death and mourning rituals. Unlike in Peru, where mourners spend time narrating stories in memory of the deceased; in Chile, the appointed Machi helps the family disremember the dead by commanding the corpse's spirit to leave altogether. He also warns mourners to refrain from mentioning the deceased's name but advises them to call him/her 'the late'. The family must also avoid naming anybody after the dead. Their understanding is that the deceased's spirit may return as a witch and torture the living person after whom the deceased was named (Bacigalupo 2010, 111).

The person who replaces the dead Machi also has the duty of removing the flags that they use to distinguish the residence of Machis from other community members. He must also remove the skin that covers the drum. He must further put everything that he gathers during the preparatory process on top of the coffin. The community believes that the act helps to ensure that the family disremembers the dead person (Bacigalupo 2010, 97-119). The family further destroys all the deceased's belongings, breaks the heels of the shoes, and avoids weeping, changes the entrance gate, plants new trees, and kills the dead's spirit animal: often a sheep (Bacigalupo 2005, 53-69, Bacigalupo 2010, 111). The death and mourning rituals among the above countries show similarities in the black dress code, the wake, washing the deceased's clothes, cleansing ceremonies and memorialisation. Most of them also share coca and alcohol as particular messages of support and condolences. The belief of life after death seems to be the principal cause of different types of rituals.

The Wari people of Brazil perform death and mourning rituals that reflect acts of cannibalism (see figure 1 below; Rachel, Ross and Lisa 2018, 8). When a person dies, the close family members would roast his/her brain, heart, liver, and bones, as shown in figure1 below, and consume them and it is believed that the ritual helps them to cope with the loss and reduce a feeling of loneliness (Rachel, Ross and Lisa 2018, 8). They further indicate that those who performed the death and mourning ritual would also cradle the corpse and lie with it from day one until the last day of the mourning such that certain corpses could be destroyed by human consumption before the actual closure of the mourning ritual.

Figure 1. A funerary roasting rack used in pre-contact Wari funerals. The palm leaf bundles on the right contained internal organs. Drawn by Wern Quirio, a Wari elder.

2.5 Some Eastern, Western and South African nations

From the European and South American countries, the focus on death and mourning rituals now shifts to Eastern, Western, and Southern African countries. The countries are Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and South Africa.

The sections present the perception of some Africans on the issue of life, death, the living and the dead which is coined in the phenomenon of African traditional religion and theology. It also reflects on the relationship between creation and its inhabitants, especially humanity. An analysis shows that most Africans believe in life after death as one of the fundamental teachings of the Bible even though their perception seems to suggest that, as Baloyi (2014, 1-7) argues, the dead do affect the living and can play a significant role in the lives of the living even after death. This is supported by Mbiti (20210, 4-21), Bediako (2000, 5-11) and Boaheng (2012, 1-13), who argue that Africans believe in the existence of God such that His supremacy was known and adored from time immemorial. Their argument strengthens the fact that African traditions and religion is solely for the purpose of maintaining the same honour that African ancestors held towards God which forces them to observe certain rituals.

In his argument, Mbiti (20, 4-21) further reiterates that although the name of God is often not mentioned during their ritual practices, it is out of the core belief in his existence that they render prayers in an African fashion which is regarded as *ho phasa* by most Christians. According to him, Africans honour God such that they see themselves unworthy to approach his throne and hence the reason why they plead with their ancestors to present their prayer and adoration. According to Ekore and Lanre-Abas (2016, 369-372), it is not every dead person that qualifies to be called an ancestor but only the dead who lived good life deserve the title of being called ancestors. Although some scholars like Bediako (1993, 367-390) acknowledges and attest the role played by Mbiti in his endeavour to shed some light on African perception of God and theology, other scholars such as Hans (2020, 23), refute such claims citing that the African recognition of God does not have any reference to the trinity doctrine which dominates the message of the missionaries.

At the same time, there is a picture which depicts that nature is also capable of playing an interactive role with its inhabitants such that life becomes a governed phenomenon where if certain rituals are not clearly and carefully observed, it has the potential to bring forth retaliatory measures against those who undermine its role and effects. Such are usually seen during the event of death and mourning rituals where some seeds which when planted during the burial and fail to germinate and yield anticipated fruits, become a sign of nature's communication means with the living.

2.5.1. Eastern African nations

2.5.1.1. Kenya

In the lowlands of Kenya, before the Luos bury the dead, the family invites "the local *mkireti"*, or man of the wilderness, to come and "cleanse the land" (*kuhorambuβa*) with a goat sacrifice (Smith 2008, 149). The traditional healer puts the corpse in the *shamba* (agricultural plot), and they believe that the *fighi* defender shrines protects deceased. However, he further shows that the lowlands were uninhabited, and the belief was that

the *fighi* defender shrines watched the area and threatened anyone staying or using it for burial (149).

Among the Luos, an ancient practice involves escorting the deceased's spirit from home to the grave so that it doesn't trouble others (Tungu 2020, 1). At the same time, to perform the ritual, men gather a herd of cattle in the yard where the death has occurred and chases them towards the river quickly to generate dust that fills the atmosphere. They believe that the disappearance of dust from the atmosphere represents the spirit of the dead. According to them, as the dust clears up from the sky, the soul leaves the house to inhabit the grave. The ceremony is incomplete until they kill a cock to cater for mourners (herdsmen) who escort the dead spirit to the graveyard (1). However, when a prominent or significantly older person dies, mourners flock to the deceased's home. "Relatives slaughter many heads of cattle called *dher buru*, and rams (Luos never ate goats)" (Tungu 2020, 1, Okpechi 2018, 1). The family also serves local alcoholic beverages, including *changaa, busaa,* and *mbare*.

2.5.1.2. Tanzanian

Becker (2009, 416-434) indicates that before the sixteenth century, the Chagga people did not bury their dead but threw them in the bushes and migrated towards a new settlement afterwards. There are similar death and mourning rituals among the Luos that occupy the Mara region (Dilger 2008, 207-232). According to Becker (2009, 416-434), the practice later changed, and they started burying their dead in homes, but the idea of relocating to a separate settlement after burial continued. However, during the eighteenth century, some of the residents developed another practice. Mourners no longer left their homes for relocation after the funeral. Instead, they only destroyed their houses so that the rubble covered the graves and built other places near the settlement. Additional to this act, they also planted crops on the ruins above the graves. Therefore, it is not apparent how many graves were needed before the family could tear down the houses and build new homes.

The Luos and Chaggas do not accept death incidents as natural ones but associate it with evil forces; hence they perform specific rituals to prevent death from attacking the family again (Dilger 2008, 226). Some of the rituals include sequential intimacy by

siblings from the eldest son to the youngest before the funeral ceremony can be deemed complete. Then, everybody who took part in the funeral and burial is free to go home (Becker 2009, 419). Becker further indicates that, if a woman that has matured children die, after laying the deceased, while the family is still at the house of the dead, the eldest son must take his wife to their home and make love to liberate the elder sister so that she can go to her house (419). The same scenario happens to the second son freeing the other sister until the ritual cleanses all ladies.

If the father has passed away, the elder sister must take her husband home and have sexual intimacy to ceremonially liberate her elder brother, and the same happens to other daughters to clean and protect the male gender from death. In a case where the elder brother or sister stays far away, he or she will have to call or notify the family representative after having arrived home. The candidate must first perform the abovesaid conjugal practice before informing the other remaining family members so that the next one on the hierarchy can follow suit until all unprotected members are ritually safe to go to their homes (Dilger 2008, 226; Becker 2009, 419).

Becker (2009, 419) further argues that introduction of Islam and Christianity changed the funeral rituals among indigenous people. According to Becker, some preferred a quick burial because of the religious custom among Muslims, while others opted for a delayed dignified burial accompanied by a bier, drummers and singing mourners. The dignified funeral takes three days of mourning, and it is a time where supporters bring condolences and gifts (2009, 419-421). The Chagga people also conducted two burials, and a ritual sacrifice accompanied each. The first mourning ritual with a goat sacrifice begins soon after the first burial, while the second ritual with a cow sacrifice followed a year later. During the second burial, the family exhume bones and the skull to re-bury them in the banana grove plant. The gender of the sacrificed animal depends on the gender of the person that had died. For instance, a married woman with children will require a female goat for sacrifice and, similarly, a male goat for a man. Unfortunately, childless people do not get any mourning rituals sacrifices apart from a mere burial (Hasu 2009, 192; Becker 2009, 419-421).

However, among the same tribes, the new generation has adopted the pattern with a slight change. Rather than performing it soon after the burial, they put a fixed period: three days after the funeral. At the same time, the second sacrifice maintains the same initial period of post twelve months (Hasu 2009, 192, Becker 2009, 419-421).

According to Faith (1942, cited in Becker 2009, 421), the mourning and burial rites for kings and noble people differ from most community members. Their dead bodies are not left alone deep in the grave for the kings and noble people but wrapped with white linen. Beside their coffins, mourners put in knives and guns. They also decorate their graves and erect roofs containing hanging clothes to display their status in the community. Those who do not use coffins are not only wrapped in fine linen. Their bodies are also protected with wood and grass to prevent soil from encountering the the body. This narrative shows how some Tanzanians honour the dead and use their graves to express the kind of respect and love they have (Becker 2009, 421).

2.5.1.3. Ethiopia

Among the Amhara tribes, in Ethiopia's southern part, death rituals can only be done by noble people, elders among the family or senior members from the neighbourhood (Banga et al. 2012, 1; Ferran 2015, 46). Ferran (2015, 46) also indicates that among the Maale, it is the responsibility of the firstborn son to facilitate proper funeral and mourning ritual procedures, and part of the process includes the identification of the burial site. According to the custom, a specific area in the cattle kraal becomes the father's burial site while the household's entrance door becomes one for the mother. The household’s entrance door is the main gate that people use to enter the fenced residence as animals have their gate on the opposite side. A belief states that failure to observe the practice risks the clan's fertility and continuity (2015, 46).

According to the custom, Ferran (2015, 46-47) mentions that it is the son's responsibility to offer ritual sacrifices to the dead parents' graves every year to appease them to ensure fertility and success in their dependents' lives. Since their social status depends on the patrilineal hierarchy, the firstborn son who buries his parents and performs the mourning rituals obtains the highest position among his younger brothers.

His siblings are customarily obliged to move out soon after their marriage to build their own homes. As mentioned earlier, his firstborn son will likewise establish a clan's cemetery within the yard. At the same time, those who moved to develop their families will build their traditional hierarchy following the same order (2015, 46-47).

Ferran (2015, 47) further indicates that some rituals include singing recommended songs with specific instruments to appease the ancestors. This singing process follows a particular pattern. In this clan, Ferran also reckons that the first parents to be buried become the ancestors of the linage. This belief is contrary to the one claimed by Ekore and Lanre-Abas (2016, 369-372) who state that only the dead who died after having lived good life qualifies to the called ancestors. All younger brothers who moved out to establish their families' become ancestors of their lineage when they die without being ancestrally connected to their parents even though they are biologically linked (2015, 47). Because of many hierarchies, people use music as one of the rituals to distinguish between different categories of people in society. According to Ferran, they also believe that a specific song must accompany the event. Suppose the pattern fails; it invites misfortunes and angers the ancestors. For instance, when a noble person or an elderly one dies, people will beat the drum to accompany musical instruments and human voices. The lyric types differentiate between a wedding event and a funeral occasion. It is taboo to play wedding lyrics on a funeral occasion (2015, 47).

In some African countries, people will visit the house of the deceased to offer condolences. However, in Ethiopia, dead members of the Mahbar and Iddi benefit from the condolences and get a replacement member from the family to continue with the group. (Mahbar is an association formed by lay people who meet to share the long-held social rituals. Iddi is associated with similar functions but focuses mainly on funerals and their associated ceremonies. (Flemmen and Zenebe 2016, 3-31; Pankhurst 2008, 143-185).

Banga et al. (2012, 1) conducted a study where the findings show that for the Amhara and Sidama ethnic groups, it is common for people who visit the mourning house to offer condolences, to sit silently with family members before departing without uttering a word, let alone greeting the family. According to the findings they believe that silence

gives mourners enough time to ponder about the dead and remember their past life stories. The following days after the silent conduct, some women with scarves around their necks gather to wail aloud as they sympathise with the family grieving for the loss. Some will even throw themselves on the ground and attempt self-injury by scratching their bodies with sharp objects and pulling out their hair (2012, 1). A non-profit organisation records similar narratives: Roots Ethiopia (2015, 1) where, among the Kembata, Hadiya, and Sidama tribes, women shave their heads and wrap their necks with black scarves, avoid beauty makeups and fancy clothes for the duration of mourning which is usually forty days for Catholics and three days for villagers who are non-Catholics.

While women perform such mourning practices, men, on the other hand, will be dancing, singing, and narrating stories about the deceased's life (Seyoum 2015, 1). Seyoum further mentions that the funeral does not mark the end of the relationship between the dead and the living, as annual sacrifices will commemorate them. Among the Hamaras, death is not a private matter. It becomes a community event where neighbours support the bereaving family by bringing food for the visitors. They also assist with preparations and manual work like cooking and sweeping the yard. According to their custom, grieving family members must not undertake any manual work. As part of condolences, some neighbours provide blankets to help visitors who intend to sleep before the burial ends (2015, 1).

For some of the elite and heroes, their mourning rituals do not only require black clothes. They also put on a *Kallačča* on their foreheads (Amborn, 2008, 20). A *Kallačča* is a prism like item, made by a silver smith that people put on their foreheads. Ordinary people do not wear it, only those who have shown their bravery by killing a person. This person is usually have been an enemy at some stage in their lifetime. It is traditionally associated with brutality and courage.

According to Woubshet (2015, 129; Abdi 2020.1) among the Arahma and Oromo tribes, people use death to determine the burial and mourning rites. He argues that the HIV and AIDS pandemic became a scapegoat for people to stop mourning rituals for those who succumbed to the disease (2015, 129). He also reckons that people get

the disease sexually and are painted with a picture that labelled them with a lack of self-control and living an immoral lifestyle that dying from HIV/AIDS was a scandal. Based on this reason, death and mourning rituals disappeared for people who succumbed to the epidemic. (2015, 129).

2.5.1.4. Somalia

Death and mourning rituals among the Muslim dominated Hawiyes in Somalia involve properly washing the corpse with warm water and straightening its legs and hands using a traditional perfume called "Adar"; before burying the deceased on the same day of the death (Ryan 2013, 1). This task is usually done by women in a woman's death and men when the deceased is a man (Roble 2008, 1, Goldade 2017, 1). Goldade (2017, 1), also indicates that unlike in many African countries where some regard death as an enemy of humanity, most people believe that Allah controls everything, including death. On the other hand, Roble (2008, 1) says that according to the Somali tradition, the duty of burying the dead is for mature and older adults. Women and children, including boys under sixteen, are forbidden to participate in the burial process and associated rituals.

2.5.1.5 Uganda

According to a Vision Reporter, Wandawa (2012, 14 January), the mourning rituals among the Banyankole people of Uganda involve public wailing. Pitched voices were coming from professionals hired as well as accompanying mourners. Practices included rolling uncontrollably on the ground, portraying the deceased photos, viewing the corpse, embracing, and kissing the corpse. Byrne (2015, 1) further indicates that as part of the mourning rituals, they kill a cow to cater for the mourners and require every close family member to attend the event. Family members who fail to participate in the funeral procession ignite suspicion on their involvement in the cause of death. They also mention that among the Banyankole tribes, the duty of funeral preparations lies in the hands of community structures called *twezikye* that also collect funds to purchase the coffin and cater for mourners. Nyanzi et al. (2009, 12-33) record similar practices.

The reporter (Wandawa 2012, 1) further indicates that the observation of mourning rituals differs according to the nature of death and the type of person who had died. For instance, the death of a breadwinner (often a man) requires that his surviving children shave their hair to obtain the inheritance. For the Acholi chiefs, mourners bring spears and put on leopard's hides. On the other hand, if a person dies without a child, they do not take his corpse through the door. Instead, the family cuts a hole from the opposite side of the door to take it out. In addition, people who facilitate the rituals inserts a banana stem in the woman's reproductive organ to protrude like a male organ. They claim that this act signifies that she is like a man, while for a childless man, the same is done on both sides of his chests with protruding sticks to represent breasts suggesting that he was like a woman.

On the other hand, a person who dies from suicide does not get mourning rituals from the family and community members. Instead, the family digs his grave beneath the hanging corpse. As soon as the appointed person cuts the robe, the dead body falls into the pit, automatically becoming the burial site (Byrne 2015, 1).

Unlike in Ankole, where children shave hairs during the death of their father, among the Bagisu, mourners only trim their hairs. After that, adults of the same gender as the deceased wash the corpse using specified banana leaves and water. They give the utensils that they used to clean the corpse to an elder to keep them until cleansing. If the deceased is a male who wasn't circumcised, they will call a surgeon to circumcise him before burial. Wandawa (2012, 1) indicates that as a punishment for not having undergone the tradition when alive, they don't support the body to lie down; those who hold it leave it to drop down by itself back to the ground.

Although most people use coffins to bury their dead, "Among the Ganda in Uganda, mourners would traditionally bring a piece of brown cloth made from the bark of the *mutuba* tree, to help wrap the body" (Snyder, Laurie and Karel 2006, 3). This cloth works more like the linen that Muslims put on their dead. However, unlike some Muslims who destroy or throw away the coffin and bury the dead using the linen as a covering for the corpse, the Ugandans retain the coffin but use the linen to first wrap the corpse inside it before lowering the coffin into the grave.

Among the Bugada tribe, there is a belief that the ghost comes at night and torments the remaining spouse sexually. To avert such trouble from happening, they dress the surviving person in the late spouse's underwear. At the same time, the bereaving family instructs the widow to, "wrap up herself as one in menstruation (*okwesabika Nga alimunsonga*)" to keep away the ghost of her dead husband (Nyanzi et al., 2009, 110). The family instructs the widow to put on the underwear of the deceased as soon as she knows about his death, and she will remain in the attire until the funeral ends when the family prepares a cleansing ceremony. The above information serves as a piece of corroborative evidence to the sayings of Akujobi (2009, 3), who indicates that among Africans, widows are the only ones who suffer the brutality of death, which exposes them to oppressive rituals that regard them as defiled objects which need cleansing. On the contrary, Khosa Nkhatini, Wepener and Meyer (2020, 8) argue that the death and mourning rituals that widows are expected to perform are not oppressive in nature but necessary for them as they prevent unnecessary misfortune and calamities such as diseases that may culminate in premature death. The same view is also found from a study conducted by Mabunda and Ross (2023, 328-338) who indicate that widows do not feel that although widows perform more mourning rituals than men, they do not see it as an oppressive task that violates their rights but regard it as upholding a cultural a privilege which assist them to avert sickness and obtain wholesome healing.

Another study conducted by Nyanzi et al. (2009, 12-33) provides conflicting claims about cleansing rituals that involve sexual relations with the in-laws. In their argument, they indicate that widows are subject to bizarre mourning rituals. Acts include wailing loudly, putting a belt made from a banana stem and remaining untidy for the mourning period's duration. Despite the above list, they argue that the process of ritual cleansing does not always involve sexual relations with the in-laws or levirate guardians. Some widows along with the clan opt for symbolic practices like a man jumping over the widow's widely stretched legs instead of direct intimacy which requires sexual relations. There seems to be a slight shift in cultural traditions of mourning rituals because of the outbreak of epidemics and pandemics such as Ebola, HIV and AIDS, which poses a life threat. This change of the usual tradition is not because of the western

influence which Moyo (2013, 207-236) argues that most Africans abandon their cultural practices and Traditional Knowledge System (TKS) because of Western Knowledge Systems (WKS). Notwithstanding that, other contributing factors are religious customs that most people embrace, which do not tally along with mourning rituals' cultural norms. For example, a member's death dictates that relatives and friends must bring food parcels to the deceased home for a funeral in other communities.

Another recent development is establishing burial societies around villages that help prepare funerals and their expenses. They are responsible for collecting funds from society members, organising the funeral, cooking, and buying necessities for the mourners to make the work easier for the family. According to Jones (2007, 509), one society group did the same practice in a place called Teso. Jones further records that when the funeral comes to an end, the social group's treasurer provides an income and expenditure report before handing over the family's balance while the family representative also gives an account (2007, 509).

2.5.2 Western African nations

2.5.2.1 Nigerians

According to Van Beek (2015, 250-257) the Kapsili's of Nigeria's follow a particular pattern known to mourners. People who pay their tributes and last respects do not flock to the house at once. But begin their visit from the first day in small groups until they saturate the place on the third day where main rituals start and last for three weeks. All the preparatory processes for burial happen between the first day and the third week. The processes become the first funeral. The memorial service held seven months after the funeral marks the second funeral, becoming the mourning rituals' end. Deaths of younger people and older ones do not have the exact same ritual requirements. The former gathers no public attention, while the latter involves a mourning dance. The dance event is often honoured by young singers who use their unique flute called '*Shila'*. Whenever a more senior person dies, it is by this time where people dress in their finest outfits to celebrate the life of one whom they believe is qualified to join the ancestors and hence the celebration dance. It is called a mourning dance that

does not depict a sombre moment with sad faces but a rather jubilant ceremony commemorating an elder's life which according to Kauffmann (2013, 115) is essential as it keeps the achievements and impact that the departed person left in their lives alive without being forgotten.

On the contrary, Krystina (2019, 1) argues that people did not celebrate all funerals with huge feasts. She argues that the death of children and people who die through accidents receive no honour because they died young or accidentally before reaching an acceptable old age fit for ancestry, the community mourn their death with grief and incur no financial losses, typically with partying (2019, 1).

However, the rituals carry the exact oppressive nature towards women even though most people observe them in many parts of the country. That means the eastern region experience the same plight as the western regions but with various mourning rituals even though the south-eastern region has enacted laws prohibiting cruel mourning practices (Mathias 2015, 225). In most cases, rules are government documents that have no meaning to rural villages. Ugwu et al. (2020, 2) argues that "Despite legislative pressures, some of these widowhood practices are still actively enforced by sociocultural norms".

Some research also indicates that family members expect women to drink the wastewater when they wash the corpse (Durojaye 2013, 176-196). They must even cry around the streets to notify community members about their husbands' death, sit on the floor for four weeks and engage in sexual relations with their in-laws without choice (Ajai et al. 2019, 6, Durojaye 2013, 176-196, Mathias 2015, 223-231). To add to the atrocities that the widow must go through, "She is not allowed to talk, laugh, shake hands or greet people, bake or cook. Her attire is called "Ogodo upa, that is, mud cloth", and she wears "the ikpim, that is, a pitch-black cloth called mourning dress" for the rest of the year (George 2011, 18). Some psychologists have added that most widows suffer psychologically because of the abuse incurred from death and mourning rituals that their in-laws impose upon them (Fareo 2015, 24-33, Ihekwuaba and Amasiatu 2016, 49-61).

2.5.2.2 Ghana

A report from Stoeltjie (2017, 58-92) shows that among the Komboka of northern Ghana, the sound emanating from a self-made tube filled with gun powder is used to inform community members about someone's death. The drum players add to a further description signifying that it is a senior citizen rather than a young man that has passed away. This practice differs from the Nigerians, where the widow is responsible for wailing around the streets to notify community members about her husband's death. As soon as a member dies, their immediate family members gather some clothes to hang around the house. The display serves as a symbol of wealth. Unlike in Chile among the Mapuche, where they dress the dead in his/her best clothes (Course 2011, 93), the clothing that relatives bring also serves as wrapping material for the corpse. The people engage in a joyous mood witnessed by drummers and dancing groups, especially during an older man or elderly woman's death. Stoeltjie (2017, 74) records that because many dancing groups attend the dance ritual, the family draft program, and grants performers time to share the platform using intervals. An expected death is worth celebrating. However, like Nigerian custom, singing and dancing are prohibited (Zimoń 2007, 47).

According to Amlor and Owusu (2016, 73) unmarried girls and daughters-in-law of the deceased shave the head of the corpse. They also put clean water and ash in a calabash that they use to sprinkle on the grave. Families believe that the procedure is a bridge between the dead and the living. The family treats the water as a drink offering for the deceased to move towards the afterlife journey. The washed dead body will lay in the hut for three to four days before escorting it to the grave. The mourning period for widows is usually three days and fifteen days of wailing aloud. Among the Akan, from the funeral and during this time, the widow is not allowed to do any manual work, but rests as other widows will be tending her. Although she has other women to comfort and assist her through this challenging moment, she must continue to cry aloud as often as possible to show her grief. During the mourning period, the widow is instructed to put on tattered clothing and is not allowed to be part of those who bid farewell to her late husband in the graveyard (Amlor and Owusu, 2016, 73). Among the Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo villages, the widow also does not have the freedom to

inherit whatever her husband has left. It is the prerogative of the elders in the family to decide what she gets as they distribute the estate according to their wishes and the practice is protected by local customary laws that regulate properties (Korang-Okrah and Haight 2015, 224-241).

Another study conducted by Van der Geest (2006, 485-501) in Kwahu compares the funeral rituals that people performed before 1964 and those practised in the twenty-first century. The findings indicate that the former required women to shave their heads. The younger generation did not form part of the mourners but went to enjoy alcohol. Only family members made arrangements for mourning rituals, burial rites and prepared the corpse. In the latter, they introduced mortuaries to prepare the corpse by embalming it and dressing it. The younger generation attends funerals and participates in dancing, as alluded to in the first paragraph in the sub-section. People put on black or red as mourning attire, and some even bring bottles of schnapps to pour out libations as a sign of re-engaging with the ancestors. They use the ceremony to welcome the deceased and also, to punish those who might have contributed towards the death of the dead.

2.5.2.3 Mali

Islam influences the observance of the death and mourning rituals in Mali. Bell (2015, 163) records similar information and further indicates that those affiliated with the Islamic religion get death and mourning ritual prescriptions. Bell also indicates that activities that they do for friends differ from non-Islam followers. The graves are built with bricks and cement for adult members to contain the soul while waiting for the final judgment. They believe that the adhesive between bricks prevents the soul from escaping the grave and wandering among the living. After the burial, the family is supposed to kill a bull and begin offering sacrifices for the deceased. The offerings can be held any day from three to forty days after the burial. The length of the days used for sacrifices depends upon the availability of the resources, especially meat. Widows and widowers are not allowed to be part of the sacrificing rituals event. The family commands them to stay at home before the ceremony begins (2015, 163). Bell further claims that because of the high cost of the sacrifices for death and mourning rituals,

some people start saving for them while they are still young so that when they die in their adult age, children will use the saved money to finance the rituals (2015, 163).

Loimeier (2016, 77) mentions that some people still hold to their classic death and mourning practices which also attract the public. Loimeier (2016, 77) also mentions that according to their culture, when a male figure dies, tailors use their skill to weave bolts-like cotton pieces sewn on display linen to signal a man's death. On the contrary, the death of women differs from that of a man. When a woman dies, mourners hang expensive fabrics and blankets around the house. This act of displaying cotton and blankets around the house of the late informs visitors that the family is wealthy.

2.5.3 Southern African Nations

2.5.3.1 Shona, Zimbabwe

The Shonas believe that when a person dies, their spirit wanders away to arid places and must be brought back through some rituals to join the underworld. Although singing forms part of mourning, specific songs accompany sacrifices to recall the deceased's wandering spirit to come back to the final place of the body and join the ancestors (Creary 2011, 223, Kyker 2009, 65). According to Creary (2011, 223), they do this unique singing practice during a ceremony called "Kurova guva", where the spirit is called and given messages to deliver to the ancestors. It implies that a person does not automatically become a "*mudzimu*" ancestor after death. Instead, he waits for the family to undertake correct funeral rituals before they incorporate him into the family of ancestors. Those who preside over the ceremonies offer an animal and request the deceased to inform the ancestors whom he/she is joining about the affairs and experience of the living.

A study conducted by Creary (2011, 221-238) among the Shona people reveals how the community continued to uphold their cultural death and mourning rituals despite religious interception. As alluded to earlier, the introduction of Christianity and Islam in some countries posed a threat to cultural death and mourning rituals among communities. Leaders of the religion concerned disallowed people to observe them because

of being associated with paganism. However, Creary (2011, 221-238) indicates that most people secretly perform these restricted rituals because of their strong attachment.

2.5.3.2 Botswana

Batswana people are found both in their country Botswana and the Northwest province of South Africa. There seems to be a continuation of the customs among the Tswanas of South Africa and Botswana. A complete narrative of the same rituals from Botswana by Klaits (2010, 250-254) shares most similarities in both activities and objects of traditions. In other African cultures, the family shaves off their hair before the burial, or the cleansing ceremony ends. However, Klaits further indicates that for the Tswanas, shaving off the hair is done on the first morning soon after the funeral, and it is only for immediate family members. The process includes taking a collective bath one after another, in the same water that contains the sacrificed animal's gall and other traditional medicine (2010, 250-254).

From the day of death until the day of burial hygiene in not observed. The widows and widowers do not take a bath, and their houses are also not swept as a sign of the darkness of death (Klaits 2010, 251). According to Klaits taking a bath will only be done on the early morning of the burial (2010, 251). Throughout the preparation period, the widow or widower cannot leave the mourning room unless to respond to nature's call. Even under such circumstances, there is somebody to accompany him/her to the restroom. As alluded to earlier, the widow sleeps on the floor. The widower does not lie down like a widow. He shaves his hair to put on a hat and sits on the chair. Then the core family put on black or blue clothes for the duration of the mourning period (Goldade 2018, 1, paragraph 1-2).

2.5.3.3 Northern Sotho speaking South Africans

Among the northern Sotho speaking people, death and mourning rituals include the killing of a bull to use its skin as burial clothing to appease the deceased, wearing black clothes for twelve months, putting a water-filled calabash beside the coffin in the

grave, planting grain seed above the grave and abstaining from sexual engagements (Makgahlela 2016, 111). The mourning process prohibits any celebration until the cleansing ends. (Kgatla 2014, 81-86, Makgahlela 2016, 111). Some believe that the fruitfulness of the planted seeds represents the deceased's joy, whereas if they die without yielding fruits, it is an indication that the ritual process went wrong and the dead are not satisfied (Kgatla 2014, 81-86). This also implies that, there is a connection between nature and belief systems of humankind such that it is able to send a communication that is well understood by African religionists way before the advent of the Jewish Bible in an African Society as stated by Mbiti (.2004, 219-237).

The mourning process among the Northern Sotho-speaking people culminates with '*go hlobola',* meaning cleansing (Letsosa 2011, 1-7). Letsosa also indicates that the traditional healer is responsible for facilitating the entire process where the widow/widower and other family members who took part in the death and mourning rituals come to an end (2011, 1-7). The ceremony involves removing all mourning clothing and the distribution of the clothing of the deceased.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature traced and showed that death rituals are important events. Social scientists have recorded various ways that people worldwide regard death and mourning rituals as a necessity among some European and some South American countries. In African countries, some nations maintain the traditional customs that passed from past generations. Some succumbed to Christian and Islam influence and either combined culture and religion to observe death and mourning rituals.

Chapter 3

Death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south

3.1 Introduction

This chapter built on the literature presented in chapter two by presenting empirical data about death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south. The chapter reflects on the demographics and dynamics of the research participants before tabulating the interview questions that governed the data collection process. It then continues to answer Osmer's (2008) two questions: what is going on and why is it going on? Thus, the chapter addresses the first subsidiary question: historically, how do Balobedu people view death and mourning? And presents death mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu, south, by simultaneously analysing, interpreting and presenting responses of the interviewed participants.

3.2 Research Population

Every research study gets guidance from a particular method and framework. From the presupposition of this study, it seems like there are practices and rituals in nature that Balobedu people of Bolobedu perform in the event of death. These bring questions like: What is it that they are doing? Why are they doing it? Osmer (2008, 31-36) coins both questions as descriptive and interpretive approaches and applies a qualitative method to expatiate the questions.

The Balobedu people of Bolobedu South is a large population, and it is impossible to obtain data from all its residents. Therefore, it is necessary to first identify the target population, second, the number of people the researcher should collect data from, and third, the researcher's tools to gather the required data. In this study, the researcher targeted five villages: *Ga-Motupa, Kgwekgwe, Relela, Morutji*e and *Motlhomeng*, to apply a purposive sampling method with a sample size of thirty nine participants.

The researcher is unfamiliar with the targeted five villages since he stays fifty kilometres away from the furthest destination. Two possible options available to recruit participants were (1) to go around looking for people to recruit or (2) recruiting others to recruit prospective participants. The researcher opted for the latter option.

However, Rugkåsa and Canvin (2011,132-143) record empty promises and non-compensation to participants as reasons that make most gatekeepers prevent researchers from conducting studies in their jurisdiction. At the same time, a study performed in the Berkely University of Califonia (2017, 1) associates that practice of empty and unfulfilled promises with the unethical behaviour of researchers. On the other hand, Head (2009, 335-344), argues on the implications of paying participants for data collection, stating that it needs more attention from researchers since it has the potential to influence the findings. To avoid being refused access to the community, the authors advise interviewers to recruit recruiters to identify and recruit prospective participants. The involvement of the participant recruiter paves the way for prospective participants to reflect on the matters during the research process thereby contributing positively towards the anticipated goal of data collection (Etherington 2007, 599-616). At the same time, Kubicek and Robles (2016, 1-32) encourage researchers to work hand in hand with the recruiters since they are familiar with the target interview group's culture and customs. According to McCormack et al. (2013, 228-241), face-to-face, on street corners is one of the methods that researchers utilise to recruit participants and the researcher supported the same approach to identify and recruit the participants' recruiter.

The prospective female participant recruiter that the researcher identified resides in the village of *Khemarela*, which borders *Morutjie* and *Relela*. *Khemarela* is also a stone throw away from *Motlhomeng* village, home to some of her relatives. The recruiter is a descendant of the royal house at *Khetlhakong* village, and the regent of *Morutjie* village is her direct uncle who assigns much of his community engagements and meetings to her because she has been unemployed for some time. She was also born and raised in the same vicinity. The candidate has worked with *Relela* village and *Motupa* village community representatives during the community development projects that

some private companies brought into the areas. Since most traditional and tribal officers have interrelationships with the *Modjadji h*ead kraal, she has close links with the office bearer of the *Kgwekgwe* tribal authority. Her engagements with other tribal offices and community affairs have exposed her to most people. She fits in the age group of the early forties, which makes her accessible to both the younger and older generation in addressing challenges that face researchers in the participant recruitment stage,

From the letter of informed consent (Appendix 4), the researcher stated that all participants provided information voluntarily and without financial expectations. However, he did not mention the issue of a participant recruiter as it was not in the picture beforehand. Like any other problem-solving technique that may arise unplanned over time, the case of a participant's recruiter became necessary and part of the problem-solving mechanisms.

Although the recruiter offered her services voluntarily, there was a mutual agreement between the two on financial compensation before the interviews began. According to a study conducted at the University of California (2015, 1-6), researchers must appropriately compensate participants for their time in any acceptable manner and this support the views of Friesen, Lisa, Barbara, and Arthur (2017, 15-21) who acknowledge the need to review the Belmont report that may not necessarily meet the current ethical requirements. And the interviewer must indicate the form of compensation before work can commence. At the same time, in-depth interviews consume time and increase ethical implications (Allmark 2009, 48-54). Therefore, it seems unethical to overemphasise the voluntary phenomenon of the participants' recruiter, who will, in turn, be part of the data collectors. That is the reason why scientists should pay special attention to ethics so as to avoid illicit and unwise research activities as they tend to have a potential of attracting public and political uproar (Shamoo and Resnik 2009, 7) which in turn bars them from feeling more excited when seeing their names in print as authors of well-written articles in respected, peer-reviewed, scholarly projects (Stichler 2014, 15-19).

3.3 Research participants

As soon as the researcher found the recruiter, they both started with in-depth interviews on target villages. Thiry nine participants answered two sets of questions. The first one was about the biographical aspects of participants. In contrast, the second one, which is semi-structured, focused on describing ritual practices and why people observe them.

As mentioned in chapter one, the researcher applies an observatory and purposeful primary interview sampling method in this study discussed in sections 2.2 and 2.3 in chapter two. Palys (2008, 697-698), argues that this method enables one to select interviewees directly linked to the research's objective. By direct link, it means people with first-hand information instead of a secondary one where an informant provides data that he obtained from others. The participants must also be relevant to the topic.

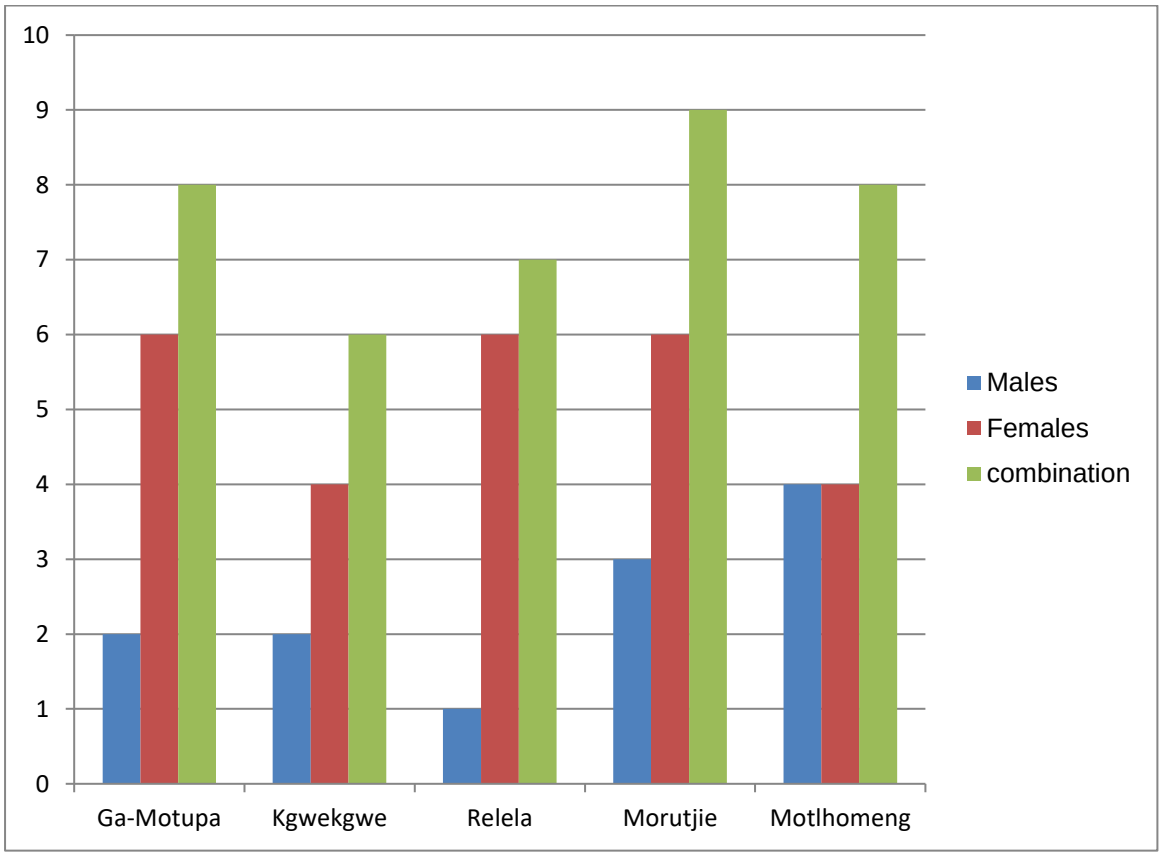
As indicated earlier, in this study, the researcher selected the interview method using an in-depth approach through semi-structured questions guidelines from an Afrocentric perspective which requires that the researcher understands things in their context and also cultural view (Ntseane 2011, 307-+322). This approach helps channel the participants to share information in line with the questions under research (Jamshed 2014, 87-88). Interviewing people takes time. If the researcher fails to prepare and guide the interview process, he may use more time than necessary by collecting even the non-required data. To avoid such incidents, the researcher prepared two sets of questions to guide the discussion with participants. As alluded to above, the first set of questions is about the biographical information of the participants. They reveal the period that the participants stayed in the area to scale the weight of the data. For instance, a person who stayed in a village for more than 20 years has more valuable information regarding the people around than one who relocated to the same place a year ago. On the same note, a person aged between 55 and 65 has witnessed more rituals in life than those aged between 18 and 25.

On the same note, the second set of questions is semi-structured and open-ended. This type of questioning helps the researcher obtain more information from the participants since it gives them the latitude to express themselves fully even though it needs more time to interview, record, transcribe and analyse (Newcomer, Harry and Wholey 2010, 365-367).

3.4 Personal data of the participants

The following section of the study discusses details from the participants. Chart 1 below reflects the gender composition in the study per village. It shows that, except in *Motlhomeng* showing an equal number of females and males, most participants in the survey are females. *Morutjie* showed the highest number of participants in the study. Apart from *Motlhomeng* and Kgwekgwe, the other three villages showed an equal number of female participants. The number of male participants from *Ga-Motupa*, Relela and *Morutjie* is the same, similarly with *Kgwekgwe* and *Motlhomeng.*

Chart 1. Research population information



Most of the participants in *Ga-Motupa, Relela* and *Morutjie* have been staying in their villages for more than 20 years, as seen from chart 2. *Motlhomeng* shows that most participants have been staying in the village from birth. In *Kgwekgwe*, most participants have been in the area from their births and more than twenty years. This reflection provides a reasonable ground to accept the participants' information as genuine since they have witnessed more death and mourning rituals in their villages during their stay.

Chart 2. Duration of settlement 1

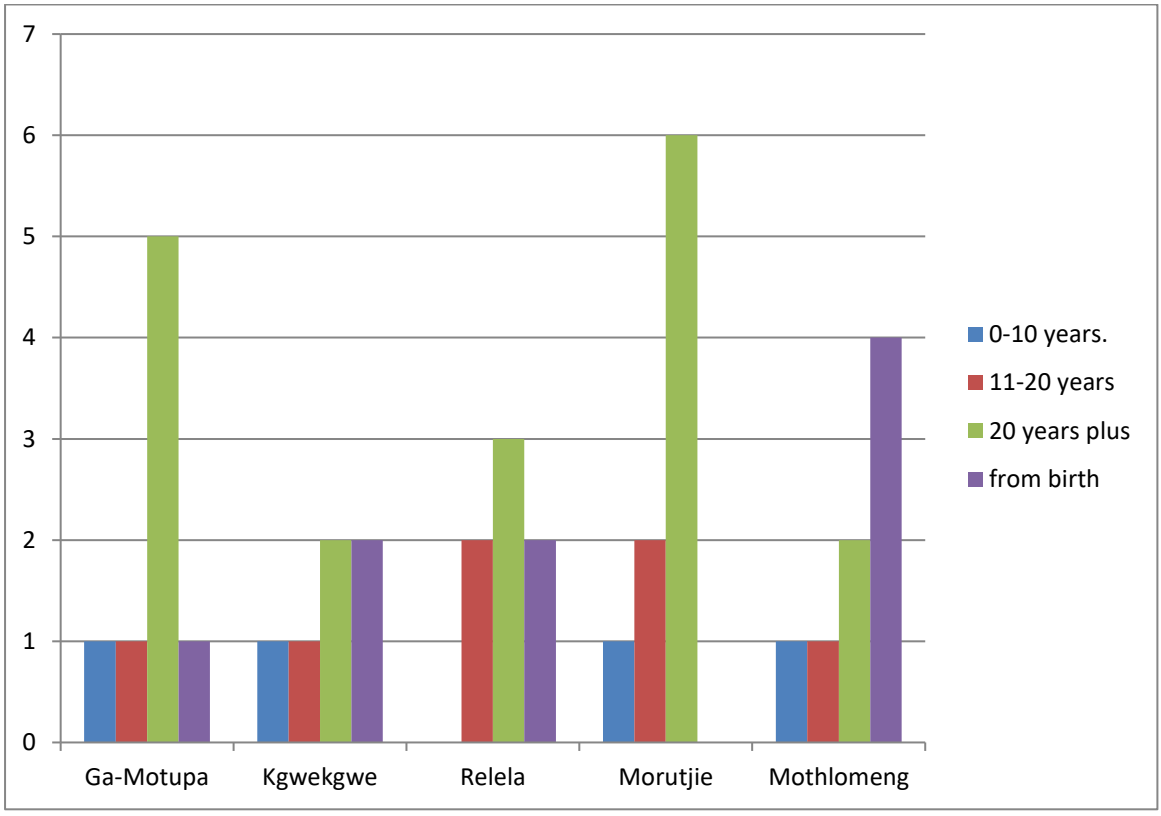
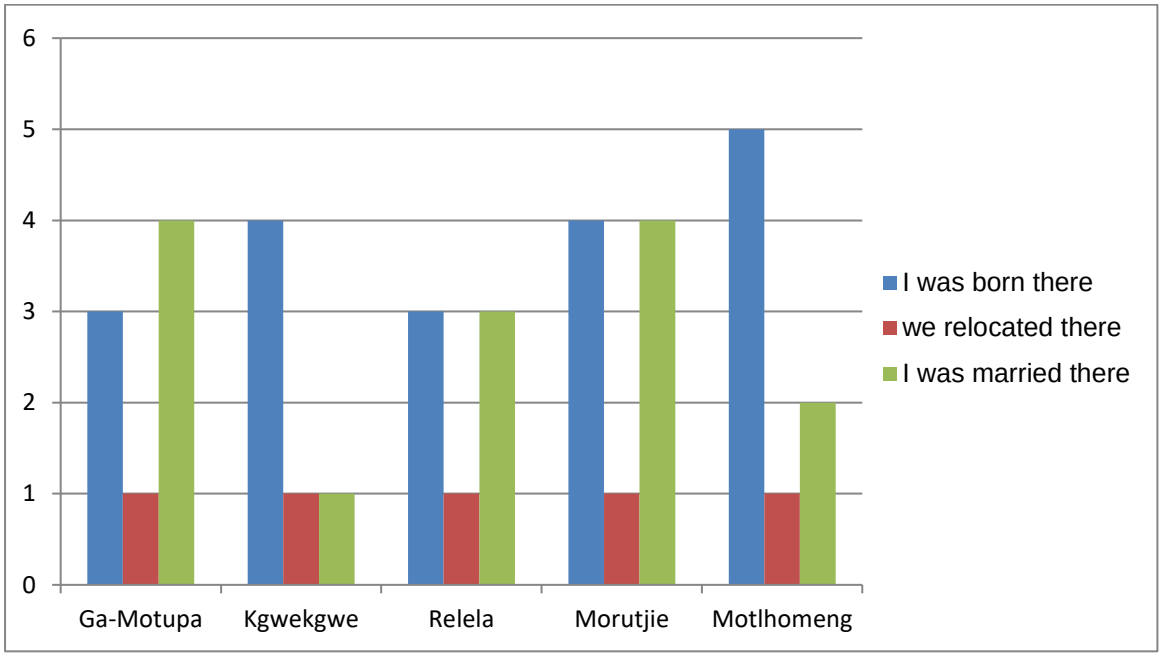


Chart 3, below, shed some light on why people stay where they are currently residing in their respective villages. The compelling reason related to staying in the areas of study include the following: most of the participants remained in the villages because of marriage while the other percentage settled because they were born in those areas. The settling of females reflects the *Khelobedu* proverb: "*lebida la mosadi ke bohadi*", meaning "once a woman marries a man, she subscribes and cling to his cultural practices until she passes away". Another proverb says, "*Phukubje ya tshela moedi ke*

khempjana", meaning "when a jackal crosses the river, it becomes a dog". This proverb indicates that those who settle in a new place usually abandon their long-held cultural practices and adopt those in the new area.

Chart 3. Reasons for staying there. 1



Age plays a vital role in sharing information that requires experience. To ensure that the participants provide tangible and reliable information, the researcher targeted participants in the 36 to 55 age group, as reflected in chart 4 below. The target group have an experience of life, and their memories have not yet deteriorated like those in the region above 66 years who are prone to Alzheimer's and memory loss. (Denis et al. 2017, 82-90) discusses the challenges of memory loss and forgetfulness from ancient philosophers to recent study findings. Some of the views they present show that people over 55 years of age start to experience memory difficulties.

Chart 4. Participants' age categories. 1

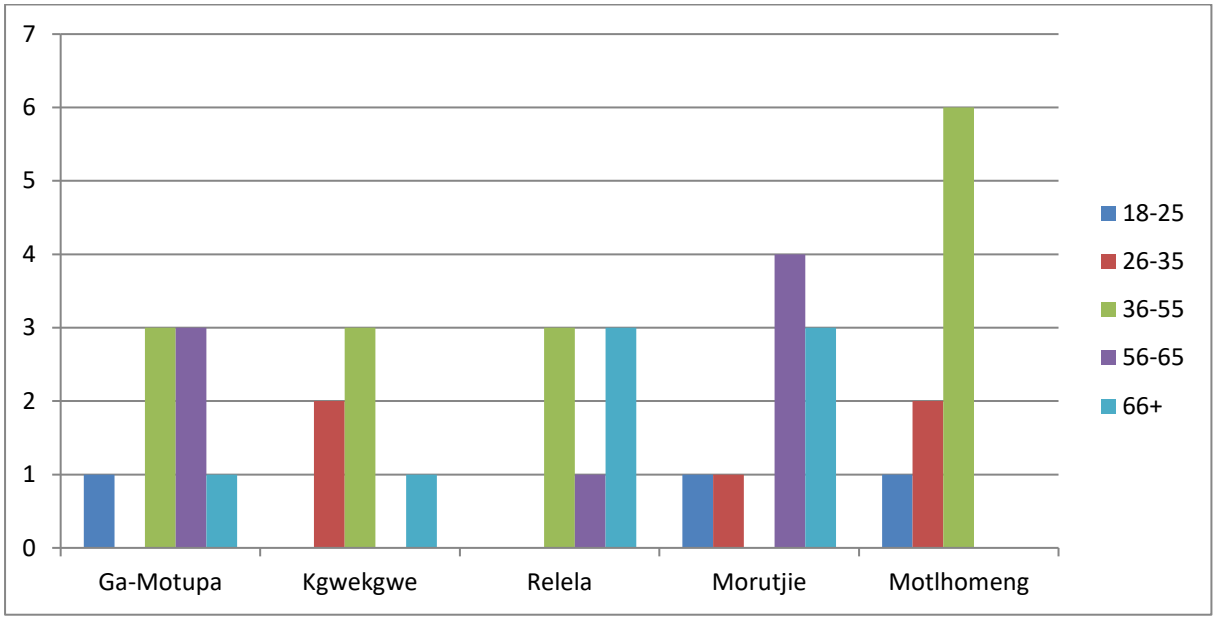


Chart 5 shows that except in *Motlhomeng,* participants were either single, married or widowed. Singles and married participants in the study in *Motlhomneng* were equal. The number of married participants was the same except in *Relela*. The highest number of widows' participants was from *Morutjie*. However, the same number of participants were widows in *Relela, Kgwekgwe* and *Ga-Motupa.*

Chart 5. Participants' marital statuses. 1

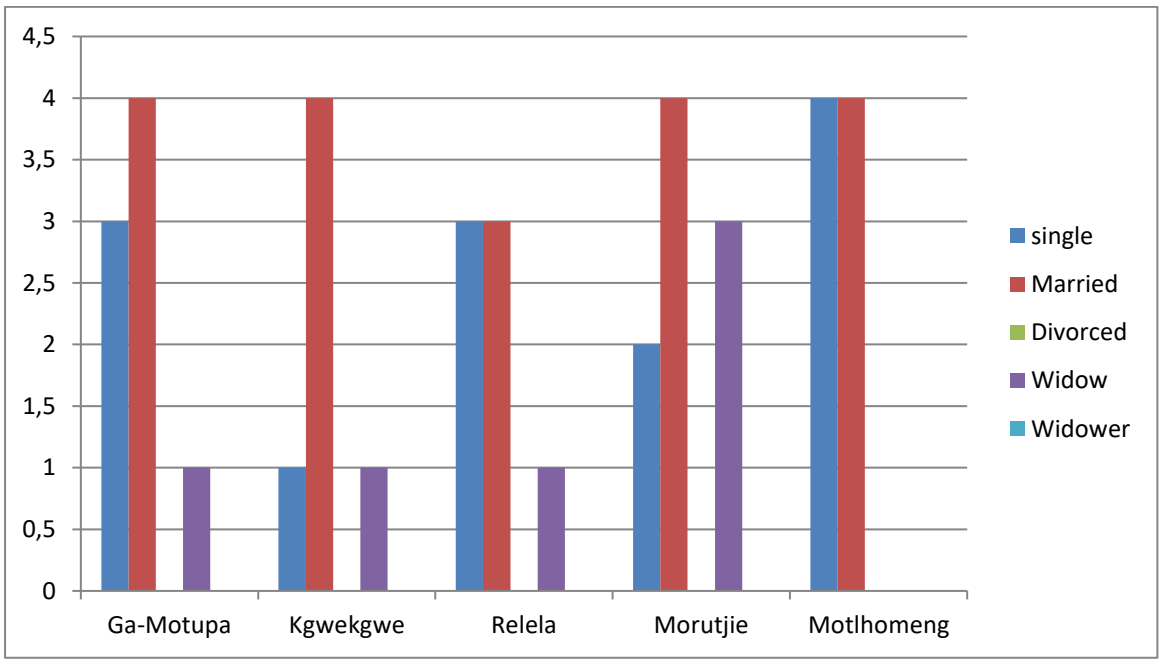
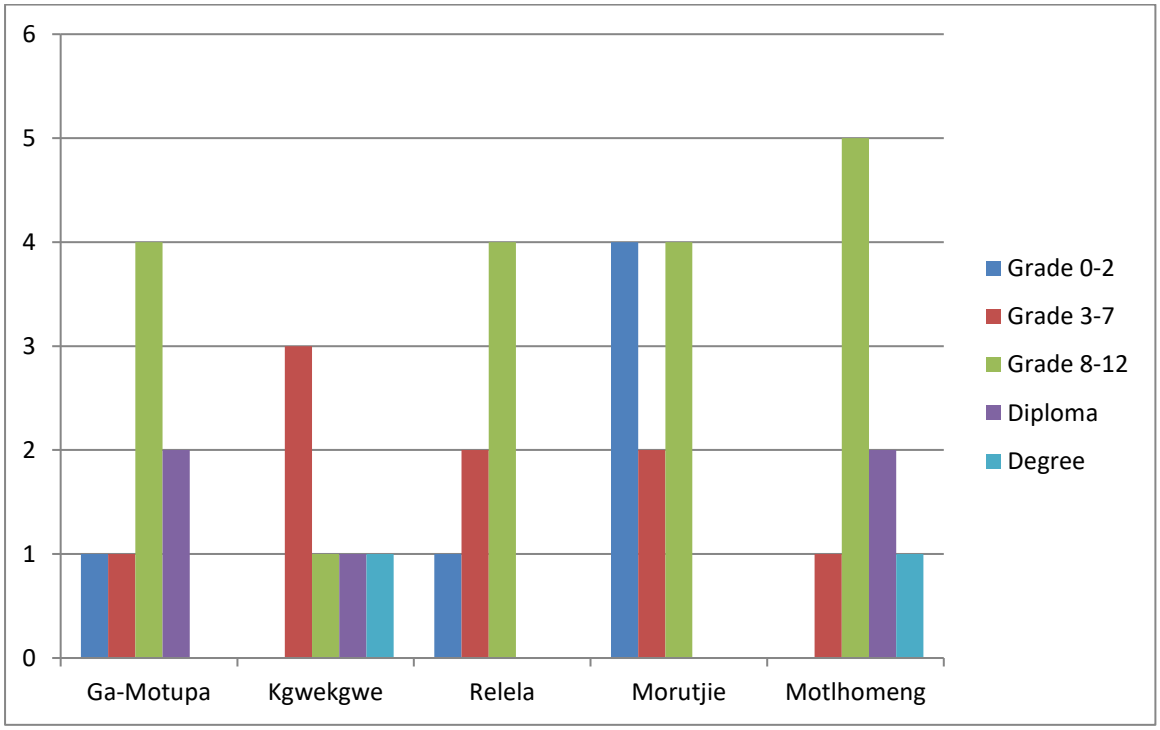


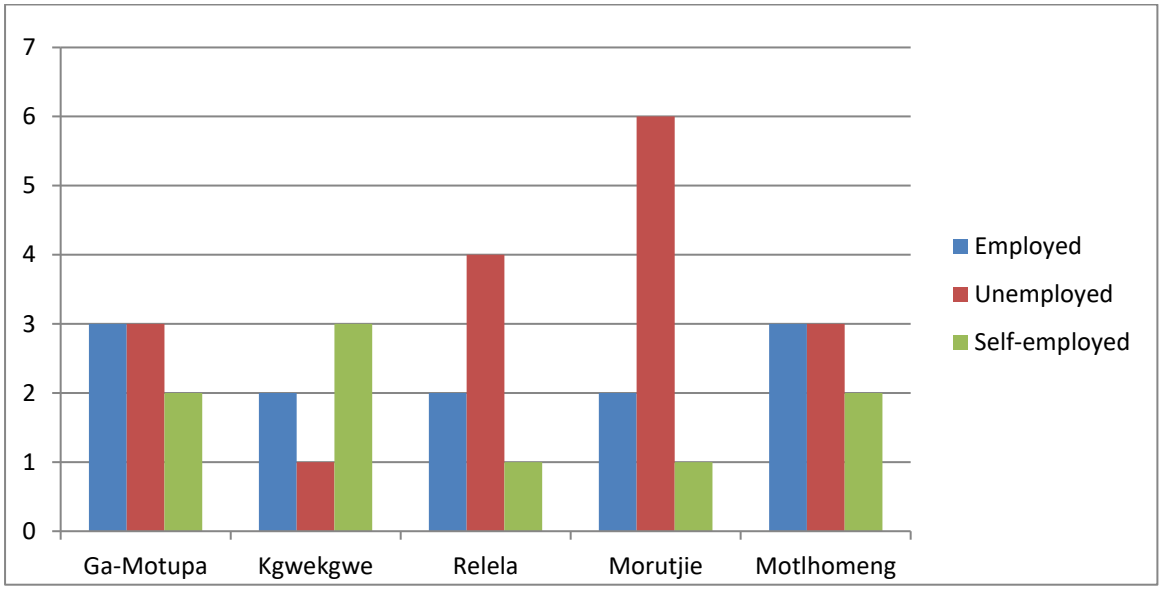
Chart 6 below shows that 17 participants are between grade 8 and grade 12. They are followed by a high number of different education levels between grade 3 and grade 7 (8 participants) and grade 0 to grade 2 (6 participants). In addition, two participants from *Kgwekgwe* and *Motlhomeng* hold a degree.

Chart 6. Participants' educational level 1



According to chart 7 below, the data shows that 44.74 per cent of the participants are unemployed, while 23.68 per cent work on their self-established micro businesses. From the chart, the researcher argues that since some participants are self-employed, they spend much time around the home like unemployed ones. Therefore, they stand a better chance to witness some of the death and mourning rituals that those at work might miss during the day. Furthermore, only 31.58 per cent of the participants have a stable job such that if they miss some mid-week mourning rituals, the unemployed and self-employed will provide them. At the same time, people who work often share ideas and experiences with colleagues. Therefore, they too might obtain certain practices from fellow *Balobedu* citizens during their leisure talks that add to their existing knowledge.

Chart 7. Participants' employment status 1



3.5 Semi-structured questions (See a Khelobedu version in Appendix 3)

1. Have you ever witnessed or participated in the death and mourning rituals that Balobedu people practice?

   Yes_____ No_____.

   If yes, please give details on your relationship with the deceased and where and when you witnessed or participated.
2. Would you please explain when most people perform these rituals?
3. Please explain who ensured that mourners performed rituals according to Balobedu culture? And why precisely that person?
4. Would you mind explaining how people perform these rituals?
5. Would you please explain the importance of the Balobedu death and mourning rituals?
6. Are there any consequences for not performing or attending these rituals?

   Yes_____ No_____

   If yes, please explain.
7. Is there anything else you wish to mention regarding Balobedu's death and mourning rituals?

   Yes _____No _____

   If yes, please explain.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

During the interviews, the researcher noticed that although perceptions and experiences on death and mourning rituals differed from one person to another, there were common expressions among participants from the five villages. If more than 50 per cent of the target population mentions ritual incidents in funerals, it indicates that the practices are consistent. The researcher later transcribed the responses from the respondents (Bernard et al. 2016, 121-122, Saldaña 2015, 58-60); and categorised the data into different clusters. This categorisation process is called verbal exchange coding (Elliott 2018, 2850-2861, Cresswell 2015,152, Saldaña 2015, 7&370). Themes emerging from the coding process are (a) pre-burial practices, (b) intermediary mourning rituals, (c) burial rituals, (d) post-burial rituals and (e) rituals for unnatural deaths. The researcher used aliases to mention the participants.

3.6.1 Pre-burial rituals

3.6.1.1 Confirmation of a deadly incident and informing the people concerned

With more than ninety percent of the participants supporting the claims, as soon as a death occurs in the family, the immediate family members usually call the elderly from the neighbourhood to confirm and witness the incident. This is because [1]Rachekhu (2021) a participant from Relela village indicates that people who were treated with herbs containing the heart of a tortoise soon after birth do not die easily. She claims that they may die and while people prepare the corpse for burial, the deceased rises again. According to her, the elder aunt must first perform rituals like *ho phasa (*a process where someone sprinkle snuff and water containing maize meal on a specified point at home with an understanding that he/she communicates with the ancestors) to enable the person to die indeed. However, before the advent of the mortuaries, Ramokako (2021), an old granny from Morutjie mentions that people had to wait for three days to be fully satisfied that the person has indeed died before preparing for the

[1] Note that all surnames that are used in this section of the participants' responses are pseudonyms to protect the true identity of the participants for ethical reasons. All the interviews in the five villages were conducted between August and September of 2021)

burial. After that, they send an urgent message to the close family relatives of the deceased so that they too can rush to verify the case. According to participants, the person who delivers the message to the people concerned will sprinkle water on the recipient's face to ease shock because it is believed that cold water eases the recipient's emotions so that the tragic news cannot cause severe shock that may result in another death.

At the same time, more than ninety percent indicate that the family of the deceased appoints a delegation that will go and consult the traditional doctors to ascertain the cause of death as well as how to prepare for the burial. This initiative is also supported by Mamorobela (2021), a participant from Ga-Motupa village.

Thirty-one participants support a practice where the informer instructs the informed to spew saliva before receiving the official news of someone's death. Participants did not provide reasons nor beliefs on this practice but one participant from Motlhomeng, Mahlane (2021), mentions that *"He e le hore ke motho wa ho nyaka ho tshekhwa, ba mo dodja molora ho thoma ka khekhosi ba khe theuwa le motodo hofita ka dinoka. Ba fedja ka o djiya meetse ba mo chela mo thwadimene ba khe yare ba khe mobodja dzwe dzwi kweledeno" (*If the recipient of the message has spirits that need to be put under control, the family rubs him with ashes from the occipital to the waist where the spine ends. They also drop a few water droplets on the centre of his head to cool him off).

3.6.1.2 Treating the corpse

When the family members arrive at the deceased's home, they must close the eyes of the corpse. According to 29 participants, sometimes, people have frowns and skewed jaws when they breathe their last gasp. Some open their mouths wide while others fold fists and bend their knees. Under such circumstances, the elders from the immediate family straighten the legs and shut the mouth. To this effect, Mohale (2021) a participant from Morutjie village reckons that the back of an axe is used to straighten the bent knees while the elder warm water is poured on the corpse to ease the process Dissimilar to Mohale's version of using the axe head to straighten, Ramokako (2021) an old lay from Morutjie contends that the axe is used to break the knees in case they

are not straight in the event of death. On the other hand, Moseamedi (2021), a participant from Kgwekgwe village indicates that prior to the advent of the mortuaries, the corpse was bent by breaking the knees to enable men to put the corpse inside a bag that would later be used instead of a coffin. According to him, the bag was then wrapped with a cow's skin before being lowered into the grave that was dug behind the house in the courtyard. Similarly, because the body and its muscles become tight due to lack of blood circulation, the family soak a face cloth in warm water and gently press it upon the areas that they want to relax.

If the deceased is a man, older men wash the corpse, dress him in other clothes and prepare him before calling the funeral parlour agents arrive to transport him to the mortuary. In cases where a woman died, older women carry out the same procedure as indicated above because the participants claim that it is taboo for a younger person to see the nakedness of an older person, whether dead or alive. Then, the older aunt goes to a house corner to communicate with the ancestors to inform departed relatives that one of their own has passed on. Finally, she pleads with their ancestors by pouring water and sprinkling snuff over the dedicated ancestral spot to allow him to go to the mortuary for the family to engage in burial preparations. According to participants, failure to inform the ancestors may spark misunderstandings among surviving family members or cause an accident along the way before the funeral parlour people reach their destination.

3.6.1.3 Preparing the corpse's room

According to two participants from Morutjie, Sechaba (2021) and Tautona (2021), as soon as the funeral parlour service providers leave the room to take the corpse to the mortuary, then "*khadi ye kholo o ba ngwedjie e ya thadzwa ya ba ya feela ndo ya mohu. He a fedjidje balapa ba tshwande ho mo nosa ka lekholo la diranta".* (The elder aunt or daughter-in-law cleans the entire room and washes all the deceased's clothes (the clothes must be packed in a trunk or wardrobe until the cleansing ceremony day comes, where they will be shared among family members). When she finishes washing and cleaning the space where the corpse was lying, the family must compensate her with one hundred rand. At the same time, Rachekhu (2021), a participant from

Relela village indicates that during the cleaning process, the cleaner smears the floor with cattle dung. According to her, men are prohibited to step on the dung-smeared floor before it has been swept clean after being dry.

Dissimilar to the version of the two participants who reckon that only the daughter-in law or elder aunt must wash the clothes of the deceased and clean the room where the corpse was laid, one participant from Ga-Motupa (Mamorobela 2021), argues that it is the responsibility of the younger sisters of the daughter in-law to do the washing and cleaning mentioned above. However, notwithstanding the difference on who does the cleaning work, all agree that a compensation of one hundred rand is supposed to be granted to the cleaner. Then, the elder aunt in the family facilitates the preparation of a mixture of ashes and water to smear on the room's windows. That serves to inform the public and passer-by that someone has died in the family.

3.6.2 Intermediary preparations

3.6.2.1 Indigenous post-mortem and appointment of the elder aunt as the facilitator of mourning rituals

When the family finally admits that one of family members has died, they delegate representatives to consult an indigenous healer, usually a male, to establish the cause of death. The consultation is like the process of the post-mortem that western pathologists use, except that an indigenous healer does not dissect the corpse to ascertain the cause of death. Instead, participants claim that the indigenous healer uses indigenous methods to determine the cause of death. The indigenous healer is also responsible for prescribing rituals that must precede the burial and the ones that must follow the funeral. He further gives the person, usually the elder aunt, instructions on how to carefully and circumspectly perform or facilitate all the ritual protocols.

3.6.1.4 Mourning rituals for the daughters-in-law

According to participants, whenever there is a deadly incident in the village, all daughters-in-law related to the deceased are supposed to assist the bereaving family members with cooking, brewing traditional beer and washing blankets. The senior aunt in the family arranges with other family members to buy similar head coverings for all their daughters-in-law to all wear "*Khenkopodi*" (head covering identical to Hijab*).* The unique head covering that the family organises for their daughters'-in-law differentiate the daughters-in-law from neighbouring and community women. The purpose of an identical head covering for daughters-in-law is sign that inform the community that they are mourning.

Whenever there is a deadly incident in the village, women in the neighbourhood summon each other to provide the necessary assistance to the bereaved family. They assist in cooking, washing dishes and pots. In addition, the family ensures that the support group brews traditional beer for mourners to drink after returning from the cemetery. While cooking the beer, the aunt puts a metal cup filled with water beside the cooking vessel and picks out one piece of charcoal from the fire to dip it in the cup. Then, she takes the cup and pours water into the cooking pot in which the beer is cooked. According to participants, when the hot charcoal is cooled down by the water, it resembles the healing process where people who drink the beverage receive cure from contracting what one participant from Motlomeng Selolo (2021) refers to it as "*makhoma" (*a disease that results from engaging in sex with a person who has lost a partner or immediate family member before the mourning period is complete). Over ninety percent of the participants mention of the prevalence of the disease in cases where improper death and mourning rituals were observed either by close bereaving family members or the community at large.

3.6.2.1 Mourning rituals for the firstborn child

Although all deceased's children observe death and mourning rituals, the firstborn child has unique practices that other children are not bound to follow. The aunt ensures that the family shaves the head of the firstborn child of the deceased by only shaving

around the head, leaving a mat-like piece on the top section of the skull before buying a new blanket that the child will wear during the burial day mourning ritual. This hair cutting style according to a participant from Ga-Motupa (Mamorobela 2021), is called "*O thekha*[2]*kheodo*[3]". The firstborn child keeps the hairstyle unaltered until the death and mourning period ends when the indigenous healer performs the cleansing death and mourning rituals by shaving the heads of the entire family. Suppose the child is still attending a school where particular hairstyles are prohibited; in that case, the child continues with the hairstyle at school as an exception because, according to participants, it is not allowed to punish an orphan who is mourning the loss of a parent. The participants emphasised that the tears of an orphan bring calamity to anyone who punishes an orphan.

3.6.2.2 Identifying and preparing the burial place

More than ninety percent of the participants indicate that most villagers buried their dead at home. However, the practice is slowly diminishing as there are cemeteries where everybody buries their loved ones. Gravediggers do not just begin with digging the grave as in urban areas where graves are readily available. Allotted numbers are assigned to bereaving families when they approach municipal authorities to bury the deceased.

Burying the deceased follows a process called: "*ho rema*", translated "to cut", which begins when the bereaved family's aunt identifies a particular spot in the home cemetery where diggers must excavate. The grave diggers accompany the aunt on her way to the cemetery, carrying bean seeds, grain or corn in a pouch and snuff (which is a smokeless tobacco that is made of finely ground tobacco leaves) as burial ritual ingredients. Following the guidance of an indigenous healer, she will pick a spot and then kneel and speak to the ancestors (this is called "*ho phasa"*) while putting snuff on that

[2] O thekha means to provide support on somebody or something to prevent from falling.

[3] Kheodo is a title that the BPOBSLPSA associate to a child who gets a sibling while he is still crawling. The child usually has a swollen stomach, a big head, thin legs and thin hands. The child also possesses qualities of one that suffers from kwashiorkor. The child gets the name because her mother can no longer breastfeed him because of the new-born, resulting in malnutrition.

spot. The practice, as mentioned above, is done to plead with ancestors to loosen the soil and allow the departed relative to come, rest, and join them.

After this process, she stands up and scatters the seeds on the area where the grave will be dug and becomes the first person to dig the grave by standing with her legs closed, facing west, holding a pick with both hands, digging once, then following the same process to the east, south and north of the spot. After that, she then plunges the pick in the middle of the four directions to identify the centre of the grave and leaves the pick in the area. The participant from Ga-Motupa, Mamorobela (2021) states that "m*oshomo wa ho rema o fede, ba o pja lebida ba do sala ba khe kwela pele*" (The cutting process is complete, and gravediggers must finalise the outstanding work of finishing the burial pit).

The process of identifying and digging the grave is not always an easy task. Sometimes grave diggers find an impenetrable bedrock. Under such circumstances, they can shift the burial site a few meters from the original spot. However, the decision to move can only happen twice. According to the participants like Tautona (2021), a participant from Morutjie village, it is against culture and tradition and perhaps a taboo to change the grave three times. Furthermore, they claim that the presence of rocks on the burial site is an indication that the person who presided over the site identification process is not the right candidate, or she might have been offended by certain things from the family. Therefore, as soon as the gravediggers come across rocks on the first spot, they notify the family, settling matters with the aunt before shifting to the next point.

As the researcher has alluded to earlier, some families have cemeteries where they bury their deceased. However, most people no longer bury at home but in public cemeteries due to changes in village regulations. Under such circumstances, Mamorobela (2021), a participant from Ga-Motuupa mentions that the elder aunt, responsible for presiding over death and mourning rituals, must first inform the ancestors in the family cemetery that their relative will not be buried at home but elsewhere. In some family cemeteries, there are spots designated for ancestor veneration. It is usually at one of the corners of the home cemetery. The aunt repeats the same communication that

she usually performs during the cutting in the home cemetery, except that she pleads with ancestors to release the relative to go to the public cemetery in this scenario. While kneeling, she sprinkles snuff upon the soil at a dedicated point to speak to the ancestors. She informs them that their relative, calling the relative by his title: son, uncle, niece, etc., is not coming to join them in the same resting place but will be buried in a public cemetery and pleads that they must not punish the deceased who will follow community members. After that, she digs up some soil from one of the graves and puts it in a plastic bag. She mixes the earth with bean seeds, corn, or grain. She then scatters these ingredients on the ground in the burial identification process. If the family does not have a cemetery at home, the aunt will use seed. The participants claim that the deceased will not rest in peace if the family ignores informing the ancestors because they did not bury the dead in the same place as the previous generation. To show that the deceased is restless, the family will suffer misfortunes at work, at home, and everything will fall apart. Their children will fail at school, family members who own businesses will experience hardships, and their pregnant women witness one miscarriage after another.

3.6.1 Burial rituals

3.6.1.1 The afternoon and evening of the day before the burial

The day before the burial marks the beginning of the funeral and most associated death and mourning rituals. Depending on the gender of the deceased, one family member, usually an uncle, goes to the mortuary to dress the corpse. The person dresses the dead in their favourite clothes except for shoes. Although smartly dressed, the deceased must not put on shoes so that they do not turn into a ghost. According to one participant from Morutjie Mahlane (2021), the body of the deceased arrives at home for burial, the family slaughter a black goat called "*khesete"* (squirrel), representing the deceased's gender (a male goat for a dead man and a female goat for a dead woman). The squirrel goat phenomenon was also mentioned by one participant from Ga-Motupa, Mamorobela (2021), one participant from Kgwekgwe village, Moseamedi (2021), It is the duty and responsibility of men to prepare and cook the meat of the goat. The meat is served only to widowers and men who have lost their parents.

Women, children, and unmarried men are prohibited from eating the squirrel meal. Later the family takes the skin of the squirrel goat to the graveyard and spreads it on top of the grave when it is half-filed with soil before grave workers fully cover it. Before the use of coffins, people used animal skins to wrap corpses before burial. In the same manner, the squirrel goat's skin served the same purpose of covering the dead person for burial.

When the body of the deceased arrives at home in the afternoon of the day before the burial day, the following procedures are observed:

As more than seventy five percent of the participants comment, firstly, the responsible aunt welcomes the body with a clan poem, the family further identifies the deceased and allows family members to queue to view the dead's face for the last time. Then, if the deceased is male, older men from the family privately open the coffin to insert his penis through the cut hole of the ear of the squirrel goat before closing the coffin. If the deceased is female, the older aunt in the deceased's family takes the squirrel goat's ear and covers her vagina without cutting a hole in it. The participants indicate that this practice serves to communicate the end of conjugal rights to the deceased. Participants claim that if the ritual of using the squirrel goat's ear is not performed, the surviving spouse will constantly dream of having sexual intercourse with the deceased. They also claim that the dead person will become a ghost and torment the surviving spouse to prevent them from having sexual relations with another person.

Secondly, after the viewing process, the family then switches off electric lights, if available, and they light candles around the coffin accompanied by a few older women and the widow, where the deceased was a married man.

Thirdly, community members and support groups prepare meals for the mourners to eat in the morning after the burial. All the meals prepared for the funeral must not be carried away from the place of grief or be consumed by children for fear of "*makhoma*" (like Ascites).

According to the participants, if the sky shows that there might be heavy rain with hail and thunderstorm, the commanding aunt appoints one woman of the family to carry an empty plate on her back as one caries a child or large cane basket on her head until the end of the burial process to prevent threatening weather conditions, during the cooking process and burial procession. On one hand, rain after the burial process signals that the ancestors are happy, and the deceased lies comfortably. On the contrary, rain accompanied by hail and lightning during the burial procession signals that the ancestors are not satisfied. This requires that the family quickly approach an indigenous healer to provide direction on what should be done to appease the ancestors.

3.6.1.2 Early morning of the burial at home

The following death and mourning rituals are observed before the burial:

Firstly, although not compulsory, depending on the cause of death, the elder aunt and other senior family members visit the grave to sprinkle water mixed with herbs obtained from the indigenous healer.

Secondly, the firstborn child will be instructed to lie prostrate on the floor outside the room's door, which contains the coffin and is covered with a newly bought blanket so that the pallbearers carrying the coffin walk over her/him when the family leaves for the graveyard.

Thirdly, if the firstborn child is unavailable or unwilling to observe the ritual or was not staying with the deceased’s husband, a stick is used to observe the pattern. The stick will be kept safe until the firstborn child visits home or arrives. This ritual is not repeated when the second parent dies. According to Sethosa (2021, a participant from Morutjie village and supported by Mahlane (2021), a participant from Motlhomeng village, it is believed that a child who refuses to observe the pattern will experience perpetual backaches.

If the firstborn child was unavailable because they were away, and the stick was used, the family will observe the ritual when they come home to visit. Firstly, they firstborn

will be instructed to lie on the floor outside the door and be covered with a blanket. Next, the aunt or uncle will move the stick over the firstborn whilst lying on the floor and covered with a blanket. After that, the aunt or uncle will throw away the stick.

3.6.1.3 Rituals at the cemetery

The participants indicate that pregnant and breastfeeding women must not attend the burial for fear of misfortune. Then went on to mention that, after arriving at the graveyard, one male person from the family gets inside the grave and places a reed mat to place the coffin on. Next to the coffin, other families also place different articles such as knives, spears, water in a pumpkin bushel, calabash, a knob*kierie* (a short stick with a knob at the top, traditionally used as a weapon by some indigenous peoples of South Africa) and other kitchen utensils. Male mourners will then fill the grave with soil while the aunt sprinkles the corn or pumpkin or beans seeds. If the seeds germinate, grow, and produce corns or vegetables, any person from the deceased's family may pick them up to cook as part of the meal for the household. However, a person not related to the dead is prohibited from picking the produce for consumption but can do it for bush clearing purposes only. When the grave is half full, the family then place the goatskin of the animal slaughtered the previous afternoon/evening. Mourners returning from the graveyard will be given "*Chidi ya mahwa"* Matsebe (2021), (a concoction made of ground charcoal and specific herbs given to people to lick to avert *makhoma from*, "Makgoma" (Sepedi terminology) is an ailment traditionally believed to be transmitted via sexual intercourse. Information regarding the true identity of "*makgoma*" is lacking and warrants further investigation. "*Makgoma"* is caused by having sexual intercourse with a widow and is usually found in males. The symptoms include swollen body parts, especially the stomach, resembling pregnancy. Untreated "*makgoma*" can lead to death (Mathibela, Potgieter and Tshikalange 2019, 387), a similar mixture with ground charcoal and different herbs is also given to new-born infants when indigenous healers treat them for various diseases and illnesses.

3.6.2 Post-burial rituals

Several death and mourning rituals are observed at home after the burial. These continue to be kept until the end of the predetermined mourning period.

3.6.2.1 Washing of hands at yard entrance

Matsebe (2021) mentions that a bucket containing water mixed with herbs from the indigenous healer is placed at the gate to the yard for the family and all who attended the funeral to wash before eating the prepared the mourning food. The above-mentioned practice is also mentioned by over ninety percent of the participants. According to Mogodi (2021) from Ga-Motupa, those who do not wish to observe this ritual prefer that a priest from a church sprinkle them with water obtained from the church. On the contrary, Ramothwala (2021) from the same village and Ramokako (2021) from Morutjie argue that some who adhere to western life do not participate in any of the culturally accepted death and mourning rituals as they associate them with strategies to connect those who observe them with misfortune or witchcraft.

3.6.2.2 Home rituals on the first day after the burial

According to Letswalo (2021), a female participant from Relela village, one of the observed home rituals is brewing a traditional beer called "*Bjalwa bja Toni"* (the hedgehog's beer) using leftover porridge. This beer is given to widowers and other older men. This type of beer differs from the one the family brews before the funeral because the initial one requires millet as part of the ingredients and has no restrictions.

When the mourners and support groups have dispersed, immediate family members, converge privately to commence with mourning rituals presided over by the indigenous healer or the family representative, who is usually the senior aunt in the bereaving family. Firstly, the indigenous healer or an individual responsible for presiding over the process shaves the heads of all bereaving members, instructing them not to cut any new hair that will grow afterwards until the mourning period ends with a cleansing ceremony which usually takes three or twelve months, depending on who has died. For example, a man can only mourn for three or six months for his dead spouse, while a woman mourns for six or twelve months for her partner, giving men a shorter mourning period than women. Keeping hair uncut after the general shaving, as mentioned above, is called "*O rwala*" according to one participant from Ga-Motupa, Mamorobela

(2021) translated “to carry”. The same information was mentioned by another participant from Ga-Motupa, Mogodi (2021), one participant from Kgwekgwe, Moseamadi (2021), two participants from Relela Rachekhu (2021) and Mampeule (2021), one participant from Motlhomeng Mahalne (2021). According to the participants, the family does not enjoy life and pleasure when their loved one lies underground - leaving hair to grow wild serves as a sign of pain of death with the deceased.

Secondly, the indigenous healer prepares a morning and evening compulsory steaming ritual. Ramokako (2021), a participant from Morutjie village mentions that the person who often took care of the deceased must be the first one to undergo the steaming process. This requires family members using a steaming mixture comprising of hot stones, herbs, and boiling water to allow members to kneel and inhale the vapour emanating from the combination. Rachekhu (2021), a participant from Relela village mentions that in another similar ritual where *ditshemo* (a concoction of herbs that is usually prepared with fire using leafs of some indigenous vegetables) is made in addition to steaming, a pawpaw leaf stem is used to stir the herbs as they burn inside of a broken clay pot called *(lengeta*). This is repeated for seven days.

In cases where some members must return to work and cannot continue with the steaming for a week, the elder aunt gives them the water mixed with herbs from the indigenous healer to put on the basin every time they take a bath at home. Because the steaming ritual requires stones to be heated before putting them in a bath containing boiling water and herbs, they can be reused when making another steaming mixture. Herbs and water need replacement with fresh ones each day when they make a formula. On the evening of the last day of the steaming process, Sethosa (2021) a participant from Morutjie village indicates that the elder aunt wakes up in the middle of the night to dispose of all the used elements for the steamer rituals at the nearby crossroads.

Thirdly, is the ritual which Mogodi (2021), a participant from Ga-Motupa calls “*ho roula*” (the symbolic mourning attire where bereaving family members, after shaving hairs and steaming, wear black clothing with no other colours or pin black patches of cloths on their shirts or blouses). More than ninety percent of the participants concur with the

narrative mentioned above. In this ritual, the indigenous healer cuts small rectangular pieces of black fabrics from one sheet and gives each member a bit to pin on their shirts or blouses to signal to other members of the community that they are in a mourning period. Lastly, one participant from Ga-Motupa Maake (2021) states that the indigenous healer uses branches of a tree called "*mosese*" to dip in water containing herbs and splash over the room's interior walls where the dead person lived to cleanse it.

3.6.2.3 Rituals performed by community members after the burial

Community members who had attended the funeral are forbidden to touch infants on the way or at home until they perform necessary rituals. In the villages in study area, families usually have mud grass-roofed huts they use as kitchens, located a few meters away from similar buildings used as bedrooms. These accumulates some black thread-like smoke web which according one participant from Ga-Motupa, Maake (2021), two participants from Kgwekgwe, Moseamedi (2021 and Kgamedi, (2021), one participant from Relela, Maleka (2021) and one participant from Morutjie, Matsebe (2021) is called *"khuna"* that hangs over a particular area. According to the participants, people returning from a funeral pick up the smoke web mentioned above web, mix it with rough salt, and give children to lick to avert "*makhoma."*

3.6.2.4 Widowhood mourning rituals at the river

At around four in the morning of the first day after the burial, older women take the widow to the river for a ceremonial and secretive bathing ritual which according to one participant from Morutjie Phatelane (2021) is called "*koma ya basadi" (women's initiation*) using herbs from the indigenous healer. More than eighty percent of the participants mention the observance of the above-mentioned ritual without going into more details about it. It was only the above cited participant who shared the secrets that are performed even to the latter. The reason why some refused to disclose the rituals was because there were claims that whosoever divulge what happens during the ritual initiation could be cursed with more chances of being mentally disturbed. In addition, Mankopane who is a participant from Ga-Motupa used the above-mentioned ritual to

attest what many other participants have said claiming that women have more oppressive death and mourning rituals than their male counter parts. However, a study conducted among the Tsonga widows refute such claims citing reasons which state that such mourning rituals are necessary as they prevent illnesses and sicknesses like *makhoma* (Khasa-Nkatini, Wepener and Meyer (2020, 8). Although the ritual is strictly confidential and only open to indigenous healers and women who have observed it, a male indigenous healer presides over it. It should be mentioned that men neither undergo a similar process nor accept mourning rituals prescription from female indigenous healers because men are regarded as heads of the families, giving them dominion over women.

The ritual begins when the indigenous healer makes a fire to put on a small clay pot that contains water and herbs. Then, the matriarch from the deceased's family working alongside the indigenous healer strips the widow naked and teaches her how to lament for her late husband: screaming, wailing, and reciting her spouse's name and speaking about the role that the deceased played, which left an irreplaceable gap. The older aunt also dips the widow in the river beating her with reed.

Next, the aunt takes away that tiny clay pot containing water and herbs from the fire and puts it upon the widow's head while she stands. As the widow continues to lament for her late husband, she lifts her eyes as if she looks up at the sky so that the hot clay pot falls back and breaks, signifying that her bond in marriage is broken. Next, the matriarch pierces the widow's clitoris with a maiden reed to insert some herbs. The aunt further puts an egg in the widow's genitals and instructs her to break it by closing her knees tightly, thereby acknowledging that she lost her husband's reproduction mechanism. Matsebe (2021), a participant from Morutjie village then explained that "*Ka moraho, ngaka ye mo khokhonya ka khwada ya pitsi dikhuru, dinoka, dziku, dzirethe le marapo awe ka moka hore a khwate, lehu le khe mo fenye".* (Afterwards, the indigenous healer knocks the widow's knees, waist, elbows, ankles, and every bone section with a horseshoe so that she can prevail over the sting of death).

Again, Matsebe (2021) and Phatelane (2021) who are both from Morutjie, mention that the team gathers the water-based adrian plants (also known as primula auricula

plants), which they call *leṯaťẹ* (cane grass), and cover the widow's body from the neck to the legs. The whole process aims to bar her from engaging in sexual relations before the end of the mourning period, which is usually six or twelve months.

Finally, to seal the activities at the river, Matsebe (2021), Phatelane (2021) and Sethosa (2021) all from Morutjie support the narrative shared by Mahlane (2021) from Motlhomeng, Maleka (2021) from Relela village and Makhurupetjie (2021) from Ga-Motupa which indicates that the indigenous healer and the matriarch orders the widow to jump over the fire twice: once towards the riverside and the second time towards home before vacating the place without looking back on the way home surrounded by those older women. Thus, as the team leaves the river to go home, it indicates that the widow's ritual known as "*koma ya basadi*" is complete.

Phatelane (2021) further indicates that when the group arrives at the widow's home, the children of her in-laws beat her with thin sticks as a sign of accusing her of killing the husband before the matriarch removes the adrian plant leaves and dresses her in widowhood clothing: black regalia from head to the toe. Around the waist, she puts on black linen. She wears a black blouse on her upper body and covers her shoulders with another black flap called *khephekho*.

Over fifty percent of the participants claim that from that time onwards, she must not raise her voice when communicating with others. If someone calls her name from a distance, she should not respond; instead, she will draw nearer as she is forbidden to shout. According to Matsebe (2021) and Phatelane (2021), both from Morutjie village and Mahlane (2021) from Motlhomeng village, before engaging in a conversation with anybody else, she must get inside her kitchen and draw water with a calabash. Next, while holding the calabash containing water, she gets closer to the person who wants to talk to her. Then without uttering a word, she breathes into the calabash before handing it over to the next person who is supposed to drink before talking to her. The above-said person must spew the first sip and say, "depart away from me, you misfortune!" before swallowing the subsequent gulps. Otherwise, the person will also be contaminated and contract "*makhoma"*. She must also be at home before dark and, as indicated earlier, never engage in sexual practices before the culmination of the six- or twelve-months mourning period.

As Maake (2021) and sixty percent of the participants narrate, the widower, on the other hand, does not wear black attire like a widow. He only shaves the hair and put on a black hat or beret for a mourning period that is often three or six months. The participants' claim that men do not observe longer mourning periods because Mokwena (2021) from Ga-Motupa claims that "*madi a banna a bela ka pela*" (men's blood boils quickly). According to the participants, all men are not supposed to put on head coverings, hats, and caps in the cemetery during funeral processions. However, widowers are an exception because their mourning rituals require that they wear a black hat or beret, which is common to most community members.

3.6.2.5 Towards the end of the mourning period

Phatelane (2021) from Morutjie village indicates that while the deceased family prepares for the cleansing ceremony, which marks the end of the mourning period, the widow must purchase waist linen ten days before, along with a t-shirt and a shoulder covering flap for the elder aunt. Then, in the early morning of the cleansing ceremony, the widow carrying the above presents visits the aunt's house and waits outside the entrance or the gate. Remember that she is instructed not to raise her voice or shout at somebody while talking or when spoken to by others. In this case, she will wait there until somebody from the house recognises her. If nobody acknowledges her presence, she may alert the family through any available person in the neighbourhood, including a passer-by. Suppose the aunt stays far from where the cleansing ceremony must occur, the widow delivers the presents a day before. According to the participants, when the aunt notices the widow at the entrance, she will draw closer to meet her. Once allowed in the house, the widow will dress the aunt in the clothing she had brought before leaving the vicinity without uttering a single word.

3.6.2.6 The cleansing ceremony and its accompanying rituals

According to old male and female participants aged fifty and above, the cleansing ceremony is called "*ho ntšha khetšhila"* (to remove contaminations or the purification ceremony). Although the younger generation among the participants do mention the idea

of the cleansing ceremony, their narrative was way far compared to the experience shared by middle-aged aged and old age participants where the latter provided more details and to that effect. Typically, the cleansing ceremony comprises of two sessions. The initial session is for the children and according to some participants like Sethosa (2021) and Matsebe (2021) both from Morutjie village, is called "*khetšhila khe khe ṱokho*" (minor cleansing ceremony) and is held three months before the second session. They duo also explained that the second session that follows is called "khetšhila khe khe holo" (major cleansing ceremony) and is for all adults in the bereaving family. It also marks the end of the mourning process. All immediate family members who took part in the shaving ritual, steaming process and put on the black pieces of cloth must assemble to participate in the final cleansing ceremony presided over by the indigenous healer.

Firstly, as over seventy percent of the participants indicate, the family brings all the deceased's clothes, washed and packed by the senior daughter-in-law, "*O di hatolla ka meetse le melemo*" (to remove bad luck by sprinkling them with water containing herbs), explained one female participant. The family then converge for a steaming process, after which the presiding person shaves the hair of all family members, removes the black patches of cloths that the family have pinned on their shoulders, as well as the widow's attire and piles them in a basket. The indigenous healer knows where to dispose of the basket. Finally, the aunt gives the widow new clothes with other colours apart from black, and the family also put on their clothes without the mourning black cloths patches.

Next, the aunt brings the bag containing the clothes of the deceased that were initially washed by the family's daughter's-in-law or aunt and places it on open ground for all to see. Then, the family gathers around the deceased's clothes and start picking up their shares. The first one to pick an item is the uncle, followed by the aunt. They all follow suit until all is finished. According to the participants, when the distribution of clothes ends, the elder member in the family conveys the wishes of the deceased on the assets that he left. This practice is like the last will of the deceased. The wishes will explain who gets what and who must inherit the house if the deceased was the last of the living parents. The participants indicate that "*lendzwi la mohu a le tshelwe"*

(the last word of the deceased cannot be changed). It is believed that its family members change the wishes of the deceased, to benefit from the estate unlawfully, tragedy will strike those who infringed on the instruction.

The indigenous healer also mixes herbs and stone salt pieces and lights them on fire to stir the concoction in "*Lengeta"* (a part of a broken clay pot). As soon as the elements burn and release fumes, he quickly removes the vessel and puts it on the ground in a room where each member uses the pawpaw leave's stem as a pipe to inhale the fume with their noses. The process is called *"ho horela ditshemo*" (to inhale incense), said the old male and female participants. Each person inhales the incense through their nostrils once and leaves the broken clay pot.

When the ritual is complete, the aunt and the indigenous healer declare that the mourning period is closed. That means everybody can continue in their regular daily routines, which they had before the mourning period began. Another issue is for the widow to resume her conjugal activities. Traditionally, Maake (2021) from Ga-Motupa village states that, "*ngwedji e supedjwa khebana*", meaning that the family presents the new husband, usually a close relative like the deceased's younger brother, to the widow. But, according to the participants, such a practice of allocating a husband to the widow is slowly diminishing, and families allow widows to accept proposals from prospective spouses by themselves without interference by their in-laws.
Then as Phatelane (2021), narrates, when the widow finally gets someone to cohabit with, her in-laws delegate the uncle from the deceased's family to ceremonially join the two to prevent the man and their children from contracting "*makhoma*". First, on the first night of their copulation, the couple wipes the sexual fluid that comes out during intercourse with bare hands and mix it with salt and snuff. They put the concoction on a piece of cloth until early in the morning when they give it to their children to inhale it through their noses to avoid contracting "*makhoma*". Secondly, the couple also urinates in one container on the same first day of their lovemaking. They hand the container over to the family uncle, who will mix it with herbs from the indigenous healer before putting the mixture in a soft porridge or mageu for the couple to consume. Matsebe (2021 and Mamorobela (2021) support the idea which claims that the concoction is believed to be helping the man from contracting "*makhoma".*

3.6.3 Death and mourning rituals for unnatural death events and exceptional circumstances

People from the villages observe death and mourning rituals according to the type of death that has occurred. The following are examples of certain deaths that require people to change some of their mourning practices:

3.6.3.1 Road accident, suicide through hanging, murder using a gun, murder employing a knife or sharp object.

Ninety percent of the participants indicate that under normal circumstances, the deceased's body carried in a coffin arrives home the night before the burial to accord the family an opportunity to view the deceased's face for the last time and spend the night with him accompanied by older women in a bright candle lit room. However, fifty-five percent of the participants state that if death results from the incidents mentioned above, the deceased's body, in the coffin, does not enter the yard. Instead, the family erect a temporary shelter to place the coffin for the night and do not allow anyone to spend the night with the deceased's body even though they keep the candles lit. In cases where the deceased was stabbed, the uncle of the deceased privately opens the coffin's lid to put the knife in the deceased's hand and fold it on his palm. According to the participants, the view of arming the dead man with a knife is that the dead will continue to fight for themselves using the knife in their hands as they traverse on the afterlife journey.

According to Maake (2021), an old female from Ga-Motupa village, a person who dies in a road accident is called *"Phalala*". In the case of a vehicle accident, Moseamedi (2021), a middle aged participant said "*ngaka o tshwande ho ya ho hoha lešaša,"* (the indigenous healer must go and carry the spirit of the dead person to bring him to a local burial site), by collecting soil from the spot where the deceased was lying before taking him to the mortuary. He also brings along some leaves to sweep the area, thereby pulling the deceased away to his new burial ground. The participants indicate that if the indigenous healer does not perform the process mentioned above, there will

be a ghost at the same spot where the person died, which will turn the place into a notorious accident zone. As a result, road fatalities on that spot will multiply.

On the other hand, Moseamedi (2021) furher indicates that if the vehicle catches fire during the accident such that the occupants were burnt to ashes, the families of the deceased do not leave the mound of burnt remains. But they package the remains, ashes, in a box contained in a coffin, proceed with similar rituals meant for an accident, and arrange a full funeral service to lay down the ashes, in the same manner they would do to any dead person.

3.6.3.2 A man who dies in another man's house

Mohale (2021) from Morutjie village claims that if a man dies in another man's house, his family does not take his dead body out through the door. Instead, the family breaks part of the wall in the room containing the corpse, opposite the entrance, to make a hole through which the corpse will exit. And the family of the deceased arranges with builders to repair the broken wall. When someone commits suicide, his coffin stays in the temporary shelter that the family erects outside the yard where it spends the night on the day before burial. The old female Sethosa (2021) and old man Matsebe (2021), who both are recidents of Morutjie village, explained that *“Ba lapa la mohu a ba hatolle ndo ye mohu a lobedeho ka hare. Monye wa ndo o do sala a khe nyaka ngaka ya ho hatolla”.* (In the case above, the deceased's family does not remove the omen from the room where he died. Instead, the owner of the house must find the indigenous healer to do that task).

3.6.3.3 Funeral for childless persons

On the other hand, over eighty percent of the participants reckon that when a childless person dies, the family performs different rituals. For example, during the burial of a normal death, the matriarch is responsible for walking behind pallbearers and reciting the clan's poetry when the pallbearers leave the room to the burial site. She also does the same when the machine carrying the coffin loosens the ropes to allow the casket

to descend into the grave. Her poetry is usually filled with ululations and tones of bravery.

But Nakampe (2032) from Kgwekgwe village, Maluleke (2021) from Relela village and Matsebe (2021) from Morutjie village indicate that in the case of a childless person's funeral service, as the matriarch walks behind the people that carry the coffin towards the grave, instead of reciting the clan's poem, she hits the coffin with a burning firewood stick that was picked from the fireplace, where the support group prepares the meals, signify the displeasure and anger that the family has against the deceased. Also, Magoro from Ga-Motupa village and Maleka (2021) from Relela village add to the narrative which states that the night before the burial of a childless person, the family privately opens the coffin's lid, and the uncle inserts a burning piece of firewood and chillies in the anus of the corpse. They also punch a hole in the coffin to signify that nothing came out of his life as, according to the participants, being childless is a sign of having an impure heart and witchcraft.

Apart from what the family and the matriarch do, as indicated above, the matriarch also changes the tone of poetry. Old female participants explained that: instead of the matriarch ululations, she utters curses and insults to the deceased, saying, "*Tšhepela lesola duwe, o hwile o khena mohula. Mpja ya o palelwa le o Siya khetshwantšho. Re do o hopola ka ene"?* (Maluleke 2021). The translated version says, "Go away, you vhoodoo. You dog, failing to leave behind your image! How are we going to remember you?"

3.6.3.4 Death and mourning patterns for minors and stillborn

According to sixty five percent of the participants, every child below five years is a minor and does not qualify to be buried in a public cemetery; instead, the family must dig his grave at home on the corner of the yard. The mother of the dead minor does not wear full black attire like when she has lost her mother or husband. Instead, she and her spouse pin black patches upon the blouse and shirt respectively to signal that they have lost someone in the family. The community members may attend the funeral even though it is not as big as an adult's funeral. The family carries out the steaming process, but no mourning period requires a cleansing ceremony afterwards. According

to Matsebe (2021), although there is no "*ho ntšha khe tšhila*" (cleaning ceremony), the couple is not supposed to share conjugal rights for three months to mourn for the dead minor.

Unlike children whose graves are put in the yard corner, a stillborn is buried inside their parents' room and Phatelane (2021), like seventy percent of the participants call it "*mefelela ndoni*" (ending inside the room). Men and the public are prohibited from attending funerals of a stillborn baby as it is the duty and responsibility of older women from the family to dig and bury them. Their corpses must be planted as soon as possible during the night, and the family representative must make sure that when the infant is buried, the head faces the correct direction that the clan maintains when they bury their dead. According to the participants, those conducting the burial must ensure that the order of the head is correct and that no ants or termites may consume the corpse so that it can naturally decompose. Otherwise, if ants eat the corpse after burial: the mother will not have another child.

According to Tshehla (2021), unlike in the case of the death of a minor where the couple observes a mourning period of three months, for a stillborn, the couple takes six months to mourn for their loss. During this time, they are not supposed to engage in sexual relations. Instead, a traditional healer must join them after the mourning period to ensure that the woman can conceive again and averts the illnesses that affects the male partner when the couple resume their sexual activities called “*ho khoma*”. This is according to a participant from Ga –Motupa, Maake (2021).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter covered death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south in Limpopo, South Africa. Its primary aim was to identify descriptive responses to Osmer’s 2008 question which asks: What is going on and an interpretive one which asks: Why is it going on? Covered in the chapters was: Historically how do Balobedu people view death and mourning? The chapter shows that death and mourning rituals manifest differently in various communities of the Balobedu and cause them to act and behave in certain ways.

Chapter 4

Biblical Teaching on Death and Mourning Rituals

4.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the second chapter (death and mourning literature and field study among the *Balobedu* people of Bolebedu south in Limpopo Province). It follows Osmer's (2008, 129 -169) normative step and asks what ought to be going on? It present: What does the Bible teach about death and mourning rituals? by discussing death and mourning rituals, using Bible commentaries and the work of theologians engaging the following Scriptures: (Gen 23:1-20, Gen 35:19-20, Gen 50:1-13, Num 20:22-29, 1 Sam 25:1-13, 1 Sam 31:1-13, 2 Sam 11:26-27, 2 Sam 14:2, 1 Kgs 13:1-13, Ezek 24:17, Matt 27:3-5, Mark 5:35-38, Luke 7:11-17, Luke 23:50-56, John 11:1-44, Acts 7: 54-8:2, Acts 9:35-39, Acts 20:9 and 1 Thess 4:13).

4.2 Selected texts on death and mourning rituals

Death and mourning rituals are mentioned in the Bible. The Bible also gives some guidance on the matter. This section first provides a background of death and mourning rituals among Ancient Near Eastern Nations (ANEN) to provide the general context of the texts before engaging them.

4.2.1 Death and mourning rituals as part of the divine rules

Most of the ANEN believe in life after death and that behind the current life, some deities were responsible for the dead, where the dead would either be treated fairly or unfairly. As a result, death and mourning rituals served as mechanisms divinely put for people to appease the deities to accord the dead a better treatment in the afterlife (Weeks 2015, 92-111). Among the Canaanites, the actions of appeasing the deities included self-mutiny, and past generations handed down such mourning practices to prolong life for bereaved families in case the plea for the deceased was not granted

by the deities concerned (Deere 2018, 316). The above shows that the mourners performed death and mourning rituals to benefit from deities. According to Cook (2014, 125), in Deuteronomy 14, God was calling the nation of Israel to refrain from death and mourning rituals that dominated the minds of many and created fear of death such that life was no longer enjoyable. The mourning practices mentioned above engraved lost hope among the bereaving families, whereas God wanted them to have hope in Him and the future. Therefore, the nation of Israel observed death and mourning rituals because their God gave them to uphold them in a particular manner and sometimes dissimilar to surrounding nations.

4.2.2 Death and mourning rituals as valuable cultural and religious beliefs

According to Nicola (2012, 109), amongst the upper Egyptians, not every woman is required to participate in the mourning spree as misfortunes are likely to occur to them, causing barrenness because the evil associated with death intercepts fertility among younger women. Only post-menopausal women are the custodians of the mourning team. At the same time, some people among the ANEN have inherited a custom of collective lamenting that is often done through groups called mourners, led by a hired professional wailer (Anderson 2010, 41-50). Continued practise of such death and mourning rituals attests to upholding their cultural values over the years.

According to Strange (2009, 399-419), the archaeological evidence found that ANEN's tombs reveal an outstanding construction work that the living performed in preparation for the dead. The construction involved carving large rocks that could not be easily tampered with by passers-by people to serve as doors into the tomb. To maintain this challenging work of cutting the stone to keep the long custom of burying in tombs proves that ANEN strived to uphold their culture and belief. The afterlife was more important among the Egyptians because they believed that how a person lived would determine the type of their life after death. Their opinion stated that the dead would come back in another form and continue to live. It is one of the reasons why they erected tombstones because they could withstand many years for generations who

die and reincarnate to join the living in another form (Teeter 2011, 111). They decorated the tombs more than their earthly house because they believed in the afterlife and saw it as more important than the current life, which lasted only a few moments.

4.2.3 Death mourning rituals as a way of healing and honouring the dead

Death brings insatiable pain. The pain is usually caused because bereaved family members face life without their kin. However, among the Jews and Egyptians, the more people cried in mourning for the dead, the more it relieved them from the pain of loss as it is forbidden for Jewish people to leave a dying person alone. According to Wakenshaw and Sillence (2018, 109-117) dying in the presence of a group is regarded as a good death and the bereaving process following it is also valuable. If people who lost their loved ones do not give themselves time to weep and mourn over it to release the pain, they bottle up the pain, and the results are often disastrous (Reif and Andreas 2014, 6,127, 188). Historical literature also shows that the Egyptians held this type of practice many years ago (Bleeker 1958, 1–17). Furthermore, according to Foch (2020, 209-223), healing involves gathering all available memories about the deceased to acknowledge the loss and accept it as it is with a view of adapting to face life in the absence of the dead and to some, it is a sense of connectedness with the departed (Nowartzki & Klischuk 2009, 91-111).

4.2.4 Death and mourning rituals as part of life's package

Teeter (2011, 111) relates death to accident and mentions that most Egyptians spent much of their time preparing for their deaths since it was regarded as the most critical but unenjoyable life's package. On the contrary, Heffelfinger (2016, 282) mentions that Jacob (the son of Isaac as mentioned in Genesis) became free and ready to die after meeting his son Joseph whom he thought was already dead. Seemingly he did not possess the same fear as that of the Egyptians that Teeter remarks about even though he dwelt among them. To further support the view that Jacob was prepared to face the much-awaited destination, Kerry (2015, 64-66; 185-192) and Spronk (2016, 279-291) indicate that he started giving his children the last message and instructions. The same

death preparedness action was witnessed when Joseph followed his father's footsteps when he, after having comforted and assured them of his forgiveness, instructed his brethren to carry his bones when God would release them from slavery (Focht 2020, 209–223, Mekilta 2016, 119).

4.2.5 Death and mourning rituals as mean of separating responsibilities

Even though the mourning practices were meant for all among most of the ANEN, Standhartinger (2010, 559-574) argues that some mourning activities among the Jews were strictly reserved for the women. Activities such as cleaning the body of the deceased and spicing it before and after the burial were the responsibility of women. Similar mourning rituals were also witnessed among the Roman women, who were given the responsibility of washing and wrapping the deceased before burial could commence (Vassiliki 2019, 86). 2 Samuel 1:24 records that David ordered the daughters of Israel to wail for Saul. According to Kalmanofsky (2011, 58), the daughters of Israel were recognised as professional mourners because some might have established guilds that specialised in dirges and wailing during death events.

One might think that mourners behave in a disorganised manner when they shout and scream at the pitches of their voices. However, Gamli'el and Naftali (2014, 135-208) argue that professional mourners and the mourning team did their work in harmony and an orderly fashion. The chief mourner, usually the widow or the orphan, was often the first to initiate mourning by uttering words or crying. On the other hand, the team of mourners had a leader called the wailer. She was the one who directed and led the mourning process at the appointed time according to the custom. Gamli'el and Naftali further indicate that among Jews and Yemenites, women who form part of the mourning team converged in a room designated for mourning activities, usually in a larger space where they sat in a circle. The circle allowed mourners to perform their wailing and mourning practices sequentially, beginning with the chief mourner, followed by the wailer and the rest of the team.

4.2.6 Death and mourning rituals as a basis for some fasting, prayer and feasting events

According to Nicola (2012, 103-123), among the Egyptians, feasting took different-forms during death events. Soon after the loved kin passed, the family would prepare a meal for mourners to feast. At the same time, after the burial, in the tomb courtyard, the bereaving family will again prepare another meal to share while reciting words that call the deceased to join them in the feasting. This process serves to inform the dead that he/she will miss the usual feasts celebrated with the family and marks the end of the funeral fasting.

At the same time, like the Romans, the bereaving family members among the Egyptians also engaged in mourning which was characterised by tearing a piece of their clothing and preparing a mourning meal. The mourning meal would be eaten seven days after the burial which marks the end of the mourning period (Vassiliki 2019, 85-87).

4.3 Engaging the selected texts

4.3.1 Genesis 23:1-20, Genesis 35:19-20, and Genesis 50:1-13

Genesis 23:1-20, Genesis 35:19-20, and Genesis 50:1-13 record three death and burial incidents. In the first one, Sarah died at a very old age, and Abraham, her husband, started with the death and mourning rituals. After her passing, the first thing that we are told is that Abraham mourned and wanted to bury his wife away from his face. The first incident of great importance in mourning is the ability to bury one in an acceptable manner. And since burial required a place, Abraham had no place because he was from Ur and had to beg for someone to sell him land. Buying land for burial use in ANEN was also not an easy task and owners used it for farming and could not easily sell quickly (Joan 2011, 27-28; cf Jeffrey 2018, 2-7). Here we are introduced to the first category where the mourners observe death and mourning rituals. Abraham observed mourning rituals like lamenting and moaning.

According to Joan (2011, 27-28), some speculate that Sarah died of heart problems that emanated from Abraham's failed human sacrifice, where Isaac should have died, and her death caused Abraham to mourn for her as a sign of remorse rather than love. However, Joan further contends that the possessive words such as my dead wife, which Abraham used when begging for land, revealed how connected Abraham was to Sarah which proved his unexpected loss and painful experience (Joan 2011, 27-28). To soothe his heart, Abraham wanted to find a burial place to honour his wife Sarah instead of just getting rid of her corpse.

The second incident was when Rachel died, and Jacob buried her beside the road. He did not buy land as in the case of Abraham. After the burial, he also erected a monument as a sign of remembrance which tradition claims, that most Ancient Near-Easter women regularly visit. This scenario brings the second category of death and mourning rituals which commences when mourning activities are performed for others, other than the bereaving family or the deceased. The monument was erected to help the next generations with historical accounts and genealogy of Jacob.

The third incident records the death and burial of Jacob. Genesis 50:1-13 (cf Heffelfinger 2016, 4313) records that he was buried according to Jewish death and mourning rituals and later Egyptian rituals. The above narrative presents the third category of death and mourning rituals where the activities are performed to benefit the deceased's body. The process helped the body to suspend decomposition and prolong its viewable state thereby relieving it from bad odour and stench that was prevalent for dead bodies.

4.3.2 Numbers 20:22-29, 1 Samuel 25:1-13, 1 Samuel 31:1-13, 2 Samuel 11:26-27, 2 Samuel 14:2, 1 Kings 13:1-13, Ezekiel 24:17

Numbers 20:20-28 records the death and burial of Aaron, the first high priest of the nation of Israel. Whedon (2013, Study light public domain) mentions the observed that rituals included wailing, beating one's breasts, putting on a sackcloth, and depriving the body of cleanliness. The Israelites mourned for Aaron for thirty days which was like the period that they observed for Moses. Nevertheless, Jacob's people mourned for him for seven and seventy days in accordance with Jewish and Egyptian customs

(Raven 2005, 37-53; Vassiliki 2019, 86). On the other hand, the deaths of Samuel and Saul and Uriah also saw people observing a seven-day and a thirty-day mourning period (1 Sam 25:1-13, 1 Sam 31:1-13, 2 Sam 11:26-27).

2 Samuel 14:2 unveils the mourning attire that ANEN put on to notify community members about their social status. Mourners often wore apparel and did not put on makeup or anointing oil. In other words, their faces were not treated for beauty but maintained a paled countenance to display grief.

Death and mourning rituals were observed for prophets, kings, men, women, children, rich and poor. From the narratives about the patriarchs' death and mourning rituals, 1 Samuel 25:1-13 shifts the focus to unravel the death and mourning rituals of the first dual portfolio holder, seer and judge of the united kingdom of Israel. Samuel, like all the other leaders, died and the nation of Israel mourned for him and lamented. The nation mourned for their national judge with the need to obtain healing and closure on the pain of loss (another first category). Unlike others who were buried either on their family graves or alongside the road, Samuel was buried in his house at Ramah.

In 1 Samuel 31:1-13, the Bible presents the death and mourning rituals for King Saul. After Saul's death with his two sons, the Bible records that some people carried their bodies to bury them. After David got the news of their death, he joined the nation of Israel in mourning for both the family of Saul and Israel troops (Berger 2011, 473, Zimran (2018, 491–517). Like the case of Samuel, the nation wailed for the loss of their king (another first category).

Further on, 2 Samuel 11:26-27 presents a case of the death and burial of a champion who King David assassinated. According to Clark (cited in Whedon 2013, Study light public domain), the woman did not have tears of sorrow to mourn for her dead husband since she lost her husband who was a captain in the army and was then to be married to the king who was worth honour compared to a servant. Instead, she forced groaning and mourning from a hidden joyous heart that would have been mistakenly assumed as genuine acts for the seven days of mourning. The insincere seven days of mourning by Bathsheba means people could engage in mourning practices for the sake of others

to observe, while in a real sense, they were not necessarily in grief. The same practice is witnessed by her future husband who performed no mourning rituals at all for losing Uriah his captain since he knew that he had orchestrated his assassination. According to Zimran (2018, 491-517), David would observe Amalekites' mourning practices such as tearing his garments publically to obtain recognition meanwhile he had no contrite heart or deepened grief on someone else's death. Bathsheba, like King David, did not perform the rituals from the heart but for the people to see that they obeyed the custom of mourning for the dead. Those around them benefited because they could not mistakenly involve them in activities that widows and widowers were not allowed (another second category).

4.3.3 1 Kings 13:1-13

In this narrative, the Bible presents the story of the life and death of a young prophet whom God had instructed to perform certain activities in Bethel where Jeroboam, king of the northern kingdom erected an altar. After his death when he was killed by a lion on the way, the old prophet buried him and erected a monument to mark his final resting place. According to Matthews (2020, 200-206), the monument which remained standing after the destruction of graves and burning of the bones by king Josiah served as a testimony of the unwavering word of God in relation to his people as to whether they would listen or not. The same argument is presented by Angel (2005, 31-39) when drawing a contrast between the narratives of the old prophet, the young prophet, and the lion with that of Balaam and the donkey where the emphasis is on when the will of God can be altered or not as well as his dealings with mankind.

The story of the man of God from Judah and the old prophet is not only a historical narrative of disobedience and punishment but rather a teaching that God wanted to present showing that he cared much about Jeroboam such that had he listened, and therefore forgiveness and reinstatement of his throne was guaranteed (Warren 2015, 129-132).

Ezekiel 24:14-27 continues to narrate the death and mourning rituals for the prophet's wife. In this case, the Bible mentions some of the death and mourning rituals performed among the Israelites. They include crying aloud and putting on sack clothes, sitting bareheaded and barefoot, eating food brought by friends and neighbours, and a mourning expression on their face (Odell 2017, 315-321; Sweeny 2013, 124-125). However, when God instructed Ezekiel to refrain from following the customs of mourning, he did not regard them as useless practices. Odell argues that God used the pain of failing to mourn for someone whom they loved to relate to circumstances that the nation would face when their sanctuary would be sieged, and people would be taken into captivity. The fact that Ezekiel was ordered to put on sandals and don a turban shows that he was supposed to enter his priestly office as opposed to mourning. Sweeny (2013, 124-125) argues that Ezekiel was instructed to observe no mourning rituals because he was a Zadokite priest and as a result, only his children were obliged to mourn and prepare her burial because his wife was not related to her husband by the blood.

4.3.4 Matthew 27:3-5, Mark 5:35-38, Luke 7:11-17, Luke 23:50-56, John 11:1-44, Acts 7: 54-8:2, Acts 9:35-39, Acts 20:9

Mark 5:35-42 and Luke 7:11 presents the death and mourning rituals observed on the death of a young girl and a young boy who a man named Jesus had miraculously raised. On the same note, John 11:1-44 also presents the death and mourning rituals for Lazarus, whom Jesus also raised from the dead. When Jesus found people mourning by acts of wailing, He ordered them to stop and claimed that the girl was asleep. The Bible records that the mourners quickly changed from mourning to laughter. According to Michael (2012, 79), the mourners reacted in that manner because they were hired and did not actually feel the pain of loss. Their focus was on making money rather than sharing the pain of loss with the family. According to Pope (2021, 53), it was not the death and mourning rituals that moved Jesus to perform the resurrection but his act of caring and compassion became the driving force because the real feeling was visible beyond the mourning rituals that the woman displayed.

On the other hand, Matthew 27:3-5 records the death of Judas Iscariot. According to Evans (2012, 449), Matthew, Luke and the later church traditions provide conflicting accounts of how Judas died. However, the biblical records indicate that he hung himself and fell headlong which caused his bowels to burst, while later church traditions indicate that Judas was suffering from a swollen stomach and developed worms which later consumed his flesh to a point where it burst open and was run over by a wagon chariot. On the other hand, Middleton (2018, 245-266) argues that Judas died a noble death as he wilfully sacrificed himself to assist the mission of Christ on earth. Nevertheless, despite their differences on how Judas died, and for what reason, they all present no death and mourning rituals that people observed for him. This is an incident where no records of death and mourning rituals were performed for a dead individual.

Meanwhile, Luke 23:50-56 presents death and mourning rituals for Jesus. Whedon (2013, study light public domain) reckons that he was also embalmed. Furthermore, Acts 7: 54-8:2 records the death and mourning rituals for the first martyr, Stephen who was one of the first administrative committee members of the early church. When the angry mob stoned him to death, the Bible records that devout men carried his body to bury it and mourn for him. According to Stephen (2013, 9a, Iyadurai 2012, 213–214.), the martyr was a result of the brutality of the Romans who not only wanted to kill convicted criminals but to torture them and scare the other community starring at the procession and to eliminate those who associated themselves with Christian ideology thereby, threatening the great commission and the mission of the early church. He further indicates that the reason why the corpse should be taken for burial before sunset was to desecrate the area which would be defiled by the corpse (9a). It means death and mourning rituals took precedence from the patriarchal era to the first century BC not only by Jewish communities but others as well who observed the rituals. L. Scott, Andreas and Robert (101-105), further argue that since the person who died due to persecution was not given mourning rituals, devout men who lamented for Stephen were protesting publicly against his assailants.

Finally, Acts 9:35-39 and Acts 20:9-10 also provides narratives about the death and resurrections of Dorcas and Eutychus respectively. When Paul was preaching the whole night, the enemy seemed to be angry and the falling down of Eutychus which

led to his death was used as one of the weapons to discourage the apostles, but God counteracted the sorrow with a miraculous resurrection of the young boy (L. Scott, Andreas and 2020, 223). Before the boy was raised, Paul lay on top of his body with his hands outstretched. The act of lying on top of the corpse as seen practised by both Elijah and Elisha has been one of the mourning practices of people before one could be declared dead (Thompson 2015, 324). The act of Paul was not only a mourning ritual of acceptance but prompted God to do something for the sake of the gospel and his people who had gathered there amidst scornful remarks from opponents of the Christian message (Chung-Kim 2013, 279).

4.3.5 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 provides a contrast between hopeful and hopeless mourning. According to Tappenden and Bradley (2017, 181-214), death is the vehicle that transports the earthly body to the grave where it will await glorification when the resurrection of the dead comes. During this time, it will be one of the eschatological events that brings more hope to the saints where the new kingdom will be bringing more peace rather than death and its torture (Breland 2017, 10). Therefore, those who live must expect it to come their way and should not regard it as an enemy but rather as an essential event that leads to a better life in the future. At the same time, Gieschen (2012, 35-53) contends that the motive behind Paul's teaching on maintaining hope for those who have died without receiving their prize as per his promises was to unveil the eschatological events that were corroborated by the resurrection of Jesus as a prelude and image of his second coming. Just as the resurrection of Jesus brought hope for the apostles, so must the hope for the living be towards those who have died before Jesus's second coming. Their reward will not be forfeited but is stored somewhere and will be obtained at the right time. According to Paul, a message of hope like their other orally distributed traditions about Jesus' death and resurrection to bring hope and comfort to those who have lost their loved ones is to be the focus (Mendels 2018, 70-81).

4.4 Lessons on death and mourning rituals

Some lessons flow from reflecting on the above exploration starting with views from ANEN on the death and mourning rituals to the discussions of theologians. The lessons can be divided into three classes. Firstly, are death and mourning rituals beneficial to the mourners? Secondly, are there death and mourning rituals that benefit others? Lastly, are death and mourning rituals performed for the deceased?

Starting with the first category of death and mourning rituals; bereaving family members collectively lament, scream, wail, moan, and spend specific periods of mourning in an attempt to cope with the pain of losing a family member. The chapter discusses the six things that contribute towards healing after the loss of a family members. Anderson (2010, 41-50) argues that group or collective mourning does not only foster continuity for cultural values and beliefs for particular societies but rather serves as a healing tool for the bereaving family before, they are incorporated back into the community. Rather than bearing the pain of loss alone and wailing in solitude, a group that helps one to carry the mourning lament assists in sharing the intense and depth of pain among the accompanying mourners. Apart from healing the wounds from the loss through lamenting, some family members also erect monuments to serve as reminders where they often visit to commemorate their kin and to maintain their genealogical evidence (Joan 2021, 38). Family members tear their clothes and refrain from using cosmetics (Raven 2005, 37–53, Vassiliki 2019, 86). All the above-mentioned practices serve to benefit the wailers and to notify the public that the family is mourning and therefore cannot be expected to participate in feasting events.

The second category of death and mourning rituals begins when mourning activities are performed for others. In this case rituals such as those performed by hired professional wailers who wail, throw themselves on the ground, singing dirges, putting ash on their heads, and leaving their hair unstructured (Ownes 2011, 21 Standhartinger 2010, 559-574, Nicole 2012, 103-123, Laurie and Deborah 2020, 141-148).

And finally, the last category of death and mourning rituals occurs on the body of the deceased. Here the body is given a proper cleansing, embalmed, wrapped in fine

lined, smeared with spices, anointed with oil and other ointments, before it is laid in the tomb or buried in the grave. These practices help the body not to decompose quickly and to treat it in a more respectable manner rather than just disposing it (Miller 2007, 240-241, Standhartinger 2010, 559-574).

In a nutshell, death and mourning rituals served to heal the bereaving family members from their loss, to show the community that the family has lost a loved one and to treat the dead person with honour and dignity.

4.5 Conclusion

The Bible records many events containing death and mourning rituals that have been observed since the patriarchal ages. There are different views among ANEN on the issue of death and mourning rituals. Views indicate that some observe death and mourning rituals because they are regarded as divine orders while others see them as valuable cultural values and religious beliefs that should be upheld. Some regard death and mourning rituals as a way of healing and honouring the dead while others accept them as part of life's package. Some see them as a means of separating responsibilities while others associate them with basis for some fasting, prayer and feasting events.

The discussions further indicate that death and mourning rituals involve wailing, throwing oneself on the ground, singing dirges, putting ash on their heads, and leaving their hair unstructured, burying the dead in the graves or tombs, erecting the monument, and treating and embalming the corpse. Discussions from theologians show that death and mourning rituals fall into three categories. The first category is where activities being performed are aimed at benefiting the mourners while in the second category the rituals benefit others, and finally, the third category benefits the deceased.

Chapter 5

A Biblical Counselling Model for Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu South, Limpopo Province, South Africa

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher turns to Osmer's *pragmatic task: servant leadership* (Osmer 2008, 100-122), which asks: how might we respond? The chapter's subsidiary question is: What strategies can one use to design a biblical death and mourning counselling model to assist the Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies? The model is necessary because Ntombana (2015, 104-119) contends that mission-planted churches like Emmanuel lack models that assist bereaving members during and after African-centred death and mourning rituals. To achieve the anticipated goal, the model gets its shape by first providing a summary of the death and mourning rituals of the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south.

5.2 Summary of the findings of death and mourning rituals of the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south

Chapter two categorised death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south into three categories: pre-burial, burial, and post-burial rituals. The rituals are performed according to the type of death, which could be natural deaths, or unnatural deaths or exceptional death causes.

5.2.1 Pre-burial death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south

Death and mourning rituals begin as soon as a person dies and differs according to the cause. First, the rituals are performed on the corpse, such as closing the eyes of the deceased and allowing either the elder or uncle or an indigenous healer to perform death-related rituals in the room (*ho phasa*). The above-mentioned rituals were supported by more than eighty percent of the participants.

Secondly, rituals are performed during the week before the deceased is brought back for burial from the mortuary. According to one participant from Motlhomeng village Makgopa (2021), such rituals include marking the windows of the room where the deceased died with ash mixed with water. The mark can either be a big X mark or window tinting. Other rituals include identifying the burial site following the correct cultural requirements and digging the grave according to instructions given by the elder aunt or matriarch of the bereaved family.

Thirdly, more than ninety percent of the participants mention that the family performs some private and public rituals on the night before the burial day. They include among others identifying the deceased at the mortuary and allowing family members, friends, and colleagues an opportunity to view the deceased when the deceased is brought home. During the viewing ritual, underage children are brought by the elder aunt who informs the children, that their relative has passed on and that they won't see them anymore. On the same night selected family members of the bereaved like an older uncle or aunt perform some private rituals. As one participant from Motlhomeng village [4]Mahlane (2021), mentions, these include practices like inserting the penis of the deceased into the ear-cut hole of the *khesete* (goat) and also, according to one participant from Relela village Maluleke (2021) and another from Morutjie village, Matsebe (2021) putting a burning wooden stick in the anus of the corpse. The latter is observed in cases where the deceased was a childless married man or woman. If the deceased died of being stabbed by a knife, they also place a knife in the hand of the deceased inside the coffin. The deceased is then placed in the coffin after performing either or both rituals.

5.2.2 Burial, death, and mourning rituals among Balobedu people of Bolo bedu south

With more than seventy percent concurring with the narrative, the bereaved family performs mourning rituals at home like preparing the death and mourning meals, putting a cup filled with water alongside the pot. Next the firstborn child of the deceased

[4] Refer to the first foot note with regards to the use of surnames of the participants.

is to lie prostate, covered with a blanket, as the pallbearers carry the deceased's coffin over him/her before proceeding to the tent, church, or graveyard.

At the graveyard, before laying the coffin inside the grave, a family member recites the deceased clan praise song. In contrast, another family member places a reed mat on the floor of the grave and the calabash is filled with water and herbs and *letate* before lowering the coffin. All the items are placed near the head of the coffin. The last item, which is the spear, is placed on the right or left side of the coffin.

After completing these rituals, one family member stands next to the grave and scoops some soil with a spade or shovel and allows family members to each take some soil and throw it inside the grave while according to NN (2021), saying "*o chepele ha botse, re do u o khumana, o khe lebelele nthago",* (go well, we'll find you later and don't look back*).* After that, the men of the village will fill the grave with soil.

And finally, as more than eighty percent of the participants reckon, to mark the end of the burial service, the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south put cups and plates on top of the grave that the deceased used to dine with to mark it. Without any inscription, they bring families and descendants once every year during the ritual of *ho phasa* to show them where their respective relatives were buried. This helps them to remember their names even though they are not written anywhere on the grave. According to Matsebe (2021) from Morutjie village and Maleka (2021) from Relela village, the water that is put in a basin at the gate contains some herbs which are used to track and identify the one who might have been involved with the deceased's death as they believe that some die of witchcraft. They claim that if indeed someone washes hand while he or she had some foul plays with the deceased, he/she will die or become ill instantly.

After filling the grave, another member concludes the burial ritual by expressing the family's gratitude to the community for their support and requesting that they make their way to the deceased's home to wash hands and have a meal.

5.2.3 Post-burial death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south

Upon arrival at the deceased home, community members will wait for the deceased family to wash their hands with special water mixed with aloe or herbs to cleanse themselves from previous death-related misfortunes. Then all the community members will do the same and eat the burial meals, often using their fingers.

Later, after members of the community have left, family members gather to observe group mourning rituals such as shaving their heads and steaming their bodies with hot water mixed with herbs and heated stones. Even though people may miss some mourning rituals like washing and dressing the corpse and viewing the deceased before burial, the steaming ritual is one of the most important practices no member should miss. Members of the bereaved family will then wear mourning clothes or attach a piece of a mourning square cloth on either the right hand or the left side of a shirt or a blouse for six or twelve months. Where the deceased is a wife, the husband wears a black beret or woollen hat on a shaven head. Where the deceased is a child, the parents pin a black cloth on their shirts and blouses, respectively. Where the deceased is a husband, the wife wears a black dress and a black head linen or dark blue dress with a dark blue head linen. On the first day after the burial, the family also performs widowhood rituals at the river before dawn.

As more than ninety percent of the participants narrates, after the prescribed mourning period of six or twelve months has ended, two types of cleansing rituals called *ho ntšha khetšhila khe khe ťokho le khe khe holo* (the lesser and the greater cleansing ritual) will be performed. The first is mainly prepared for minors, while the second, which often comes after three or six months of the first one, is prepared for all family members to remove their mourning clothes and clothes.

5.3 A proposed biblical counselling model for Emmanuel members

The above sub-sections have presented a summary of findings on death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south. However, there is still a need

to answer the question: what strategies can one use to design a biblical death and mourning counselling model to assist the Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies? This is the primary goal of the chapter.

To respond to the question, the following section of this chapter proposes a biblical counselling model that applies Magezi's seven approaches of pastoral care[5] (Magezi 2016, 4-6); and Stuart's (2012, 157-180) three steps of counselling. The model also includes a section on psychological support.

5.4 Enculturation of the model

According to Mokhutso (2019, 64), there is a need to combine Christian bereavement rituals with African cultural death and mourning rituals to avoid conflict between the church, family and community. However, this should not compel Emmanuel members' belief to fuse indigenous practices with the Scripture. The inclusion and exclusion criteria should be based on finding similarities between these practices and the Bible.

The researcher holds that it is not enough to provide spiritual counselling and argues for the inclusion of a section on psychological support that addresses the African death and mourning context in the counselling model. This approach integrates the Bible, psychology, and the African death and mourning context. It emphasises the role of the community in providing care and support (cf Kiriswa 2002, 26) as well as the role of the counsellor as a listener like a diviner as people consult her for healing of diseases or advice on life issues (Berinyuu 1998, 93-98). Thus, the pastor, like a diviner, should be able to display Kasambula's (2004, 159-160) phases of: discerning, clarifying, interpreting, supporting, reflecting and responding to issues the bereaved family members raise. The pastor offering pastoral care should be able to assist Emmanuel members to place the Scripture above community praxis where contradictions occur.

Magezi's seven approaches is discussed first, Stuart's steps are discussed second, and a psychological support is discussed last.

[5] In the next sections "pastoral care" and "pastoral counselling" are used interchangeably

5.5 Magezi's seven approaches

Magezi (2016, 4-6) mentions that Pastoral care and its accompanying ministry in many parts of Africa is practiced in at least seven distinct, integrated and discernible ways which organically arise as responses to the context of people's pastoral needs. According to him: The first approach entails mixing African traditional practices and Christian pastoral care practices where the second approach is one that draws a dichotomy between Christian values and practical life. The third approach is one that entails agonising and alienating Christianity while the fourth approach focuses on formation of family and community coping with support structures. With the fifth approach being family group enrichment and the sixth approach being exorcism and healing, the seventh approach is position reversal.

This implies that, in the first approach, people combine African traditional praxis and Christian praxis because they think neither of the two methods can provide the anticipated solution to their problems. On the same note, the second approach which draws a dichotomy between Christian values and practical life, believers believe that certain issues of life cannot be addressed by following the Bible and Christian doctrines but rather by reverting to the African traditional practice of *ho laola* (indigenous healers throwing the bones on the ground to determine and predict the condition of a person seeking spiritual help). Under such circumstances, believers' supplement Christian values with African traditional approaches to solve their problems.

On the other hand, the third approach called agonising in Christianity, Magezi (2016, 4-6) claims that this approach banks on holding on to the initial Christian belief amidst scornful attacks and severe criticism from those who don't believe in the gospel message or its strategies of handling life issues. On the fourth approach which focuses on the formation of family and community coping support structures, pastoral caregivers encourage community members to identify or form support groups and structures that will assist in dealing with emerging family challenges. In that case, the support group comprises of family members who know and understand the culture of the family or the community affected by the death.

Similarly, in the fifth approach which is family group enrichment, pastoral caregivers establish some peer-group discussion forums that deal with life challenges. In addition, the sixth approach which is anchored on exorcism and healing, believers hold that evil spirits cause sicknesses and life problems, and as a result, they often use tangible objects and declare them anointed (e.g., water, oil, handkerchief, and other pieces of cloths) to protect them from evil spirits. And finally, on the seventh approach which is termed position reversal. Christians tend to look backward on old traditional ways of addressing life problems and thus regress from their faith-based techniques into traditional ones.

Although the researcher concurs with Magezi's (2016, 4-6) seven approaches, his view is that not all Emmanuel members fall into any of his seven categories listed. Instead, some belong to another approach which he calls the confused approach. These members want to hold on to their Christian faith but do not know how to address the Balobedu people's death and mourning rituals. In the confused approach, Emmanuel members yearn for biblical guidance to addresses death and mourning rituals in their families. Hence the researcher applies Magezi's approach as one of the tools to propose a biblical counselling model.

The first step in applying Magezi's approach is to categorise unbiblical and unbeneficial death and mourning rituals for Emmanuel members.

5.5.1 Unbiblical-unbeneficial pre-death and mourning rituals

When two elderly people from the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south have confirmed the death of an individual, the family then notify other immediate family members and in-laws who do not stay in the same house or place with the deceased. Upon arrival, the messenger performs rituals such as (1) sprinkling water on the face of the of the person to whom the message of death is conveyed, (2) instructing the recipient of the message of sad news to spew saliva before the messenger breaks the sad news to the listener, (3) assigning a female or male to clean the room the person died in using water mixed with prescribed herbs, (4) *ho phasa* (acts of uttering words to ancestors while putting snuff and pouring cold water containing maize meal on the designated

spot, (5) tint the windows with ash wax and (6) provide the daughters-in-law with identical head coverings to make them look alike, (7) consult an indigenous healer to establish the cause of death. In cases where the messenger uses a phone method to convey the message, the reporter applies rituals mentioned in no. 2 above.

In instances of unnatural death like a road accident or being stabbed to death. The rituals include (1) ho *hoha lešaša* (using a specific tree branch and herbs from the indigenous healer to take the deceased's spirit from the place where the deceased died to the home where they will be buried), (2) erecting a shelter outside the courtyard or compound to put the coffin in overnight before the burial day and (3) forbidding mourners to spend the night with the coffin in the erected shelter as they would normally do in a room for natural death incidents.

Other rituals include those performed for a childless adult. This involves opening the coffin to insert a burning piece of firewood in the anus of the deceased. This is done on the evening before the burial day. During the burial process a family member insults the deceased when the coffin is lowered in the grave because the deceased did not reproduce.

5.5.2 Unbiblical-unbeneficial burial mourning rituals

The following are unbiblical and unbeneficial mourning rituals. At the grave, for both natural and unnatural deaths, a man would scoop some soil using a spade or shovel and stand beside the grave to allow mourning family members to grab a handful and throw it into the grave, speaking certain words. Placing utensils like knives, a water-filled calabash, spear, goat skin, adrian plants and plates/cups in the grave to accompany the deceased.

At home, the first-born child of the deceased lies down while covered with a blanket to allow people carrying the coffin to go over him, leaving a mat-like section on the skull of the mourning first-born uncut. In contrast, the other head section is fully shaven, and the hair style according to participant from Ga-Motupa, Mamorobela (2021), is called *o thekha kheodo* (supporting the child suffering from malnutrition).

5.5.3 Unbiblical-unbeneficial post-burial rituals

The following are unbiblical and unbeneficial post-burial rituals. After the burial, death and mourning rituals include, washing hands in the water basin placed at the gate for those returning from the graveyard and brewing *bjalwa bja tlhoni* (a traditional beer made from the porridge leftover after the mourning meal).

In the early hours of the morning after the burial, the bereaved family members perform widowhood rituals at the river under the supervision of an indigenous healer or matriarch of the bereaved. The rituals include (1) teaching the widow how to lament and confess her loss, (2) piercing her genitals with a sharp cane peel and (3) jumping over a boiling clay pot containing herbs.

As mentioned in the previous section, after the prescribed mourning period members of the bereaved family assemble to observe a cleansing ritual done by an indigenous healer. Two rituals are observed; the first is for children six months after the burial and the second, and final is for all adults after twelve months. During the latter, the indigenous healer (1) steams the whole family. This is done by covering each of them with blankets as they inhale the vapour caused by hot stones placed in water mixed with herbs in a basin, (2) shaves their hair, (3) cuts and pierces part of their bodies and insert herbs to cure death, (4) removes their mourning clothes and (5) appoints a replacement husband for the widow who must perform sexual activities according to the indigenous healer's prescription to avert *makhuma*. In preparation of the culmination of the widowhood mourning period, some of the activities that the widow observes are buying a traditional *doek* and t-shirts for the matriarch.

The second step in applying Magezi's approach is to categorise biblical and beneficial death and mourning rituals for Emmanuel members.

5.5.4 Beneficial death and mourning rituals for Emmanuel members

5.5.4.1 Beneficial pre-burial rituals for Emmanuel members

The ritual of washing the corpse, embalming it, anointing it with sweet-smelling spices and ointments, and dressing it in clean clothes are recommendable. Rituals, that are beneficial and resonate with the Scripture. The same with sharing the news of someone's passing, supporting each other, and preparing a burial place is also essential. Other mourning rituals include (a) staying with a person on the deathbed in anticipation of getting the instructions of the deceased and (b) viewing the remains of the deceased in a hospital or at home on the night before the burial day.

5.5.4.2 Beneficial burial rituals for Emmanuel members

A decent and dignified burial process includes carrying the coffin to the grave, singing songs or hymns to comfort the bereaved family, putting the coffin in the grave and covering it with soil. Expressing gratitude to members of the community for supporting the family during the funeral process.

5.5.4.3 Beneficial post-burial rituals for Emmanuel members

Balobedu people of Bolobedu south converge annually to observe a ritual of *ho phasa* where they also visit the graves of the deceased to show descendants where their relatives were laid. They also use that opportunity to narrate stories about their histories which entails business engagements, problem solving strategies and life motivations. That practice is similar to the erection of tombstones and monuments which also marks the end of burial rituals in scriptures. Apart from *ho phasa,* the ritual is worth observing because some departed relatives may have left some notable skills upon which those who remain may learn to resuscitate or apply them in their lifetime.

The third step in applying Magezi's approach is to respond to the confused approach.

5.5.5 Responding to the confused approach of Emmanuel members

5.5.5.1 Pre-burial rituals

One of the important rituals found among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south is to sit near the deathbed and listen the last instructions of the deceased. Participants from Morutjie, Relela and Motupa, indicate that, those privileged to have this experience are honoured in the bereaved family because the deceased's final instructions are treated like their last will. According to some participants from Morutjie and Motlhomeng, some of the instructions may include the location of hidden treasures because elderly people would not bank their money but rather hid it somewhere.

Participants from Relela and Motupa, reckon that, not only do people utter blessings and raise grouses caused by their adversaries, but some also use it as a moment to plead for reconciliation and pronounce forgiveness because some believe that they should not die with unsettled scores as that would invite a black cloud on their afterlife journey.

Another ritual involves viewing the deceased. As soon as the funeral undertakers place the coffin in the appointed room the night before the burial, the older uncle of the bereaved family confirms that it is the deceased by allowing the undertakers to open the coffin's lid to identify his face. After identification and confirmation, immediate family members are called to view the deceased. The matriarch of the family also accompanies the children of the deceased, if they are still minors, to take part in viewing their dead parent while whispering to them that he/she has died and will no longer be seen again.

For Emmanuel members, it is during this time that emotional support is needed to assist those who cannot cope with the reality of death. Just like the sons of Jacob after the death of their father. Soon after his death, Joseph and his brothers took some time to weep while viewing his dead body before instructing the physicians to embalm him; a process which lasted for forty days (Gen 49:1-33 & 50:1-4). Although Emmanuel

members may not embalm their dead, it seems important to have some time with the dead body to view it for the last time before taking it to the burial ground where it will be hidden from their eyesight.

Dead people deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. Hence, their corpses can still be bathed, treated with ointments, and dressed in clean attire as alluded to earlier and a practise that is found among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south.

Burying the deceased quickly without viewing them may deprive bereaved Emmanuel members of the opportunity to fully acknowledge the reality of the death that occurred. The study conducted by Makgahlela, Sodi, Shai and Mokwena (2021, 91-98) among the Northern Sotho-speaking people shows that death and mourning rituals contribute to the healing process even though it is subject to cultural beliefs. According to the participants, viewing the deceased assisted the bereaved to face the pain and obtain healing quickly, The study has also highlighted the different treatment of men and women during the viewing process where the widow is covered with a blanket, handheld and escorted by one or two senior women who have also had the same experience to take the last look upon her dead husband while the widower walks by himself unwrapped with a blanket but wearing a beret or hood on a shaved head to take the same last look on his dead spouse. These practices may concur with scriptures that women are weaker vessels that must be treated with care.

5.5.5.2 Burial rituals

When a person dies, it is human to grant them a proper burial as noticed in the Bible. It is human for Emmanuel members to treat the corpse respectfully even though it is subject to decay. According to Berg (2017, 216-229), women who supported Jesus's ministry witnessed and assumed the role of burying him according to Jewish custom. At that time, no dignified burial and mourning rituals could be observed for a crucified person. Burying dead bodies properly does not negate the Emmanuel members' faith in any way since New Testament believers did likewise as in the case of Stephen (Acts 8:2).

The Bible does not mention whether the dead are carried with their heads facing a specific direction, as in the case of the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south. The heads of the latter point towards the direction that pallbearers take when moving the coffin. As a result, the notion among Balobedu people of Bolobedu south, which states that the head must face the direction of pallbearers convey the idea of burying the dead with dignity and respect. Emmanuel members are encouraged to observe this practice.

Burial does not only benefit the dead person but also serves as a reminder. Death and mourning rituals like placing the cadaver in the coffin and later descending it into the grave remind Emmanuel members that life on earth is not forever. They need to know that death is part of the package of human life. The burial process serves as a mirror where they imagine themselves and think carefully about the afterlife promises mentioned in the Bible.

The death and mourning rituals the first child observed among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south do not have similarities with the Bible and are not recommendable for Emmanuel members. They include, among others: lying down while covered with a blanket to allow people carrying the coffin to go over them and cutting the hair in a traditional style which according to a participant from Ga-Motupa, Mamorobela (2021), called *o thekha kheodo* (supporting the child suffering from malnutrition*).* Other burial rituals, such as putting utensils like knives, water-filled calabash, spear, goat skin, adrian plants and plates/cups in the grave to accompany the deceased, suggest that they anticipate activities in the afterlife. This view is contrary to the biblical teaching, which indicates that beyond the grave, there is no work (Ecclesiastes 9:9-10).

5.5.5.3 Pots burial rituals

The post-burial death and mourning rituals found among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south, such as washing hands in the water mixed with a herb in a basin placed at the gate for those returning from the graveyard to remove bad luck, conflicts with the teaching that God protects the believers.

Emmanuel church forbids the drinking of alcohol. Thus, the brewing of *bjalwa bja tlhoni* (a traditional beer made from the left-over porridge after the burial) is not necessary for Emmanuel members to observe.

As alluded to earlier that the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south wears mourning clothes after the burial, for Emmanuel members I will discourage them from following the practice since it is not recommended in the church era. According to 1Peter 2:9, Christians have joined the royal priesthood of the kingdom of heaven where Jesus is the chief high priest. Just as God forbade Ezekiel the prophet (Ezek 24:17) to relinquish his office after the death of his wife, so shall be the case of Emmanuel members.

The practice of appointing a replacement husband is also a prerogative of the bereaved family. Although the practice is witnessed among Balobedu people of Bolobedu south and almost like the one found in the Old Testament, nevertheless, Baloyi (2016, 201-216) argues that this practice deprives the widow of her freedom of choice; dehumanises and subjects her to men's authoritarian rules, insecurity and exposes her to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). On the same note, Manala (2015, 1-9) argues that the manner in which the rituals are carried out seem to disrespect women and also their rights to human dignity.

The third step in formulating a biblical counselling model for Emmanuel members is to apply Stuart's (2012, 157-180) counselling steps.

5.6 Applying Stuart's three counselling steps

Stuart (2012, 157-180) argues that the three steps essential for counselling are: addressing men's physical state, mental state and spiritual state (commonly likened with body, soul and spirit). Therefore, Stuart further presents pastors, elders, and deacons as instruments through which counselling sessions are organised and carried out to facilitate the abovementioned three steps (2012:157-180). They teach those that are mourning, the word of God and recommend it to be applied in their situations. They also pray for the bereaved family so that the Holy Spirit, who is the great teacher, may clarify and confirm the word to their hearts and also do his other work of being the

counsellor who gives them complete healing. Since healing and assurance are needed during death, Stuart (2012, 157-180) argues that the anticipated goal can only be obtained when the counselee knows God, accepts his word and embraces what the Bible teaches him about his ability concerning humanity and their problems.

Counselling is about helping someone identify the problem to find or propose a possible solution to it (Lambert 2016, 3). It is an effort to regain the lost status of life due to problems they come by. From a biblical point of view, mankind's problem begins as soon as their relationship with God was disturbed (Gen 3:8-11). That absence of God in people's lives weakened their relationship with each other and God.

Similarly, when death comes, it affects the relationship between human beings and God as they begin to ask many questions concerning death. Often, their emotions are the result of a confusion. Therefore, for Emmanuel members to be completely healed from the experience of death, their body, mind, and spiritual should be addressed. To assist the Emmanuel members, the researcher, need to address how the confusion caused by death and mourning rituals affect their relationship with God, their well-being, and their relationship with the community. The researcher needs to also address the whole person (Stuart 2012, 162) rather than just their emotions alone. That forms part of practical theology to assist the whole person to deal with issues of life when interacting with the world for the advancement of the gospel because it is not only about what they say and what they do, that should have coherence in explaining the meaning behind their reason for what they say and what they do (Swinton and Mowat, 2016, 5). For example, if the deceased was their father and sole provider, this would deprive them of meeting physical needs. Pondering on how to foster life without the pillar of support leaves them with worries that disorganise their logical thinking capacity, thus affecting the mind. Whenever the body is deprived of physical needs and the mind is clouded with worries, a person's spiritually is affected.

5.6.1 Addressing the physical needs

Apart from averting *makhuma,* (an ailment traditionally believed to be transmitted via sexual intercourse or exchanging food with widows or someone from a funeral), the

Balobedu people of Bolobedu south perform death and mourning rituals to protect members of the bereaved family from sicknesses, opens doors of employment and enhances their business opportunities. The researcher will advise Emmanuel members to devise a means of generating some income and to look to Jesus for their well-being. Emmanuel female members should not neglect their bodies and leave them untidy, as seen among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south during the mourning period, where the wife of the deceased does not bath until the morning of the burial day.

5.6.2 Addressing the psycho-social aspects

The participants also indicate that members of the bereaved family ask many questions like: what really caused their beloved's death? How are they going to bury them? How are they going to meet their financial needs? Who is going to provide the moral support that the deceased used to offer them? How are they going to live without them and what are we supposed to do now? According to participants, the bereaved family members find themselves in a difficult situation, struggling to concentrate on one thing, feeling psychologically confused and burdened.

To assist Emmanuel members in answering the above questions, the researcher will remind them that human beings die due to natural and unnatural incidents and causes (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2). Just as Jesus and Stephen were buried by surviving people, the researcher will encourage Emmanuel members to assist the bereaved family to bury the deceased. Assistance comes in the form of joining existing or establishing burial societies that provide financial and moral assistance during the period of death and mourning.

Another form of assistance comes by providing moral support to the bereaved. Jesus urged his mother to look at the disciple whom he loved and referred to him as her son thereby revealing the importance of being one family in Christ (John 19:26-27). Paul also urges believers to help each other in carrying the burdens (Gal 6:2).

The researcher will further advise Emmanuel members to focus on Scriptures that encourage us to allow Christ to be part of the grief and loss stages that clouds minds. Jesus told the disciples not to worry (Matt 6:33). Will also encourage them to cast all their anxieties and burdens to Christ as (1Peter 1:5) says he cares for them.

5.6.3 Addressing the spiritual aspects

One of the activities that the elder aunt performs among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south is *ho phasa* (invoking the presence of the ancestors). Participants indicate that the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south regard their ancestors as mediators who have powers and should be revered and honoured. Participants reckon that *ho phasa* is not for death and mourning rituals. It also forms part of the rituals that the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south observes at least once per annum to show continued reverence and dependence upon them for safety and security in life.

For Emmanuel members, the researcher will advise other believers to remind the bereaved family members that Jesus became the only perfect sacrificial lamb of the Passover to redeem people from the fear of death (1Cor 5:7). There is no need to put someone in-between as he is the only mediator between man and God (1Tim 2:5). As Jesus told the disciples not to fear people but revere God who is able to destroy both the flesh and the spirit of man in the lake of fire (Matt 10:28). The researcher will advise the members to serve God alone and fear him because he possesses absolute power to save and protect them from anything.

5.7 Psychological support

This section further addresses the role of a person in providing psychological care, since Stuart step includes it in his three steps. The members of the bereaved family (immediate and extended family) also need psychological support. This need points to view that pastoral care occurs within the community praxis (Kiriswa 2002, 25). As alluded to earlier that as soon as death occurs among the Balobedu, family members (this includes the extended family) are informed. They usually come to provide support to the bereaved family. They provide support by staying and sleep with the bereaving

family members for the duration of the burial preparation until few days after the burial. The purpose of this practice is to assist the members of bereaved family handle loneliness and the stress of losing someone they love.

According to some participants, the Balobedu perform the steaming process to ensure that bereaving family members vent off the stress levels of their loss so that they can carry on with life. On the other hand, they also mention that the *bolebadja* (a concoction of herbs) that is offered to children who have lost their parents, helps them to quickly forget about the deceased.

To assist Emmanuel members in Bolobedu in handling loneliness and the stress of losing a loved one, the researcher holds that the family members should refrain from observing the practice of seaming and giving *bolebadja* to children. Instead, the researcher will employ Blanton's (2019, 1-20) approach to address loneliness and stress. This approach promotes two phases, namely, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). The former implies that the candidate engages in meditation and yoga techniques as forms of relieving stress levels. The researcher promotes the use of Scriptures for meditation instead of yoga. This can also be made possible by engaging with fellowship prayer groups and Bible study programs where some homework is given which keep the minds of attendees on scriptural passages thereby reducing idle mental moments.

On the other hand, the later refers to a psychotherapy approach designed to help people manage symptoms of depression by combining cognitive behavioural therapy, which helps people to change their thoughts and behaviour, and mindful practices which urges them to focus on the present circumstances without judging themselves on what had previously bothered them. Similarly, the researcher would submit to bereaving family members of Emmanuel in Bolobedu south that it isn't useful to blame themselves or others about death of their loved one or worry much about their future but to admit that it has occurred and irreversible.

5.8 Promoting the model in the Emmanuel Assemblies

The man objective of the study is to design a biblical death and mourning counselling model to assist the Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies handle death in a family. Hence, the researcher will write an official letter to the leadership of Emmanuel Assembly requesting to share with them the outcomes of this study. After presenting the study, the researcher will then present a formal request to have them consider adopting the model as part of Emmanuel pastoral care and faith formation programmes. The request will be based on the following three points:

A. No existing tool

   Emmanuel Assemblies does not have a tool to address death and mourning rituals of the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south. In the event of officiating a marriage, a pastor often has a manual that guides him/her on what should be done. The proposed model can assist pastors and members to address the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south death and mourning rituals.

B. A model for pre and post burial rites

   The model list for death and mourning rituals that are performed before the burial begins, during the burial and after the burial. With the list being self-explanatory, the pastor can follow each item and provide the correct biblical response to his/her members. Furthermore, the model also provides a contrast of unbiblical and unbeneficial rituals with biblical and beneficial ones, making it simpler for the pastor and the members. It thus works like a troubleshooting guide with a possible solution manual.

C. Reducing confusion among believers

   Apart from simplifying the work for the pastor, the model will assist in reducing the levels of confusion and uncertainty among Emmanuel members in the event of death. Members will also assist each other even without the help of pastoral caregivers, thereby extending the teaching of Emmanuel on matters about death among the Balobedu people of Bolobedu south.

D. Professional counselling training for members and pastors

The researcher will point out that there is a need for the leadership of Emmanuel Assemblies consider sending some of the members and pastors to be trained as professional counsellors to assist members who need counselling after the death in a family.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter reflected on the findings of death and mourning rituals among Balobedu people of Bolobedu south before, during and after the burial. It further applied Magezi's seven approaches as a guideline to draw a contrast between unbiblical and unbeneficial, and biblical and beneficial death and mourning rituals with a view of assisting the Emmanuel members to avoid a confused approach when faced with death and associated mourning rituals. The chapter also follows Stuart's three steps of attempting solutions for those faced with death and mourning rituals requirements. The chapter culminates by showing how the model will seek acceptance among the Emmanuel churches and also the motivation that will wrap up the submission of the proposed model.

Chapter 6

Summary and Recommendations.

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study which entails the following: (1), research question that governed the initiative. (2), the research methodologies that were applied to collect the needed data. (3), research sites where the required data was collected and, (4), research participants who shared the information by responding to questionnaires. (5), a summary of the findings. (6), a proposed biblical counselling model that can be utilised by members of Emmanuel assemblies provided, the church's leadership approves it. Thereafter, the chapter culminates by highlighting on some suggestions pertaining to areas that still require further studies.

6.2 Thesis main question

The study aims to design a biblical death and mourning counselling model to assist the Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies handle death in a family. Hence, it asks: How might a biblical death and mourning counselling model help the Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu south, Limpopo Province, South Africa, deal with death and mourning rituals?

6.2 Thesis subsidiary questions

6.2.1 Historically, how do Balobedu people view death and mourning?

6.2.2 What do social scientists and theologians teach about death and mourning rituals?

6.2.3 What does the Bible teach about death and mourning rituals?

6.2.4 What strategies can one use to design a biblical death and mourning Counselling model to assist the Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies?

6.3 Research method, instruments (interviews) and participants

In this study, the researcher applied Osmer's (2008, 31-36) to answer the main research question and associated subsidiary questions. To collect data, the researcher opted to employ face-to-face interviews among participants from Ga-Motupa, Kgwekgwe, Relelea, Morutjie and Motlhomeng villages. The participants were identified through a purposive sampling method comprising fifty participants from all five villages.

6.4 Chapter summaries

From the introduction in the first chapter, the second chapter focused on answering the subsidiary question titled: historically how the Balobedu people view death and mourning rituals. Following Osmer's (2008:31-36) question: what is going on? This first subsidiary question utilised the above-quoted source as a framework to help ascertain the answer. To find out the outcome of the question, the researcher selected *Ga-Motupa*, *Kgwekgwe*, *Relela*, *Morutjie* and *Motlhomeng* villages among those found in Bolobedu south to conduct a qualitative research approach.

The study shows that Balobedu performs pre-burial, burial and post-burial death and mourning rituals according to inherited patterns from their departed relatives on the deceased, on the bereaved family members and on the supporting community members. According to participants, all people who observe death and mourning rituals do so to appease the dead, to seek protection, to ask for prosperity in life and to avert some diseases like *makhuma*. The death and mourning rituals are observed by young and old, men and women, with women going through many more perilous rituals than their male counterparts.

On the other hand, death and mourning rituals are not only observed on bodily objects, but they are also performed on designated spots like graveyards, ancestral worshipping spots, areas where accidents occurred and on other non-human objects like clothes. In a nutshell, it was from this chapter where data revealed different types of

death and burial rituals that the Balobedu people perform on the corpse, on the graveyard, upon the bodies of the bereaved and towards the community that support death events for either the family, relatives, friends or neighbours.

The third chapter reflected on views from human and social scientists and theologians on death and mourning rituals and applied Osmer's (2008, 79-95), interpretive task which asks: why is it going on and the researcher used it in conjunction with the corresponding subsidiary question stated above.

In response to the above question, the literature study indicates that death and mourning rituals are observed in many countries worldwide. It also shows that in some European nations' death and mourning rituals are used mainly to honour and commemorate the dead. Some South American nations use death and mourning rituals as celebration instruments and throw huge parties during the burial and annual scheduled celebrations. Some African utilise death and mourning rituals to display their wealth and impress the community by means of using expensive caskets, delicious food and long services rendered by famous people in the communities both during the burial and after the burial.

Other Africa nations, use death and mourning rituals as instruments of religion to corroborate their commitment to cultural and ancestral beliefs.

The fourth chapter placed its focus on what the Bible, theological scholars and Bible commentaries teach on death and mourning rituals. The chapter followed Osmer's normative step where he asks the question: what ought to be going on? (2008, 129 - 169). It was from this chapter that practices of ancient-near eastern nations (ANEN) were brought to the spotlight. Some selected section of Scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments was used.

Subsequently, the current generation, whose Christian doctrine owes its existence to the apostolic foundation, emerges as part of the continuum of death and mourning rituals to be observed. They are a remembrance of the reality of death, even though Jesus has conquered it (Van Oudshoom 2017, 65-81). The guarantee of the promised

rest beyond the current life, provided they stay tuned to his gospel message and its unwavering promises of eternal life with him in heaven.

The fifth chapter provides the gist of the study whose primary aim was to develop a biblical counselling model for Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel assemblies in Bolobedu south, Limpopo province, South Africa. In this fifth chapter, the researcher referred to Osmer's *pragmatic task: servant leadership* (Osmer 2008, 100-122), which asks: how might we respond? It was used in conjunction with the subsidiary question: What strategies can one use to design a biblical death and mourning counselling model to assist the Balobedu Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies? The chapter then explained strategies which, through Magezi's (2016, 4-6) approaches and Stuart's (2012, 157-180) three steps, yielded positive results for compiling the envisaged biblical counselling model. Further from the proposed model, the chapter further presented motivations for its presentation and application of usage to the Emmanuel leadership for utilisation by their members and pastors in the Emmanuel Assemblies.

6.5 Areas for further research

Firstly, the royal house of *Khetlhakong* (the royal head Krall office of the Balobedu tribe) remains an untouched and unexplored avenue in research. The only available resources pertaining to it was penned down by Krige (1981, 33), in the early sixties due to the nature of confidentiality of death and mourning rituals of the monarchs. However, many headmen and headwomen are people who like other human beings, need salvation and counselling in times of death. As a result, it becomes difficult if not impossible, for pastoral caregivers under such services without understanding the circumstances surrounding their cultural practices on death and mourning rituals. I suggest a similar study be done on death and mourning for in the royal clan. I should believe that there are pastors from royal tribes and the general public (who are capable) that can be granted permission and an opportunity to study and assist royal descendants on matters pertaining to death and mourning rituals from a biblical perspective. One particular example is the dissertation published by Letsoalo (2009, 14-45) from the University of Limpopo, where she concentrated on the rain-making skills that the clan claims to have possessed. Due to the researcher being a descendant of the

same royal house, it was easier for her to obtain permission from relevant regents and stakeholders without disregarding or divulging forbidden information from the clan. The dissertation shed some light on the abilities of the Mamatlhola clan and their establishment, without which it would have remained unknown history to the public. Most people have seen how the queen of England's funeral was conducted, especially the confidentiality of the ceremony and other rituals that were not open to the public was handled. Therefore, allowing such a study would not disparage the identity of the Balobedu of Ga-Modjadji in any manner but will assist the royal bereaved people with the necessary counselling sessions to bring healing to them from their losses because pain is no respecter of people. Pain does not know whether one is from the royal house or a commoner. It strikes like death and affects all people differently according to how the bereaved handles it or gets assistance towards the healing process.

Secondly, before democracy, according to participants, Tsonga natives were not allowed to inhabit in the Modjadji area, which is predominantly a Balobedu settlement. It was the reason there was a clash between the Tsonga-speaking and Balobedu or Bakgaga of Maake, tribes, because of the same political misunderstandings from their forefathers. Therefore, in view of the example as mentioned earlier there is a need to investigate how the integration of other tribes has affected the death and mourning rituals among the Balobedu of Bolobedu south.

Thirdly, there is a need to work on cross-cultural study on death and mourning that takes cognisance of Sotho, Swazi, Zulu, or Xhosa.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter shared a summary of the preceding chapters and supplemented it with recommendation. The chapter continued to share some light on the methodology that was applied to conduct the study as well as to share the information pertaining to the participants that took part during the data collection process. As the last chapter, it further highlighted areas that were not covered by the study, which still require further study.

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Appendix 1

A translated version of the interview guide to Khelobedu language

Dipudjiso dja o naka

Khetha karabo ya nnete mo fomoni

Haaye le kwa kae?		
Ga-Motupa	*1*	
Kgwekgwe	*2*	
Relela	*3*	
Morutji	*4*	
Motlhomeni	*5*	
Ke o duwa lene le khe dula hana kua?		
Ke no pepiwa hana kua	*1*	
Ka fase ha mengwaha ye lesome	*2*	
Mengwaha ya ho puda lesome mara ka fase ha masome a ma-bedi	*3*	
Mengwaha ya ho buda masome a mabedi	*4*	
Dzwi dile bjane hore le dule hana kua?		
Ke pepilwe hana kua.	*1*	
Re dio khuduhela hana kua.	*2*	
Ke dio bekwa hana kua.	*3*	
Mengwaha		
18-25	*1*	
26-35	*2*	
36-55	*3*	
56-65	*4*	
66+	*5*	
Moene.		
Monna.	*1*	
Mosadi.	*2*	
Dzwe dzwengwe.	*3*	

A dzwi arabeye.	*4*	
Dzwa o beka/bekwa.		
Nkhe noosi	*1*	
Ke bekile/ ke bekilwe	*2*	
Ke tlhadwe/ ke tlhade	*3*	
Ke lobedwe ke monna	*4*	
Ke lobedwe ke mosadi	*5*	
Dzwa khekolo		
0-6	*1*	
1-7	*2*	
8-12	*3*	
Diploma	*4*	
Degree	*5*	
Dzwa mošumo		
Keya šuma	*1*	
A nkhe šume	*2*	
Keya dzešuma	*3*	

Dipudjiso dja o beyakanchiwa ha ṱokho

Le tseba o ilela hoba o bona ba bangwe ba khe ilela lehu lela mohu ka khedjo kha Balobedu?

Ee_____Aowa_____.

He ele hore karabo ke ee, nṱalosedjeni nyana hore, ke mo kae, ke lene le hore le be le khe šakhelana bjane le yo a lobileho.

_____

Habotse, he motho a lobile, ke ene dzwe dzwi diiwaho ka khedjo dzwa ho mollela le o moilela?

Nke lenṱalosedje ka bodalo hore ke mane yoo bonao hore dzwa o ilela mohu hoya ka khedjo kha Balobedu a dzwi taboiwi? Le hona ke ka lebaka la hene dzwi tshwanede hore ebe hena motho yo?

_____

Ke hopela le nṱalosedje hore dzwe dzwa ho ilela le o ṱoboha dzwi diiwa bjane?

_____

Ke hopela le nṱalosedje ka mohola wa khedjo kha Balobedu kha o ilela, o ṱoboha le ollela mohu.

_____

Ono dzwe dzwe ka dieyaho he motho aka se latele kedjo kha dzwa o diiwa lehune?

Ee_____Aowa_____

He ele hore karabo ke ee, talosane ka bodalo

Ekaba o kha no dzwe dzwengwe dzwe le nyakaho o mpodja dzwa o yelan le dzwa lehu dzwa ho diiwa ke Balobedu?

Ee _____Aowa _____

He ele hore karabo ke ee, edani nadjo

Ke lebowa nako ya lena.

Appendix 2

Clarification of concepts

Ditshemo refers to a process where some herbs are stir-fried inside a broken clay pot to release fumes or smoke that people inhale with the aim of curing certain ailments

Khekhuma: is a process where people boil water and heat stones on fire to put them in a steel bath or basin containing herbs prescribed by the indigenous healer to generate steam. Next, people cover themselves with a blanket to inhale the vapour from a mixture of herbs, heated stones, and boiling water.

*Khenkopodi***:** refers to a head-worn cloth covering the whole head and face leaving only eyes to see. But when a widow puts it on the day of the burial, the family covers even her eyes.

Khesete: this refers to a male goat or a female goat that the family slaughters to prepare for the burial of the deceased.

Khethepa: this refers to an African calabash which is a hand-crafted product of pumpkin legume.

Khuna: refers to a smoke web that accumulates on the round poles of a grass-roofed hut when people make fire for daily uses.

Leṱaka: means a cane reed.

Leṱaṱe: this refers to an aquatic plant with long green-coloured and thread-like stem with large ace-shaped leaves.

Makhuma: refers to an illness that occurs when a person has sexual relations with another in bereavement or has lost a spouse while the mourning period is not yet completed.

Appendix 4

Permission Letters and Clearance Certificates

CONFIDENTIAL

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

Office of the Premier

Research and Development Directorate

Private Bag X9483, Polokwane, 0700, South Africa

Tel: (015) 230 9910, Email: mokobij@premier.limpopo.gov.za

LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS

COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Review Date: 31st August 2021

Project Number: LPREC/69/2021: PG

Subject: Death and Mourning Rituals on South African Church: Towards a Biblical Model for Counselling Bereaved Families of Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu South, Limpopo Province

Researcher: Modiba E

Dr Thembinkosi Mabila

Chairperson: Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee

The Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC) is registered with National Health Research Council (NHREC) Registration Number **REC-111513-038.**

Note:

i. **This study is categorized as a Low Risk Level in accordance with risk level descriptors as enshrined in LPREC Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

ii. **Should there be any amendment to the approved research proposal; the researcher(s) must re-submit the proposal to the ethics committee for review prior data collection.**

iii. **The researcher(s) must provide annual reporting to the committee as well as the relevant department and also provide the department with the final report/thesis.**

iv. **The ethical clearance certificate is valid for 12 months. Should the need to extend the period for data collection arise then the researcher should renew the certificate through LPREC secretariat. PLEASE QUOTE THE PROJECT NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.**

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LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

TO: MR E MODIBA

FROM: DR T MABILA

CHAIRPERSON: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (LPREC)

DATE: AUGUST 2021

SUBJECT: DEATH AND MOURNING RITUALS ON SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCH: TOWARDS A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR COUNSELLING BEREAVED FAMILIES OF EMMANUEL ASSEMBLIES IN BOLOBEDU SOUTH, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

RESEARCHER: MODIBA E

Dear Colleague

The above researcher's research proposal served at the Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC). The ethics committee is satisfied with the ethical soundness of the proposal.

Decision: The research proposal is granted approval and ethical clearance

Regards

Chairperson: Dr T Mabila

Secretariat: Ms J Mokobi

Date: 06/09/2021

CONFIDENTIAL

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

TO: MR E MODIBA

FROM: DR T MABILA

CHAIRPERSON: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE (LPRC)

DATE: AUGUST 2021

SUBJECT: DEATH AND MOURNING RITUALS ON SOUTH AFRICAN CHURCH: TOWARDS A BIBLICAL MODEL FOR COUNSELLING BEREAVED FAMILIES OF EMMANUEL ASSEMBLIES IN BOLOBEDU SOUTH, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

RESEARCHER: MODIBA E

Dear Colleague

The above researcher's research proposal served at the Limpopo Provincial Research Committee (LPRC). The committee is satisfied with the methodological soundness of the proposed study.

Decision: The research proposal is granted full approval

Regards

Acting Chairperson: Dr T Mabila

Secretariat: Ms J Mokobi

Date: 06/09/2021

SATS

Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

Ethical Clearance Statement

Name of researcher: Edwin Modiba

Research programme: MTh

Student number (if applicable): 12779

Title of research: Towards a biblical death and mourning rituals strategy among the Christians of Emmanuel Assemblies in Bolobedu South, Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Primary supervisor: Dr Modisa Mzondi

Supervisor contact details: modisa@sats.edu.za

Research Committee reference: REC2019_12779

Date of statement: 1 November 2019

SATS hereby states that we have received and approved the application for ethical clearance for the above research project. Parties involved in this research are requested to provide the researcher with relevant and reasonable support needed for the purposes of the project, as outlined in the official application.

For further details or correspondence, please contact the supervisor or the undersigned.

Dr Robert Falconer, PhD

Masters and Doctoral Research Coordinator

South African Theological Seminary

robertf@sats.edu.za

South African Theological Seminary NPC
PBO - 18/11/13/2403 • 033-343-NPO • Reg. 2002/005184/08
Tel: +27 11 234 4440/3 • Fax: +27 11 234 4445 • Cell: +27 82 900 1306
PO Box 98988 Sloane Park 2152 • 37 Grosvenor Road Bryanston Sandton 2191 • E-mail: study@sats.edu.za • www.sats.edu.za

Registered with the Department of Education as a private higher education institution under the Higher Education Act, 1997
Registration certificate number 2001/HE08/005

MODJADJI
ROYAL NATION
Republic of South Africa

P O Box 440
Modjadji
0837
Limpopo

Tel: 015 311 0005
Fax: 015 311 0004
info@modjadjiroyal.co.za

Enq: Modjadji R.F.M
Cell: 071 518 7556

28 June 2021

Sir/Mudam

Re: PERMISSION GRANTED TO CONDUCT INTER VIEWS: YOURSELF: CHOSANA TRANS EDWIN MODIBA.

The above matter bears reference:

The Modjadji Traditional Council hereby give you permission to conduct intrviews to enable you to proceed with the project as mentioned in your letter dated 2nd April 2021 and the targeted villages as follows: - Ga-Molupa, Kgwekgwe, Relela, Morutji and Mothomeng.

Hoping that you will find this to be in order

Yours

Office of the Royal Regent

MODJADJI TRADITIONAL COUNCIL
28 JUN 2021

Era Lebea M. J
Cell: 0606649758

Mahadia M. A
Mothomeng Village
P.O-Box 6066
Modjadji
0837
02/08/2021

HEADMAN MAHASHA M. A.
MOTHOMENG VILLAGE
Under Chieftainess Modjadji
Date: 02/08/2021
P. O. Box 6066 MODJADJI 0837
LIMPOPO PROVINCE

Dear S/r

Permission to conduct interviews

You are hereby notified that your request for permission to carry and Interview for research project is accepted.

As stated in your letter dated 20th of June 2021. You are required to adhere to all promises in the letter to the head kraal dated 28/06/2021

Thank you for choosing our Community for your Should there be any queries please do not hesitate to contact us

Kindly Regards

Lebea 0606649758

MODJADJI TRADITIONAL LEADER
HEADMAN P.V. MATHIBELA
RHULA VILLAGE
ENQ. MR MATHIBELA P.V.
CONTACT: 076 768 3480

P.O Box 2625
Tzaneen
0850
05-09-2021

To whom it may concern

Permission to conduct interviews

This serves to confirm that Chasona Frans Edwin Modiba has been granted permission to carry out his research study.

The letter is a covering of the approval from Modjadji head kraal issued on the 25th of June 2021

He is required to abide by all covid-19 protocols and use the information for research purposes only.

Should there be any queries, do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind Regards

MSH Mathibela - - Secretary

ENQ: MOLOKOANE M.L

CELL NO : 0722958440

MORUTJI
TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY
HEADMAN MOLOKOANE
P. O. BOX 3562 TZANEEN 0850
BOLOBEDU SOUTH
LIMPOPO PROVINCE
Date: 10/08/21 Sign:

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Permission granted to consult interview at MORUTJI by Mr MODIBA.

This serves to confirm that Mr Modiba has been granted permission to conduct interview at Morutji

Hoping that you will find this to be in order

Chairperson of Morutji

Molokoane M.L

Headman MAHASHA
P. O. BOX 179, ZANEEN 0850
KGWEKGWE COMMUNITY
Date: 09.08.21 Sign:

Kgwe Kgwe Village
P O Box 3712
ZANEEN
0850
09 August 2021

To whom it may Concern.

Permission to Conduct interviews for reseach Perposes

This Serves to confirm that headman Mahasha has granted Chosing frans Edwin Madiba to Convey out his Studies as Permited by Modjadji Royal Letter Dated 28 June 2021

He is Supposed to comply all Covid-19 Protocols and follow ethical rules as Stipulated

Kindly Regards
Headman Mahasha (079 517 9411)

Headman MAHASHA
P. O. BOX 1791 ZANEEN 0850
KGWEKGWE COMMUNITY
Date: 09.08.21 Sign:

MOTUPA COMMUNITY LEADER
HEADMAN MACHABA
BOX DEERPARK 01
TZANEEN
0850
09.08.2021

DEAR SIR

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEW

You are hereby notified that your request to Conduct interviews is approved

Due to Covid-19 pandemic and its variant, you are requested to abide by all protocols as gazzetted by the government. The data collected as started is solely for study purposes and can not be used for any other means

wish you the best in your studies

Kind Regards
Machaba M.P
Cell no: 078 984 7523

MOTUPA TRIBAL LEADERS
TRADITIONAL LEADER
2021-08-09
P.O. BOX 1 DEER PARK 0850
DEER CHIEFTAINCY AREA