

**THE REVIEW OF *MOETLO OA LEFU* “DEATH
RITUAL” ON THE BEREAVED BASOTHO WOMEN:
FROM DEATH TO POST-BURIAL**

By

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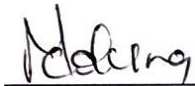
August 2022

Declaration

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I, 'Manthabile Cecilia Maduna, declare that THE REVIEW OF MOETLO OA LEFU "DEATH RITUAL" ON THE BEREAVED BASOTHO WOMEN: FROM DEATH TO POST-BURIAL is my own work and that all sources that I have used or cited have been acknowledged by means of complete references.



Signed


August 2022

Date

Supervisor(S)' Recommendation

Supervisor(s)

Date



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I am forever indebted to my God and my ancestors, who have given me strength when I needed it the most. This work has been a collective one, and I wish to thank all the people who have in any way contributed to the completion of my dissertation.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Mrs. 'Maseeiso Josephina Seetsa, who has been the greatest pillar of my strength and my late father, Mr. Peete Peter Seetsa. *Mokoena oa heso*, you left so much void in our lives. May your soul continue to rest in peace!

Abstract

This study reviews *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women using the African Feminism and Functionalism theories. The study selected some rural and urban villages in Leribe and Botha-Bothe districts in Lesotho. Data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews.

The study findings have revealed that *moetlo oa lefu* has a certain significance to the Basotho as a whole. The study has found that amongst others, *moetlo oa lefu* is used as an official confirmation about the passing on of a person; it allows the society to offer support to the bereaved and is used to integrate members of the bereaved back into the society.

Although *moetlo oa lefu* is significant to the Basotho, the study has also found that it also has some psychological and economic impact on the bereaved Basotho women as the main mourners. Under the economic challenges, the study has found that the bereaved Basotho women have to renovate the mourning house for the arrival of the corpse, incur increased financial responsibilities, loss of property and income. Societal and familial expectations force the bereaved Basotho women to overspend.

On the psychological impact of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women, the study has found that the bereaved Basotho women are discriminated by some members of the society. The bereaved Basotho women also suffer from social phobia, depression, trauma and anxiety disorders.

The study has recommended that issues related to mourning have to be discussed thoroughly during family gatherings rather than at funerals to reach a consensus in

a relaxed manner. It has even recommended that the Government of Lesotho through the relevant stakeholders, should engage in programmes that reinforce the well-being of the bereaved Basotho women.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The study evaluates *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” to find its significance to the Basotho and its psychological and economic impact on the bereaved Basotho women. The chapter comprises of background information and contextualisation of the study, statement of the problem, research questions and hypotheses. It also has the significance of the study, the review of related literature, the theoretical framework, the methodology, the ethical consideration and the organisation of the study.

1.1 Background information and Contextualisation to the Study

Rituals are a portrayal of cultural performances and rites of passage that mark people's life experiences. They enable people to express their thoughts and emotions. They even help them to reveal their social organisation and cultural identities (Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata, 2014). These rites, as Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (2014) have explained, envelop all aspects of society and a person's life from birth to death. These rituals include birth, marriage, and death rites.

Amongst the rituals, Maloka (1998) identifies mourning for the dead as a common global exercise that constitutes religious and cultural activities. As a result, death affects all people irrespective of their social status, customs and beliefs. That is why mourning is habitual amongst different communities worldwide. However, the execution of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” is dependent on individual communities. In support of this, Cohen (2005:75) writes, “mourning consists of a culturally

defined set of activities that create a liminal state in which the living participates and provide participants with opportunities to express grief.” Mourning practices play a significant role as they allow individuals to deal with their losses.

Likewise, all societies believe that death is a transition of life for the dead. In support of this, Cebekhulu (2015) states that amongst the Westerners, there is life after death, which has two different meanings that denote heaven and hell. For the Westerners, what happens when a person dies is determined by how they have lived their life. They can either see heaven or hell. However, in the African culture, death marks the end of physical life but denotes the beginning of spiritual life. Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (2014) share the same view that for indigenous African people, dying marks a further developmental milestone, which is similar to one's developmental stages. Dying is considered a continuing system. In addition to this, Rakotsoana (2009) states that the Basotho believe that when people cease to live, they are re-birthing and become *balimo* “ancestors”, whose lives become more superior than they are in the current world. They consider death as a transition from one life and world to another. The Basotho refer to this transitional place as *balimong* “the ancestral world”.

Consequently, many African traditional societies consider death as a sacred incidence that has to follow certain rituals that each have its purpose. Setsiba (2008: 3-4) concurs,

In traditional African cultures, funerals and bereavement rituals help in the purification of the mourners ... failure to cleanse ... as required by tradition is believed to bring bad luck, i.e. misfortune or evil to the family.

Due to the belief that the death of a family member leaves behind a residue that may harm the bereaved family, it is required of the bereaved family to perform *moetlo oa*

lefu. This is one of the reasons the African bereavement rituals are widespread in Africa. As a result, the study intends to implement Setsiba's (2008) observation in finding the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* "death ritual" to the Basotho.

Although mourning is a common African practice, it differs from one ethnic group to another. Lutomia *et al.* (2015) contend that there is a remarkable resemblance in how humans experience grief across cultures, but cultures differ in how mourning and death customs are performed. The differences in cultural performance may slightly differ through individual cultures as explained by Lutomia *et al.* (2015). In support of this, Adonis and Sobane (2017) maintain that mourning amongst the Basotho is a social procedure that follows some rituals, which begin when the death of a person is announced until sometime after the burial. In the Sesotho culture, death rituals follow a sequence: pre-burial, burial and post-burial rituals. Death rituals begin immediately when *pihi* "death report or announcement" has been made public.

For this reason, *pihi* has to be dispatched immediately to all the relevant people such as the family, relatives, friends and the chief of the deceased together with the members of the community. *Pihi* can be disseminated verbally, through writing, or by phone calls by an authorised person. In support of this, Matšela (1990) and Lesitsi (1990) state that *pihi* has to be sent to the relatives of the deceased, the uncles and the chief in writing or verbally through a messenger.

All the relevant stakeholders must receive *pihi* as soon as a person is confirmed dead because there are some shared and specific death rituals and activities, which are done by individual people depending on their relationship with the deceased. For instance, mothers, wives and children of the deceased have specific rituals from what

other members of the family do. The community members also help the bereaved in varying ways. In the study, the bereaved woman refers to the woman who has lost her child or spouse through death.

Because death rituals have been going on from generation to generation, *moetlo oa lefu* in the Sesotho culture has seen some varying changes from time to time. According to Maloka (1998) and Maluleke (2012), the fluctuations in death rituals could be owing to many factors such as lifestyle changes that have been brought about by colonisation, missionary influence, modernisation and people's attitudes towards death and burial rituals. It is assumed that these many variable changes in *moetlo oa lefu* have some bearing on the bereaved women as its major practitioners.

Furthermore, Casalis (1997) declares that the traditional Basotho buried their dead on the day or two of their death. Thus, they prepared their dead for burial as soon as possible before their bodies stiffened as they were buried in a squatting position facing east. He further alleges that there were no burial grounds as the dead were buried in the kraal, and that the Basotho corpses were wrapped with *makoko* “animal skins”. Nonetheless, there was no need for women to succumb to *ho lula materaseng* “the sitting on the mattresses” as burials were done immediately.

However, currently, when a person dies, the body is taken to the morgue where it is usually kept for several days or weeks until the burial. Modernisation, amongst other factors, has brought a huge change in the standard of living; and has even affected the indigenous Basotho modes of burial, which led to the introduction of burial grounds (Maloka, 1998). Modernisation, missionary influence and colonisation did not only bring a shift in the Basotho burial modes, but also gave rise to new Basotho death rituals such as the ritual of *ho lula materaseng*.

The ritual of *ho lula materaseng* is defined by Ntimo-Makara (2009) as lying on a *moseme* “grass mat” by a bereaved woman. However, this customary practice was transformed due to the scarceness of *meseme* and their lack of fluffiness, which made prolonged sitting on them uncomfortable. *Meseme* were replaced by mattresses, that is why the ritual is popularly known as *ho lula materaseng* “the sitting on the mattresses”. Adonis and Sobane (2017) explain that the Basotho choose a room or a hut where visitors will be welcomed. They add that the room is stripped of furniture except for a few mattresses and some chairs. The bereaved woman and a few elderly women who are related to the deceased sit on the mattresses while the visitors sit on the chairs.

Since there is no furniture in the mourning room or house, the bereaved Basotho women are hindered from accessing any form of entertainment like watching television and listening to the radio. They are not even allowed to sleep on the bed as the only bedroom furniture available in the mourning house or room is the mattresses. In a case where there is no bathroom in the house, the bereaved Basotho women even take their baths in the mourning room in the presence of the women keeping the bereaved Basotho women company. The mourning room becomes their formal room for the entire time of *ho lula materaseng*.

In the Basotho culture, the bereaved Basotho women are expected *ho lula materaseng* immediately when death is announced until a day or two after the burial. The ritual symbolises the start of the mourning period for the bereaved Basotho women, and it is accompanied by some rules that the bereaved Basotho women have to adhere. Failure of the bereaved Basotho women to follow the set rules raises concerns amongst the community and their relatives. In contrast, men who have lost

either their children or spouses are exempted from following these mourning orders per the Basotho tradition and culture.

During the funeral preparation or even sometime after the burial, the community members, friends, colleagues and relatives of the deceased visit the bereaved family to offer *matšeliso* “condolences”. Every person who wishes to visit the bereaved family for *matšeliso* is free to do so, and *matšeliso* have no particular time frame even though they are commonly done before the burial. On this issue, Ellenberger (2012: 262) writes, “visits of condolence were always paid to the bereaved family and continued for days, weeks and even months after the demise.” The Basotho consider death a communal responsibility, which is why *matšeliso* does not even have a specific duration. It affords everyone to express their sympathy at any convenient time.

On the same note, Adonis and Sobane (2017) further express that community members visit the bereaved family to offer psychological support, pass condolences, pray and listen to the narration of the details about the cause of death. These condolence visits are referred to as *ho isa matšeliso*. The visits are done in the spirit of *botho* “humaneness”, and every member of the community is at liberty to visit the bereaved family. Since death is a communal responsibility, everyone, including, friends and enemies comes to offer condolences; and the bereaved Basotho women are expected to welcome the visitors alike irrespective of their relationship with the visitors. During *matšeliso*, the visitors are offered delicious food or some snacks, most of which are costly; and the bereaved Basotho women, as the owners of the bereaved households, have to see to it that the food for the visitors is available.

As part of the procedures of the death rituals, on the dawn of the burial day, an ox referred to as *mohoha*, which is the same sex as the deceased, has to be slaughtered. Lesitsi (2015) indicates that the *mohoha* is slaughtered because the Basotho believe to be accompanying the deceased with it, “*ho feheletsa mofu*” at the same time, giving the deceased a blanket with which the late can enter *balimong*. As a result, the ritual of slaughtering *mohoha* is referred to as *phelehetso ea mofu*.

Subsequently, Nkoka (2007) and Phafoli and Zulu (2012) state that in pre-historic times, the traditional Basotho used the *makoko a mohoha* “the skins of *mohoha*” to wrap the corpse for burial. These *makoko* also acted as coffins since there were no caskets. Of course, Nkoka’s (2007) and Phafoli and Zulu’s (2012) observation might slightly differ from oral tradition as it states that the Basotho used any available supple *lekoko* to cover the deceased.

Additionally, Matšela (1990) further affirms that in the pre-historic times, the meat of *mohoha* had to be cooked without salt and roasting. The meat had to be eaten and finished on a burial day and was not served on dishes, but stones. The way the meat was cooked and served was economically favourable for the bereaved Basotho women. There were no additional costs suffered in buying spices, salt and even the serving plates for the funeral attendants. In support of this, Nkoka (2007) and Phafoli and Zulu (2012) declare that in the modern-day, the meat of *mohoha* is cooked in a tasty manner as if people are at a feast, and some spices and salt are added to the meat. The meat is also served in dishes. This has made *phelehetso ea mofu* even more costly amid the current global economic status and recession because the cattle and the culinary ingredients have become expensive to buy.

Regardless of the changes in the way the handling of the meat of *mohoha* has been revolutionising with time, the Basotho do the ritual of *phelehetso* to accompany the deceased “*ho felehetsa mofu*”. Nonetheless, *phelehetso ea mofu* may have certain outcomes, which in one way may affect the bereaved Basotho women as they have to conform to societal expectations, which have not only made *phelehetso ea mofu* costly to perform, but have also influenced funerals.

According to Maloka (1998) and Segoete (2002), in the pre-historic era, after the burial, the bereaved Basotho women used to wear *thapo ea loli* “a cord of *Cyperus marginatus*” around their necks until the end of their mourning period. Contrarily, Nkoka (2007) states that the missionary influenced and introduced a black mourning attire. Nowadays, the bereaved Basotho women do not only wear black mourning clothes but may choose any colour and fabric for their mourning dresses. This can emanate from factors that include individual religious beliefs or familial choices. However, the fabric should be one of colour, which the bereaved Basotho women wear as their uniform throughout the mourning period.

Despite all these, the chosen set of clothes for mourning are the only clothes that are worn by the bereaved Basotho women during their mourning period, and the bereaved Basotho women follow a similar set of rules throughout their bereavement. One of the rules regulating the ritual of the wearing of mourning clothes is that the clothes cannot be worn should they get torn. For this reason, the bereaved Basotho women can eventually end up wearing tattered mourning clothes as most of them are not financially equipped to have several sets of mourning clothes, which are even costly to have. This ritual of wearing mourning attire is known as *ho apara thapo* “the wearing of mourning clothes”.

In the Sesotho culture, the bereaved Basotho women cannot get out of the mourning period at any time because the Basotho have a stipulated time of ending *ho apara thapo*. This is during the winter season. For this season, the length of *ho apara thapo* is determined by the time at which the death of a person occurred. Likewise, Lesitsi (1990) and Ntimo-Makara (2009) state that the period of *ho apara thapo* may last up to a year because the bereaved Basotho women get out of the mourning period from mid to the end of Winter. Regardless of the length of *ho apara thapo* for the individual bereaved Basotho women, the rules followed during this period are common. Nevertheless, the rules observed by the be-mourned women during bereavement may have a certain effect on them.

Consequently, this paper makes an in-depth analysis of the review of the *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women, under which the pre-burial, burial and post-burial rituals are scrutinised. To achieve this, the study investigates the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho, examines the psychological impact of *moetlo oa lefu* and even probes its economic challenges on the bereaved Basotho women.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In many of the Basotho communities, when death has occurred, the relatives of the deceased ensure that *moetlo oa lefu* is practised without even considering issues, such as, financial muscle, and psychological well-being of the bereaved women. However, the Basotho regard *moetlo oa lefu* as one aspect of oral tradition, which symbolises respect for the deceased and allows the bereaved to mourn for their loved ones.

On this issue, some Basotho scholars, such as, Maloka (1998) and Nkoka (2007) have researched on how *moetlo oa lefu* has been altering from the pre-historic times

to the 21st century due to factors, including, modernisation and colonisation. However, they have not particularly focused on how *moetlo oa lefu* affects the bereaved Basotho women. As a result, the study intends to review *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women and to investigate its significance to the Basotho and its psychological and economic impact on the bereaved Basotho women.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What is the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho?
2. What are the economic challenges associated with *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women?
3. What is the psychological impact of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women?

1.2.1 Hypotheses

1. The significance of *moetlo oa lefu* is to announce the death, to mourn the deceased, cleanse the impurities from the mourners and the deceased, teach the members of the bereaved family their hierarchy and to give everyone a chance to pay their last respect to the deceased.
2. The bereaved Basotho women loss of property, accumulate debts (economic burden).
3. *Moetlo oa lefu* causes trauma, mental exhaustion, disputes, anxiety disorders resulting into severe health problems for the bereaved Basotho women.

1.3 Significance of the Study

It is hoped that the study would benefit individual Basotho and different groups of people in various Basotho communities, particularly, those who still believe in

indigenous Basotho culture. The study could bring light to some of the challenges that the bereaved Basotho women encounter due to *moetlo oa lefu*. It might also bring light to other Basotho who do not or no longer believe in the African or Basotho ideologies to know and understand the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* in the Sesotho culture. Members of other African communities are also anticipated to benefit as they would know how *moetlo oa lefu* in the Sesotho culture is practised. This alone would enlighten them as there are some shared similarities on *moetlo oa lefu* amongst the Africans. Lastly, for the academics and researchers, the study could impart more knowledge on *moetlo oa lefu* and could even encourage them to conduct more research on *moetlo oa lefu*.

1.4 Review of Related Literature

1.4.1 Introduction

The section presents the review of related literature on the topic: “From Death to Post-burial: The Review of *Moetlo oa lefu* “Death Ritual” on the Bereaved Basotho Women”. The literature is arranged thematically as follows: studies on the Basotho death rituals and studies on death rituals in some African cultures.

1.4.2 Studies on the Basotho Death Rituals

Scholars such as Opong (1997) and Letsosa and Letsosa (2011) have made research on the Basotho rituals. Opong (1997) studied rituals that are performed at births, weddings and funerals in Lesotho to find out how such rites have been practiced amid the Christian and Western education influence.

In the study, Opong (1997) has revealed that some of the rituals are performed in private while other rituals are done openly. Although Opong (1997) has done his

study in the Sesotho context, the current study does not research about the rituals done at birth and weddings but focuses only on death rituals to investigate their significance without considering how far they have been influenced by the Western or Christian forces as Opong (1997)'s work did. Opong (1997) used a phenomenological and hermeneutical approaches, and questionnaires and formal interviews were used to collect data for his study. However, the current work has gathered information through the use of semi-structured interviews.

Apart from that, Letsosa and Letsosa (2011) have also studied about the Sesotho death rituals. In their study, they did a pastoral investigation on traditional purification as the last phase of bereavement amongst the Basotho. They pronounced that some rites are followed by the Basotho during the mourning period such as *go ilela* “to mourn”, which is done by all the members of the grieving family. During bereavement, the bereaved stay away from certain activities such as having feasts in their homesteads. This is one of the restrictions that this research intends to investigate to find its psychological and economic challenges on the bereaved Basotho women.

Additionally, Letsosa and Letsosa (2011) state that the length of *go ilela* differs depending on who has died in the family. These bereavement periods and restrictions may in one way or another impact the lives of the bereaved Basotho women. Thus, the present research explores how the Basotho traditional practices such as *go ilela* affect those who practice it; which, however, Letsosa and Letsosa (2011) did not deal with.

Letsosa and Letsosa (2011) make detailed documentation on the stage of *go ilela* and *go tloša setšhila* “traditional purification” by explaining how each rite is

performed depending on whose death is being mourned and even outlays the significance of each ritual in the Sesotho custom. Regardless of that, they have not dwelled on the problems surrounding the practice of these customs on bereaved Basotho women. As a result, the current study does not only examine the purification ritual, but also studies some selected rituals that are performed from the time the death of a Mosotho is announced until when the cleansing rite is done after the burial. The present research has scrutinised the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho, its psychological impact and the economic challenge it has on the bereaved Basotho women.

Even though the works reviewed in this part have dwelled on the Basotho rituals, the present research differs from Opong (1997) and Letsosa and Letsosa (2011) because their studies have only focused on explaining how the mourning rites are done in the Sesotho custom. None of the studies reviewed in this section have looked into the significance of death rituals to the Basotho. This research studies the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho and even investigates the impact of this custom on the bereaved Basotho women.

1.4.3 Studies on the Death Rituals in Some African Cultures

Some African scholars, such as, Ndlovu (2013) Yawa (2010) and Itsweni (2018) have studied about bereavement amongst the African cultures, such as, Venda, Zulu, Tswana and Xhosa cultures. Yawa (2010) has inquired about the psycho-analysis of the bereavement in Xhosa, Zulu and Tswana cultures. Yawa (2010) aimed at unveiling different stages of the bereavement in the three selected cultures. The study unveils that in the Xhosa, Zulu and Tswana cultures, the mourning may last up to a year during which different rituals are being performed.

Yawa (2010) has given a detailed explanation of all the death rituals that are performed in the Xhosa, Zulu and Tswana cultures and what each practice means to its people. Yawa has even disclosed that all the cultural groups and modes of burial differ, but the Xhosa, Zulu and Tswana view grieving in the same way. The findings have shown that generally, the members of the ethnic group under scrutiny are happy with their mourning practices.

Yawa (2010) even suggests that educational psychologists must take into consideration specific stages of bereavement and be culturally sensitised as the bereavement may differ from one individual and from one cultural group to another. Yawa (2010) has enlightened the current study because they have explained how issues relating to bereavement are done in Xhosa, Zulu and Tswana cultures, which form part of the Bantu cultures including the Basotho. This information was used in the study to help the researcher to understand the dynamics of *moetlo oa lefu*. However, the current study intends to find the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho and the psychological and economic challenges of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved women in the Sesotho culture only. Yawa's (2010) used semi-structured interviews and a case study to collect data while the present researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data.

Besides that, Ndlovu (2013) has researched on death rituals in the Zulu culture and focused on the challenges faced by Zulu widows during bereavement in KwaNyaswa, the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. In their study, Ndlovu (2013) has demonstrated that the large fraternity of KwaNyaswa locals believe that their customs play a major role in determining their identity.

Despite this significance to the Zulu people of the KwaNyauswa area, the study findings have shown that the women are burdened, stressed and marginalised as they experience discrimination, particularly when they are still in the period of wearing the mourning dress. The similar challenges that Ndlovu (2013) has revealed may also affect the bereaved Basotho women. As a result, the current research intends to find the challenges that could be brought by the performance of death rituals in the Sesotho context.

Ndlovu (2013) has also divulged that widowhood in the Zulu custom encourages psychological challenges for the Zulu widows. Ndlovu's (2013) study has further shown that the Zulu widows encounter gender inequality. All these dynamics of the Zulu death rituals may affect the Zulu widows both socially and psychologically. Ndlovu (2013) has recommended that the Zulu societies especially those that are in the rural areas should consider transforming themselves to free women from gender inequality embedded in their customs.

The present study intends to follow in Ndlovu (2013)'s footsteps by investigating the challenges brought by *moetlo oa lefu* in the Sesotho culture. Ndlovu (2013) collected data from focus groups, face-to-face interviews and participant observation. They used the Radical Feminism while the present study has used African Feminism and Functionalism theories and collected data through the semi-structured interviews.

Similarly, Itsweni (2018) has researched on the bereavement amongst VhaVenda widows intending to establish the challenges that the young VhaVenda widows face. Itsweni (2018) aimed at finding whether the widows are treated with dignity, respect and compassion during their mourning period. Itsweni (2018) has explained that the

widows face socio-economic challenges that are aligned to increased family responsibilities and financial hardships that result from the loss of support due to the death of their spouses. The findings have also revealed that some of the young widows are vulnerable as they are forced to re-marry into their late husbands' families and even encounter serious physical health problems that include loss of weight and appetite. These could be similar experiences that the bereaved Basotho women encounter. As a result, the present research has examined the psychological and economic challenges influenced by *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women.

Itsweni (2018) focused on the impact that is influenced by the practice of VhaVenda death rituals. However, the current research examined the impact of the Basotho death rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. Itsweni (2018) used structured and unstructured interviews to collect data. In the analysis, Mbigi's Five Finger theory was implemented as the main theory alongside the Attachment theory, Kubler-Ross model of bereavement, and Attribution theory. The current study has collected data through the semi-structured interviews and has used two theories, namely, African Feminism and Functionalism theories.

1.4.4 Conclusion

The efforts of all the scholars reviewed in this section cannot be overlooked as they have laid a foundation for the current work. However, the current research would differ from all the works presented above as none of them has researched on the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho and its psychological and economic impact on the bereaved Basotho women. The study has, therefore, reviewed *moetlo oa lefu* from the pre-burial rituals to the post-burial rituals using the African Feminism and Functionalism, which none of the reviewed scholars has employed.

1.5 Theoretical framework

1.5.1 Introduction

The section introduces the African Feminism and Functionalism as the theories that are used as analytical tools in the study. These two theories complement each other because they are used interchangeably where the principles of one theory do not fit into the context of the study. However, the study considers the African Feminism as a principal theory for the study and the Functionalism as a complementary one.

1.5.2 African Feminism

African Feminism descends from the third wave of feminism. The theory critiques the flaws of the Western Feminism for its inability to address the challenges that the African women all over the world are faced with and its disinclination to understand the values of the indigenous African culture (Eze, 2014; Oyekan, 2014; Al-Harbi, 2017). As a result, the African women found the need to establish a theory that would aid in fighting their own battles as the Western Feminism was unable to address their problems. To support this, Wane (2011) asserts that the problems that the African women have cannot be outlined and solved through the Western Feminist ideologies.

The African Feminism was established at the beginning of the twentieth century by the African women, such as, the Sierra Leonean women's rights activist called Adelaide Casely-Hayford popularly, also known as the 'African Victorian Feminist' and the South African named Charlotte Maxeke, the founder of the Bantu Women's League (Wang'ondy, 2019). Notably, Coetzee (2017) further states that in Nigeria, the African Feminism was pioneered by a group of the African women activists and writers, who amongst others include Buchi Emecheta, the author of many feminist

novels including *The Joys of Motherhood*. These were the first group of women to declare themselves as feminists with the small ‘f’, which is popularly known as the African Feminism. With reference to Coetzee (2017), the feminists with the small ‘f’ did well to frame a concept that understands the African ideologies so that it can attend well to challenges that the African women meet.

However, the African Feminism came face-to-face with many critics, which included some African women critics and writers. On the same note, Nkealah (2007) states that many African female writers distanced themselves from the African Feminism because they believed that it continued to share the Western Feminism ideologies, which are, anti-male, anti-culture and most importantly, anti-African. Therefore, some African Feminist critics chose to call themselves “womanists” instead of “feminists”. Thus, in 1980, Clenora Hudson-Weems coined a theory called Africana Womanism. Later on, other opposing theories such as Motherism and African Womanism were coined by some Nigerian women who completely distanced themselves from the African Feminism and the term ‘feminism’ (Amaefula, 2021).

Referential to Nkealah (2007) and Amaefula (2021), the African Feminists were able to refute these allegations in their teachings and writings as they strongly took a stance to fight against the Western Feminist discourses. The African feminists used principles that openly fought against the White or Western Feminism. They continued to address the African women’s challenges, which they maintained that they differ from one individual and culture to another.

Due to its ability to address the challenges of women, the African Feminism saw its growth throughout Africa and the rest of the world. It has even caught the interest of

many African women including political activists. In support of this, Atanga (2013) states that the African Feminism has caught the eyes of many African women political activists, such as, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela; and Albertina Luthuli, popularly known as Albertina Sisulu of South Africa.

The African Feminism criticises some cultural practices, norms and stereotypes found in the indigenous African culture, which negatively affect the lives of the African women. According to Mekgwe (2008:16):

African feminist discourse takes care to delineate those concerns that are peculiar to the African situation. It also questions features of traditional African cultures without denigrating them, understanding that these might be viewed differently by the different classes.

The African Feminism is a facilitation structure that allows members of the African communities to address all issues that are affecting them. The theory lets them to outline the weaknesses of the African culture while considering community structures, norms, values and customs embedded in their indigenous culture. Therefore, the study has used the African Feminism to review some of the Basotho rituals embedded in *moetlo oa lefu* by investigating the effects it has on the bereaved Basotho women by examining their economic and psychological impact.

Ajidahun (2020) states that the African Feminism condemns and fights all forms of gender bias and preconceptions encountered by women and recognises the biological and maternal roles of women in their societies. It also calls for the social, political and economic empowerment of women. Seemingly, the African Feminism advocates for gender equality in the African communities and encourages the African women to do their motherly, reproductive and production duties. This

concept of the African Feminism is employed to investigate how *moetlo oa lefu* sometimes restricts the bereaved Basotho women to perform their duties and to reflect on the psychological and economic challenges that could be reinforced by this. It is also used to examine how *moetlo oa lefu* restricts the bereaved Basotho women from accessing all forms of women empowerment in their respective households and communities.

In addition, the African feminists believe that the African women can be freed from the socio-cultural, patriarchal and phallogocentric chains that have manacled them from time to time (Bayu, 2019). The African Feminism aims to fight all forms of female subordination enclosed in social and cultural structures that have been fettering them for a long. It enables them to have the freedom to combine some traditional rituals and professional and personal roles (Atanga, 2013). The study has employed these principles to investigate the psychological and economic impact of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women.

African Feminism is applied in the analysis to unfold the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* in the Sesotho culture. It is also employed to examine the psychological and economic impact of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women. The theory advocates for all forms of women empowerment fights for gender equality and even encourages women to do traditional and professional duties.

1.5.3 Functionalism

Functionalism is a theory of Sociology that focuses on functions done by different structures and institutions in a society. This theory was founded in the early 20th century by authors, such as, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, Herbert Spencer and Robert Merton between 1950's-1960's (Gomez-Diago, 2020). The Functionalism

theory believes that all social institutions play significant roles in ensuring the long-term survival of the society (Perry, 2003). Although this theory has been borrowed from Sociology, it is applicable in this study because it scrutinises what different societal institutions do in a society.

According to Ormerod (2019), one of the principles of Functionalism is called social cohesion or solidarity. Ormerod (2019) states that social cohesion is a principle in which the society works together by supporting one another and showing a sense of solidarity for a common social goal. Ormerod (2019) also indicates that through social cohesion, people are treated based on social, physical and cultural interaction. Consequently, the study has used this principle in the analysis to examine if *moetlo oa lefu* adheres to the principles through the investigation of the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho. The principle has been applied to the examination of the psychological and economic challenges of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women.

Furthermore, Sydie (2002:9) asserts, “another principle of Functionalism theory is a function that looks at the functions of different parts of society. It focuses on the needs those functions fulfill, how those needs are met, and the purpose for meeting such needs”. As Sydie (2002) has indicated, a variety of community structures such as the government, the family and the culture are designed to meet different needs of the society. Therefore, the society, and the family, as one of the structures of the Basotho culture and oral tradition, are used to perform different roles in many of the Basotho communities.

Moreover, value consensus is one of the principles of the Functionalism, which allow people to agree on common values and norms that work towards facilitating

order in society. It also plays a positive role in social regulation (Layton, 1997). *Moetlo oa lefu* as part of the Basotho oral tradition teaches individual members of societies about the norms and values of the communities that they live in.

Therefore, the stated principles of the Functionalism theory are used in the present study to investigate the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho and its psychological and economic impact of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women.

1.5.4 Conclusion

The study used Functionalism and African Feminism in the analysis to examine the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” to the Basotho, and the psychological and economic impact of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women.

1.6 Research Methodology

The section aims at presenting the research methodology. It entails methods and techniques that were used for the collection, organisation, and presentation of data used for the study.

1.6.1 Research Approach

The study has adopted a qualitative research approach. Haradhan (2018) defines the qualitative research approach as one form of social action, which is used to study the experiences and behaviour of a certain group of people to understand their social reality. Since the qualitative research approach deals with the experiences and behaviour of a social group, it has been chosen in this study to research about *moetlo oa lefu* which is a social phenomenon amongst the Basotho. The qualitative research approach has been employed in the study to find the significance of *moetlo oa lefu*

to the Basotho and the psychological and economic challenges of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women.

1.6.2 Research Design

The study has employed an ethnographic research design to make a review of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women. According to Sakar and Sharma (2019) ethnography is one of the qualitative research designs which originates from Cultural Anthropology that studies the culture of a certain group of people. Sakar and Sharma (2019) further state that ethnographic research enables researchers to research about some complex issues and challenges within a certain culture.

Since ethnography studies about culture, the study has selected it to research about *moetlo oa lefu* which is the cultural phenomenon amongst the Basotho. The ethnographic research design was employed in the study to research about the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho, the economic and psychological challenges of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women.

1.6.3 Study Location

The researcher in the study selected the Botha-Bothe and Leribe districts of Lesotho where the main focus is on the selected villages and town areas of Botha-Bothe and Leribe districts respectively. The representative for the rural areas is drawn from the village of Koug Ha Bafokeng in Botha-Buthe and Malaoaneng Ha Seetsa in the Leribe district. The village of Sebothoane around Hlotse town in Leribe is selected as a representative for town areas. The village of Malaoaneng Ha Seetsa is selected because it is the researcher's birthplace. Koug Ha Mashoba is the researcher's marital home while Sebothoane is the current residence for the researcher. The afore-

mentioned villages are also selected because the researcher is familiar with them and it is easy for the researcher to conduct the research in these villages.

Apart from that, town areas are selected since cultural practices may be diluted due to civilisation in towns. The rural areas are chosen because cultural practices are still regarded in great esteem and are still highly practised in the villages. Therefore, towns and villages are selected to bridge a gap that could be brought by the differences in the standards of living and conformity to cultural practices.

1.6.4 Population

According to Bhandari (2020), population refers to a group of people one intends to study. The population for the study includes bereaved Basotho women, unbereaved Basotho women and family elders. In the study, the family elders refer to respondents who are over 65 years of age. They are selected for their understanding, knowledge and experiences in the cultural practices.

The bereaved Basotho women are women who have previously lost their children and or spouses and have been out of mourning period for over two years. The bereaved Basotho women are selected due to their experiences during bereavement. The unbereaved Basotho women are chosen to avoid biasness as they have never experienced the loss of a spouse or child through death and are also selected because they are part of the society which deals with *moetlo oa lefu*. Some of the unbereaved Basotho women could have had a hand in ensuring that *moetlo oa lefu* is performed and their involvement, and observation is helpful in the study.

1.6.5 Sample and Sampling

According to Bhardwaj (2019), a sample is a smaller group of items that have been chosen from the population. The study used 20 participants as a sample. The researcher feels that the sample is sufficient to provide adequate information. The sample was arranged as follows: 6 family elders, 6 bereaved Basotho women and 8 unbereaved Basotho women.

The sample was later broken down according to the villages where the participants lived. From the village of Koung, Ha Bafokeng, the study has 7 participants, 10 participants are from Malaoaneng Ha Seetsa and 3 participants are from Sebothoane. In the village of Koung Ha Bafokeng, there are 3 family elders, 2 unbereaved Basotho women and 2 bereaved Basotho women. From the Malaoaneng Ha Seetsa, there are 3 family elders, 4 bereaved Basotho women and 3 unbereaved Basotho women while there are 3 unbereaved Basotho women and no family elders and the bereaved Basotho women from the village of Sebothoane.

The sample was selected through purposive, simple random and snowballing sampling techniques. Sharma (2017:750) defines purposive sampling as, “a non-probability sampling technique in which the sample is chosen based on the researcher’s knowledge and judgement.” The purposive sampling method was selected because it was easy to conduct and allows the researcher to use her own judgement. It also gave the researcher freedom to select a desired sample based researcher’s needs for the study and the study objective.

According to Bhardwaj (2019), a simple random sampling technique is a sampling method in which all members of a sample are selected by random and chance. Every part of the population has an equal chance to be selected as a sample. This method

was conducted because it was easy to use and even helped the research to ease the biasness that could have been incurred through the purposive sampling technique.

Lastly, snowballing sampling technique is a cost-effective type of sampling where participants identify some people with target characteristics to whom they refer the researcher for information until the study has reached a desired level of data saturation (Ghaljaie, 2017). This technique was used because it allowed the researcher to use referrals during the data collection phase which helped the researcher to collect sufficient data for the study. The referrals also enabled the researcher to reach relevant people easily.

The previously mentioned sampling techniques were used interchangeably because they complement one another and supplemented for any weakness that could have been overlooked by one of the sampling techniques. They enabled the effective selection of samples.

1.6.6 Data Collection Techniques

The study has collected data through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are described by Smith (2017) as the type of interviews that use a set of a few pre-arranged questions but allow the researcher to simultaneously use impromptu questions. Since semi-structured interviews accommodate flexibility of mixing prescribed and spontaneous questions, they were used in the study as they allowed the researcher to elicit detailed information, which was useful for the study. Semi-structured interviews were also used because they allowed the use of open-ended questions which were asked to meet the study objectives. The pre-set questions were written in English as the research is written in English. However, they were asked in Sesotho as all interviews were done in Sesotho. Most of the

interviews were recorded through a cellphone recording device. After the interviews, recordings were saved in google drive which is accessed by the researcher's password. This was done to protect data from being accessed by any unauthorised person or being misplaced.

1.6.7 Data Organisation and Presentation

After the collection of data, the researcher re-visited the recorded information, listened to the recordings and transcribed data. All the responses were translated and paraphrased into English. After that, data was prepared and arranged through data coding. This was done so that information could be arranged in line with each research question and interview questions. All participants' responses either from major or follow-up questions are used as excerpts for the chapter which was achieved through data coding.

According to Korsgaard and Linneberg (2019), data coding refers to a method of labeling and arranging information which is in a form of words or responses to find common themes. Data coding helps one to decide upon useful data and find the number of its occurrences. In the study, data coding was used to help the researcher to identify data collected from the interviews and give it appropriate codes which enabled effective categorisation of data. Data coding enabled the researcher to classify data and code it into three categories namely: categories A, B and C respectively, which have been presented in the given tables in the study.

Data labelled under category A endorsed the hypotheses, and category B did not support the hypotheses. Category C had miscellaneous responses that bring new ideas which did not fall under either category A or B). In the given categories, the

occurrence of the responses (data) was presented in percentages and raw numbers for effective data analysis.

Data was further coded into themes based on the research questions. These themes have been presented as sub-sections of the analysis chapters. Information displaying the arrangement of themes and sub-sections for the analysis has been presented in bar and pie charts displayed at the beginning of each section of the analysis chapters. Data shown in the bar charts indicate the distribution of data according to participants' groups in the given theme. Data presented in pie charts display an overall percentage of data distribution into themes.

1.7 Ethical Consideration

Moetlo oa lefu on its own is a sensitive issue. As a result, the researcher has taken into consideration the feelings and emotions of the participants as some of them have been directly affected by the loss of their loved ones. As such, the consent of the participants was requested before the interviews. The consent of participants to have the recordings was requested before all the recordings were done. Where such consent was not granted, information from the interviews was written as notes.

To protect the participants, the researcher addressed them with either their first names, surnames or nicknames only during interviews. The participants were also informed of their liberty to withdraw from the study at any time they felt the need to. The researcher has also taken into consideration the norms followed when dealing with issues surrounding mourning in the Sesotho culture.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

The study entitled: The Review of *Moetlo oa Lefu* “Death Ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women: From Death to Post-burial, is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter one introduces the study and gives background and contextualisation of the study by laying out a brief presentation of the study concept. The problem, which led to the researcher's interest in investigating *moetlo oa lefu*, is outlined together with the research questions and the hypotheses. The significance of the study together with the review of literature related to the study and the theoretical framework is later outlined. The chapter also has the research methodology, ethical consideration and organisation of the study.

Chapter two explores the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho.

Chapter three investigates the economic challenges associated with *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women.

Chapter four examines the psychological impact of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women.

Chapter five presents the conclusions drawn from the study and even gives recommendations based on the study findings.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *MOETLO OA LEFU* “DEATH RITUAL” TO THE BASOTHO

2.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho using the African Feminism and Functionalism as analytical tools. In the study, the word significance refers to the value exhibited by *moetlo oa lefu* in the lives of the Basotho as a society. The significance of *moetlo oa lefu* is examined from the following rituals of *moetlo oa lefu*: the pre-burial, burial and post-burial rituals, which form three major sections of the chapter. Under each section, several rituals of *moetlo oa lefu* are individually investigated as sub-sections of the chapter.

The data used in the study has been collected through semi-structured interviews with the following groups of participants: the family elders, the bereaved Basotho women and the unbereaved Basotho women. As indicated in the methodology, the total number of respondents in the study is 20. Data from interviews is classified into three categories namely: category A, B and C. Tables, pie and bar charts showing the distribution of data is presented at the beginning of each section.

2.1 The Significance of Pre-burial Rituals

The section presents, discusses and analyses the significance of the pre-burial rituals of *moetlo oa lefu* to the Basotho. In the study, the pre-burial rituals mean the rituals that are done before the burial of *mofu* “the deceased”. The section is set to unpack how the pre-burial rituals associated with *moetlo oa lefu* form the basic part of the

lives of the Basotho. The significance of the following pre-burial rituals is studied in this section: *pihi*, *ho lula materaseng*, *matšeliso*, *tebelo* and *phelehetso ea mofu*. These rituals are individually studied as sub-sections of this part. The section was directed by the following question: what is the significance of pre-burial rituals to the Basotho?

Table 1 below presents the distribution of data into categories.

Table 1 The Significance of Pre-burial Rituals to the Basotho

| | Category A | | Category B | | Category C | | Total | |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Unbereaved Basotho women | 6 | 30 | 2 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 40 |
| Bereaved Basotho women | 5 | 25 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Family elders | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Total | 17 | 85 | 3 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 100 |

Table 1

Table 1 above presents data distribution on the significance of pre-burial rituals to the Basotho. In the table, data has been presented into categories A, B and C. Data classified under category A ranges from sub-section 2.1.1 to 2.1.5 while data for category B is used under sub-section 2.1.6 below.

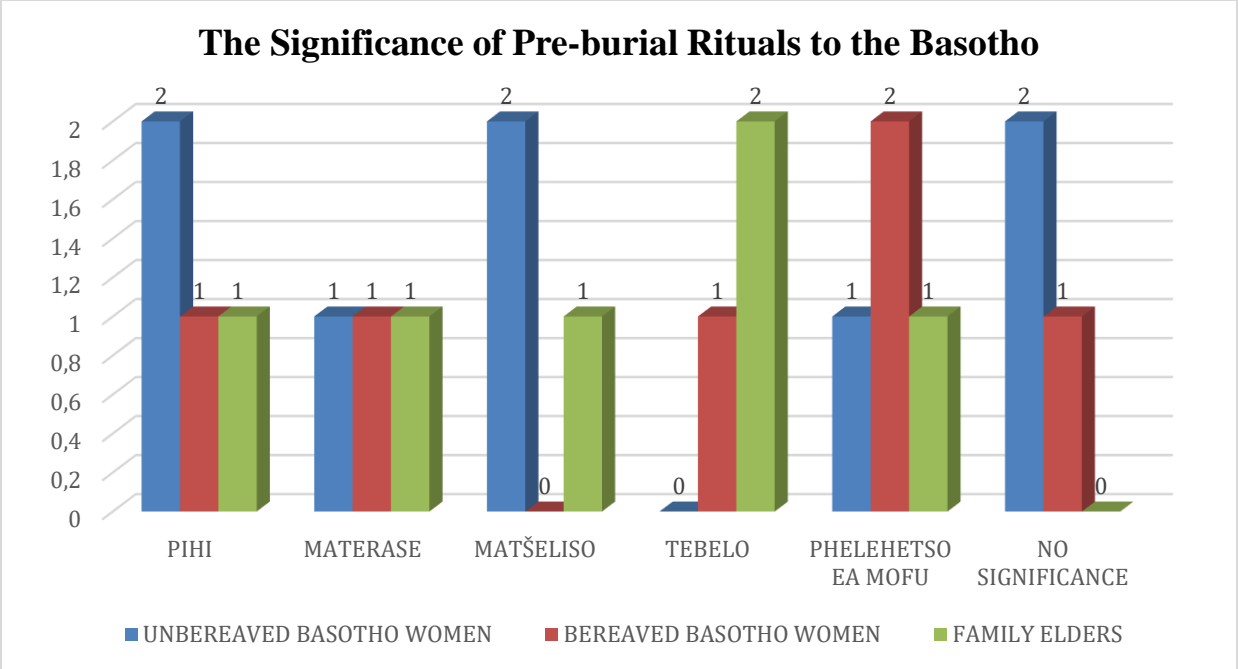


Chart 2A

Chart 2A above shows the significance of pre-burial rituals to the Basotho in which 3 participants find no significance of pre-burial rituals to the Basotho. However, 17 participants show that pre-burial rituals such as *pihi*, *materase*, *matšeliso*, *tebelo* and *phelehetso ea mofu* are significant to the Basotho.

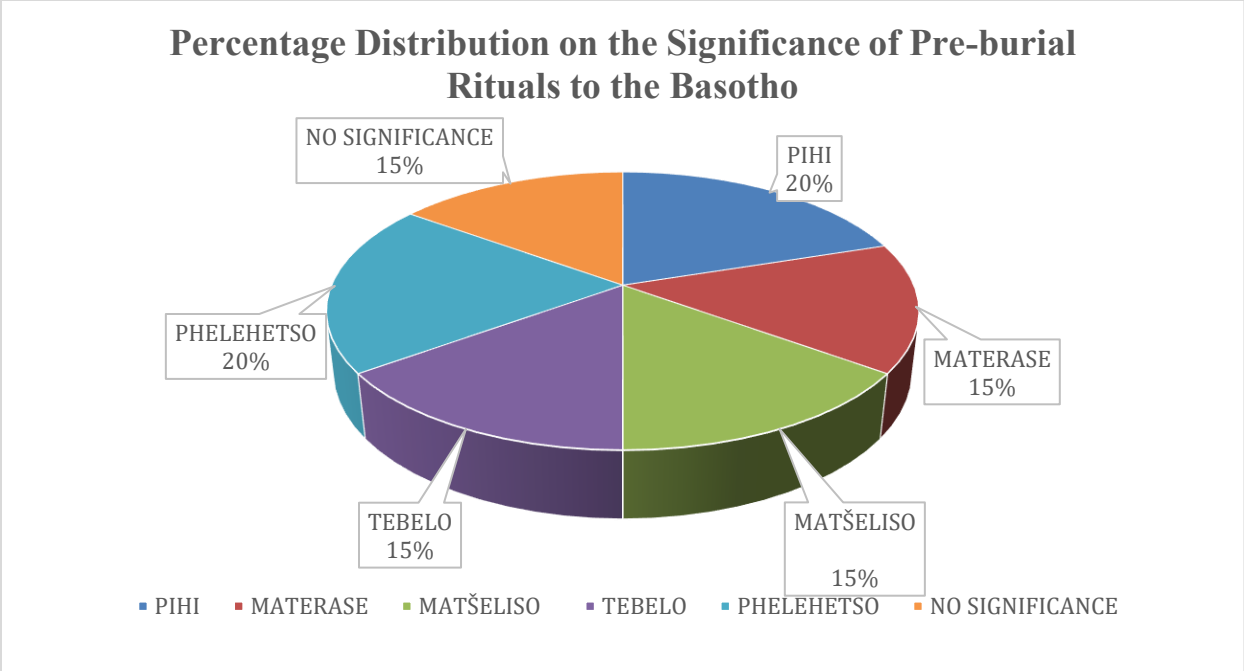


Chart 2B

The above chart shows percentage distribution on the significance of pre-burial rituals to the Basotho. Twenty participants were selected to provide their responses. As motioned above, both *phelehetso* and *pihi* constituted 20 percent each while perspectives on *tebelo*, *matseliso* and *materase* individually contributed 15 percent. The last 15 percent was classified under responses which found no significance of pre-burial rituals.

2.1.1 Pihl “Death Announcement/Report”

This part deals with the examination of the significance of *pihi* “death report”. In the Sesotho culture, *pihi* is a ritual in which the passing on of a person is announced to his or her relatives and the community. *Pihl* is considered a ritual because it follows certain procedures depending on the social standing of the late and the relationship of the deceased with the person to whom *pihi* is sent. On this account, Lesitsi (1990), Nkoka (2008) and Ntimo-Makara (2009) assert that a letter reporting about *pihi* is

hand-delivered through a message carrier or delivered personally by an authorised person (cf. 1.1).

Besides that, the dissemination of *pihi* follows a certain hierarchy of individuals; it starts with very close family members. In support of this, Phili (2020) states that an individual's death must be reported to his family and relatives before it can be disseminated to the community members. *Pihi* influences the start of the *moetlo oa lefu* "death ritual" where proper performance of death ritual has to be ensured.

When responding to the following question: what is the significance of pre-burial rituals to the Basotho? 4 (20%) respondents expressed that:

E thusa hore bohle ba amehang baamani, metsoalle le sechaba, ba tsebe ka lefu.

"It helps everyone: relatives, friends and the members of the community to know about the death."

In the excerpt above, *pihi* enables people to know of the passing on of someone they know or may not know with whom they could have a certain personal or professional relationship. In support of this, Matšela (1990) and Lesitsi (1990) state that a person's death must be announced to his or her relatives, uncle, the chief, the principal chief and the members of the community. Usually, the person who delivers *pihi* to the bereaved family and their relatives would have all the correct information relating to the deceased and may have the authority to do so. This would help to clear any confusion that could be brought by assumptions or hearsay about the passing on of someone.

It is important to inform people about the *pihi* because, amongst the Basotho, issues surrounding the passing on of a person is a collective responsibility where every

person plays a certain role. For the relatives of *mofu* “the deceased”, they would have to start planning for the funeral, of which there are some specific or shared roles and rituals that they have to perform. For instance, the wife and mother of the deceased have to perform the ritual of *ho lula materaseng*, where they are kept company by some elderly women of the family.

The community would avail itself to the bereaved family as soon as they know about *pihi*, and some of them “particularly men” are sent to deliver *pihi* to society. The community members watch the corpse until it is taken to the mortuary while some women of the community help to prepare the mourning house or room together with the relatives of the bereaved. In support of this, Adonis and Sobane (2017) state that the mourning room is cleared and cleaned by the neighbours and relatives of the deceased. Apart from that, the chief provides *setša* “a burial ground” and writes letters confirming *pihi* to various stakeholders in the community such as the burial societies and home affairs.

One of the objectives of the Functionalism shows that the community structures have to ensure that proper functioning and order are maintained. Since the conveyance of *pihi* to the close relatives of the deceased is done by someone who has the authority to do so, that would help to put the minds of the bereaved family at ease. It would dispel all the uncertainties about the person's well-being, conditions and whereabouts, and assures them that the person has indeed passed away. By doing so, proper functioning and maintenance of order are adhered to as proposed by Functionalism.

2.1.2 *Ho lula Materaseng* “The Sitting on the Mattresses”

The section analyses the significance of *ho lula materaseng* as one of the Basotho rituals of *moetlo oa lefu*. *Ho lula materaseng* is defined by Ntimo-Makara (2009) as a ritual in which the bereaved women sit on the *moseme* “grass mat” from the time when the bereaved families receive *pihhi* until the day after the burial. Due to the scarcity of *meseme* “grass mats”, they were replaced by *materase* “mattresses”. This is why the ritual is known as *ho lula materaseng* “the sitting on the mattresses”.

When responding to the following question: what is the significance of pre-burial rituals to the Basotho? 3 (15%) respondents revealed that:

Mosali ea hlokahalletsoeng o lokela hore a lule fatše; a phomole e le ho mo qobisa eng kapa eng e tla mo hlahisa kotsi kapa hona ho mo ama hampe. Ke ka hona a felelehetsoang leha a ea ntloaneng.

“A bereaved woman has to sit down; to rest and safeguard herself from anything that may cause injury to her or affect her badly. That is why she is even accompanied when going to the outhouse.”

In the citation above, the bereaved Basotho women are required to perform *ho lula materaseng*. This emanates from the assumption that their bodies could be weakened by the loss of their loved ones. The bereaved Basotho women must perform the ritual of *ho lula materaseng* because the emotional trauma they undergo is likely to affect their bodies. Some of the bereaved Basotho women could get weak due to the extreme agony, crying and stress influenced by their loss. Some could have fits and could not even be able to help themselves.

Therefore, it is wise to let the bereaved Basotho women have an opportunity to have some rest because the death of a loved one leaves the bereaved weak. The bereaved

Basotho women are exempted from performing some basic household chores to enable their bodies to have a break from the emotional strain that can be brought by their loss. According to Cebekhulu (2015), bereaved women experience emotional distress and shock.

The bereaved Basotho women are sat down and guarded in case they experience any danger as there is always an elderly person available to assist them. The role that the elderly women play ensures that the bereaved Basotho women stay in a better state of their physical health. This kind of help adheres to the principles of the African Feminism, which advocate for the improvement of the health of the African women.

Another essential issue picked from the data is that wherever the bereaved woman goes, the elderly women have to walk behind the bereaved Basotho women so that they would watch out for any danger that may befall the bereaved Basotho women. In support of this, Idialu (2012) states that the bereaved woman must always be accompanied to the toilet, and an elderly woman has to walk behind her. These elderly women are cautious and vigilant that the bereaved Basotho women get assistance and care whenever the need arises. This suits well with the objectives of the African Feminism because one of its principles encourages that the African women should get assistance from all the social structures in their communities so that their problems can be solved.

2.1.3 *Matšeliso* “condolences”

The section examines the significance of *matšeliso* as one of the rituals of *moetlo oa lefu*. The friends, relatives of the bereaved and the community visit the bereaved family to pass their condolences to show sympathy to the bereaved family. According to Mokitimi (1997:2), “Basotho observed that people die from different

diseases and that death occurs at different times and does not discriminate against the poor, [sic] and the old and the young.” It is, therefore, a communal phenomenon in which all have to sympathise and empathise with the bereaved family.

To reinforce this idea, the Basotho have various proverbs that are related to death. Some of these proverbs are *lefu ha le na morena, ha le mo tsebe* “death does not have a king, it does not know him”; *lefu ke ngoetsi ea malapa 'ohle* “death is a daughter-in-law of every household” (Mokitimi, 1997). Due to this and many other underlying reasons, the Basotho have *matšeliso*.

On the previously mentioned question (cf. 2.1.2 above), 3 (15%) participants said that:

Matšeliso a thusa Basotho ho tšehetsana ka ho bontšana kutloelano bohloko le ho lla mosoanng 'moho, ba isa matsoho le ho fana ka koleke le litlatsetso tse itseng.

“*Matšeliso* helps the Basotho to offer support to one another and to show compassion to the bereaved. They also offer contributions and help with manual work.”

The extract above shows that *matšeliso* enables the Basotho *ho lla mosoanng* “to cry on the chyme” with the bereaved. The empathy displayed by society would help the bereaved family to heal. *Ho lla mosoanng* helps the community to morally support the bereaved family by showing them that they are not alone in their agony; they feel their pain too. In this account, Adonis and Sobane (2017) add that the community goes for *matšeliso* to show the bereaved that they feel the same agony the bereaved feel. Meanwhile, Ellenberger (2012:263) further enunciates, “condolences are usually paid to the bereaved family ... to show sympathy”. This type of emotional support that the community offers to the bereaved families and the bereaved Basotho

women is appraised by the Functionalist principle of social cohesion. The community comes to visit the bereaved family to grieve together with them and show sympathy to the bereaved family.

Furthermore, *matšeliso* enables the Basotho to offer material support to one another by donating much-needed supplies to the bereaved family: be it money, food produce or even firewood. All the contributions would be used by the bereaved family during their tough time. For instance, food items including mealie-meal are intended to be used for the preparation of food for the bereaved family and the visitors. This is even emphasised by the Basotho proverb, *ha ho matšeliso a se nang phofo*, “there are no condolences without mealie-meal”. In support of this, Matšela (1990:96) states, “*ho ntšetsanoa likoleke tsa lichelete le lithuso tse ling*”, “they give monetary contributions and other aids to one another”.

The community members support the bereaved Basotho women and their families by helping them with a variety of manual duties. For instance, the community helps with cooking, setting up tents, digging up the grave or collecting firewood. The community members are even observant of what duties need immediate attention and attend to them, sometimes without even having to get a directive from the members of the bereaved family or any authority in the community. This goes well with the African Feminism principle of social empowerment. The bereaved families are socially empowered through the physical support they get from the community. The community empowers the bereaved because it ensures that all due assistance is done. The community would even facilitate the smooth running of things as more people would help around with work.

2.1.4 *Tebelo* “night vigil”

This section discusses the significance of *tebelo* “night vigil” to the Basotho. According to Matšela (1990), *tebelo* is a pre-burial death ritual in which the community avails itself to help the bereaved family to guard the corpse on the eve of the burial day. Matšela (1990) also states that during the *tebelo*, prayers and speeches are made by the people and some members of the family. Besides this, *tebelo* is also characterised by a lot of singing most of which are choruses. Another essential part is that a sheep called *lebone* “lamp” is slaughtered for *tebelo*. This sheep acts as a lamp that would light or path-way for the deceased on their way to the ancestral world. The meat of *lebone* is used to feed people during *tebelo*.

In response to the following question: what is the significance of pre-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women? 3 (15%) respondents expressed that:

Ho thusa lelapa ho lebela mofu oa lona, ho lumelisa mofu esita le ho mo paka.

“To assist the bereaved family with guarding the corpse, bid farewell to the deceased and acknowledge him or her.”

The excerpt above shows that *tebelo* is done to assist the bereaved family with watching over and guarding the corpse, and affords everyone (the community and the relatives of the deceased) to bid farewell to the deceased. This would help to reinforce the spirit of humanity in the community by not letting the bereaved family to spend the night alone with the corpse. The bereaved are being supported by the presence of the community.

The availability of the community during *tebelo* helps to advance the Functionalist perspective of social solidarity. The community stands together with the bereaved family with their presence. They acknowledge the time they have had with the

deceased while at the same time assisting the bereaved family with watching over the corpse because they feel that the deceased was one of them. This helps to reinforce the social-fibre by supporting one another whenever the need arises. The presence of the community during *tebelo* also enables the continuity of the Basotho culture in which the members of the community are given the liberty to participate in.

2.1.5 *Phelehetso ea Mofu “The Accompaniment of the Deceased”*

The section analyses the significance of *phelehetso ea mofu* “accompaniment of the deceased”. *Phelehetso ea mofu* is explained by scholars such as Lesitsi (1990), Matšela (1990) and Nkoka (2008) as the slaughtering of *mohoha* “the bovine slaughtered for the ritual of *phelehetso ea mofu*” on the dawn of the burial day. They state that the hide of this beast was used in the past to wrap the body for the burial since there were no coffins, and the meat of this ox had to be cooked without salt to show that people are not celebrating. The scholars indicate that the meat of *mohoha* had to be finished on the day it was slaughtered.

However, there is some discrepancy between the scholars and oral literature because some of them reveal that the bodies were covered with tanned skin, not the one for *mohoha* for it is believed that it is inappropriate to clothe a person with a wet *letlalo* “blanket (cf. Chapter 1 (1.1)). In addition to that, Segoete (2001) states that *phelehetso ea mofu* can be done at any time that the family would agree to do it after the burial. The study concurs with Segoete’s (2001) observation and incorporates it in the description of *phelehetso ea mofu*.

The spilling of the blood of *mohoha* “the beast slaughtered for *phelehetso ea mofu*” works as a sacrifice that the Basotho give to the ancestors regarding their *mofu* to

accept and appreciate the newly arrived in the spiritual world. This beast is not slaughtered just like any other animal. Before it gets slaughtered, it is presented before the people and introduced as a beast that is going to perform the ritual. Similarly, some words are being uttered to the ox. It is highlighted that it is going to be the deceased's companion. On the same note, Matšela (1990:98) confirms, "*khomo eo e lokela ho tsebisoa hore ke eona eo mofu a felehetsoang ka eona*" "That ox or cow is supposed to be informed that it is the one accompanying the deceased". In response to the question that is directing the section (cf. 2.1.4. above), 4 (20%) revealed that:

Phelehetso ea mofu e etsetsoa ho fehelehetsa mofu ho ea balimong. Hape e etsetsoa le ho mo fa kobo.

"*Phelehetso ea mofu* is done to accompany the deceased to *balimong*. It is also done to afford the deceased the blanket."

The Basotho are widely known as *ma-apara-kobo* "a blanket-wearing nation". The blankets that they wear almost daily, protect them from severe weather conditions, especially the cold. When they are in their blankets, they are even able to work during the cold weather. Some of the blankets are kept for special occasions such as feasts. The Basotho consider blankets as their formal attire. The blankets are also the pride of the nation. For this reason, it is also wise to give the late the blankets so that they too can perform their duties at *balimong* and even protect themselves from the cold. As the excerpt shows, *phelehetso ea mofu e etsetsoa le ho mo fa kobo*, "it affords the deceased with a blanket".

Phelehetso ea mofu helps the Basotho to ritually clothe their dead with blankets. It keeps the deceased warm and will not complain about being cold. In support to this, Lesitsi (2015:11) states, "*ho nepahetse ho felehetsa mofu hore a se ke a lla ka hore*

o hatsetse” “it is right to accompany the dead so that he or she may not complain of being cold.” According to the Functionalism principle of function, different community structures like the family have to perform their duties. Thus, the bereaved families execute their duties by affording the deceased with a ritual blanket.

Furthermore, *phelehetso ea mofu* is performed to accompany the deceased to *balimong*, so that the departed settles well into *balimong*. Similarly, Rakotsoana (2009) and Adonis and Sobane (2017) state that *phelehetso ea mofu* is done to ensure that the *mofu* “the deceased” is accommodated well into ancestorhood and settles well amongst other ancestors. In the Sesotho culture, the deceased does not rest, their spirit will disturb the peace of the living saying that they are cold if *phelehetso ea mofu* was not done. To add to this, Matšela (1990) and Segoete (2001) state that *phelehetso ea mofu* is done so that the late can settle well in the spiritual world.

By performing the ritual of *phelehetso ea mofu*, the bereaved family highlights the Functionalist objective of the maintenance of social stability because the ritual ensures that the deceased settles well in *balimong* as their new social world where they would play their role as *balimo*. The bereaved family would also acquire some sort of social stability through adherence to cultural performance. They would have strengthened their link with other members of society by not diverting from the societal norms.

2.1.6 No Significance

In the study, the phrase no significance means that something has no value; instead, it wastes other people's time. In response to the question that is presented in 2.1.4 above, 3 (15%) declared that:

Ha ba bone molemo oa ho tšoarella motho ka meetlo e kang ho mo lulisa materaseng, motho ka mong a lumelloe ho phetha mabaka a hae ka moo a khonang.

“They do not find any significance in enforcing a person to do the rituals like *ho lula materaseng*, everyone must be allowed to do whatever she wants to do.”

From the aforementioned citation, the respondents do not find any significance in *ho lula materaseng*. Instead, they say that the bereaved Basotho women should be freely allowed to perform their duties as they wish. This implies that they do not find any need of exempting the bereaved Basotho women from doing some daily routine. The bereaved Basotho women have to be allowed to continue with their normal lifestyles while at the same time preparing for the funeral without performing *ho lula materaseng*. This response disregards the principles of the African Feminism because they encourage women to perform their motherly and biotic duties. In the Sesotho culture, it is the duty of women: mothers, wives, aunts or grandmothers of the deceased to do the ritual of *ho lula materaseng*. In this regard, the participants defy the precepts of their own culture and disregard the preservation and continuity of their culture.

The section has discussed the significance of pre-burial rituals to the Basotho. In the section, 3 (15%) participants from category B find no significance in the pre-burial rituals. 17 (85%) respondents from category A (cf. table 1 above for the distribution of data), (which is the majority) have revealed that *pibi* is highly significant to the Basotho because it informs them of the passing away of someone and motivates the beginning of the performance of *moetlo oa lefu* and all activities related to the loss of a loved one amongst the Basotho.

Ho lula materaseng affords the bereaved Basotho women an opportunity to rest. This suits well with the objectives of the African Feminism because one of its principles encourages that the African women should get assistance from all the social structures in their communities so that their problems can be solved. *Tebelo* enables the community to assist the bereaved family with watching over the corpse and affords everyone (the community and the relatives of the deceased) to pay their last respect to the deceased. *Phelehetso* plays the part of providing the deceased with blankets and acts as an accompaniment to the deceased.

2.2 *The significance of Burial Rituals to the Basotho*

This section aims to explore the significance of burial rituals to the Basotho. According to Opong (2004), burial rituals are the rituals that are performed to cut the physical connection that the bereaved have with the deceased. In the study, burial rituals mean the rites of passage that the Basotho perform on the day of the burial before or during the funeral procession to ensure the proper burial of the late. In this section, the following rituals: *ho hlatsoa setopo* “the washing of the corpse”, *ho bona setopo* “the viewing of the corpse”, and *ho tšela mobu* “the throwing of the sod” are discussed.

Data from this section emanates from the following question: what is the value of burial rituals to the Basotho? The responses to the question are used as data, which is presented as excerpts throughout the section. Data has been organised in categories A, B and C as shown in the table below.

Table 2 Significance of Burial Rituals to the Basotho

| | Category A | | Category B | | Category C | | Total | |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Unbereaved Basotho women | 7 | 35 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 40 |
| Bereaved Basotho women | 5 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 30 |
| Family elders | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Total | 18 | 90 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 20 | 100 |

Table 2

Table 2 above displays data distribution on the significance of burial rituals to the Basotho in categories. Data used in category A is distributed from subsection 2.2.1 to 2.2.3 below. Data under category C is presented in sub-section 2.2.4 below.

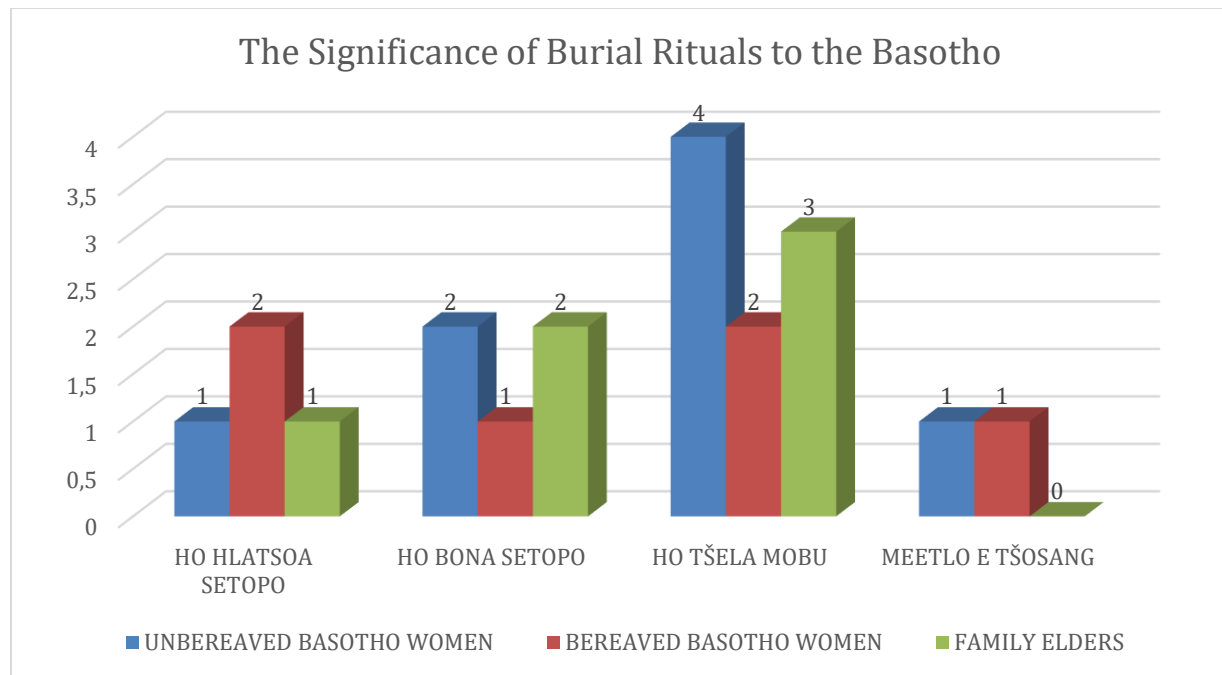


Chart 2C

Bar chart 2C above shows the significance of burial rituals to the Basotho, among the 20 participants selected for the study. The chart shows that 4 participants gave their view on *ho hlatsoa setopo*, 5 on *ho bona setopo*, 9 on *ho tšela mobu*, and 2 on *meetlo e tšosang*.

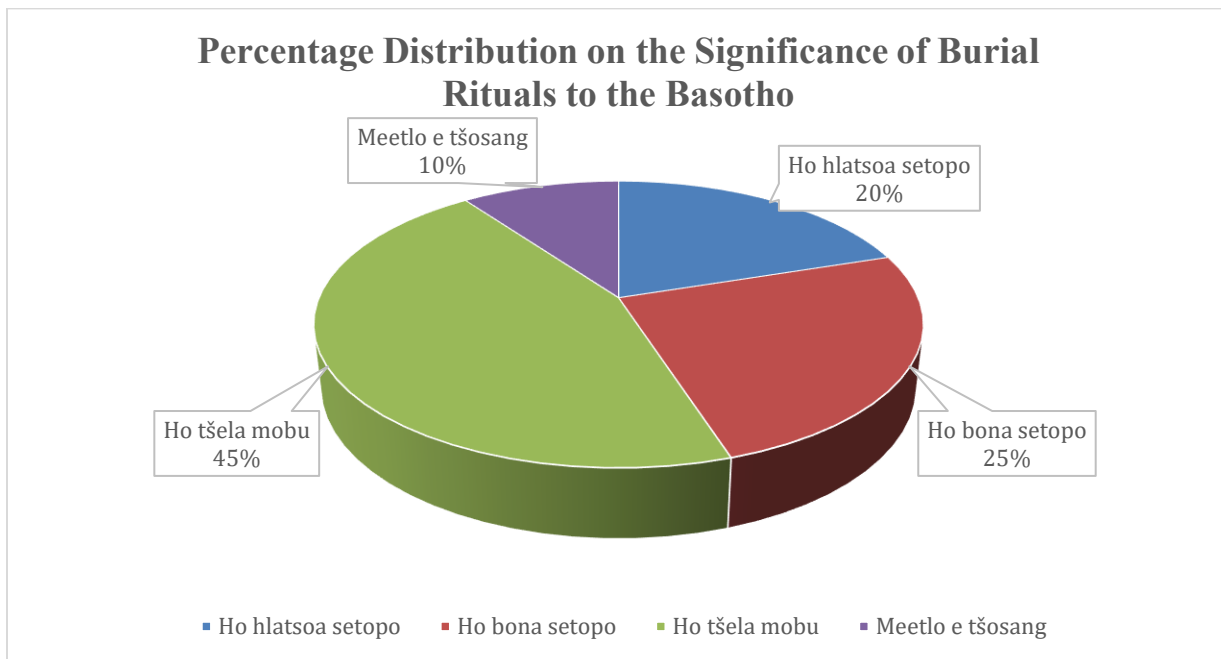


Chart 2D

The above chart shows percentage distribution on the significance of burial rituals to Basotho. The chart shows that 45% of the responses were categorised under *ho tšela mobu*, *ho bona setopo* constituted 25%, 20% responses were classified under *ho hlatsoa setopo* and *meetlo e tšosang* constituted 10% responses.

2.2.1 *Ho Hlatsoa Setopo* “The Bathing of the Corpse”

The section examines the significance of *ho hlatsoa setopo* “the bathing of the corpse”. Amongst the Basotho, *bafu* “plural of *mofu*” have to be washed before the burial to guarantee that they enter into the spiritual world without any impurities that

could be brought by death. During the performance of this ritual, the water used is prepared with some traditional medicine and herbs, and soap depending on different family traditions. *Ho hlatsoa setopo* follows some gendered protocol in which females would only bathe female corpses and males would bathe male corpses.

In response to the following question: what is the value of burial rituals to the Basotho? 4 (20%) participants exposed that:

Mofu o photloa hore a se ke a tsamaea a le litšila.

“The deceased is bathed so they cannot embark on their journey without tidying up.”

From the excerpt, *mofu* has to be bathed to ensure that they go on with their journey clean. This reinforces the Basotho belief in the afterlife. This bathing of *setopo* “a corpse” is done to clean *mofu* from all the impurities that they might have caught in the world of the living. In support of this, Lee and Vaughan (2008) affirm that the deceased has to be removed or cleansed from any impurity so that they can enter the ancestral world in harmony. The act of ensuring that *mofu* is being washed and is ritually cleaned shows the participation of the family members in ensuring that impurities are removed from the corpse. In doing so, the family adheres to functionalists’ perspectives which state that the society has to perform its duties to ensure the continuity of its norms and values. In this case, it is the function of the family to remove impurities from their *litopo* for a smooth transition into *balimong*.

2.2.2 *Ho Bona Setopo “The Viewing of the Corpse”*

This section aims to investigate the significance of *ho bona setopo* “the viewing of the corpse” to the Basotho. In the study, the ritual of *ho bona setopo* refers to the ritual in which the relatives of the deceased and the people (community and the friends of the deceased and his or her family) view the corpse on the day of its burial.

The performance of *ho bona setopo* normally follows a hierarchy that begins with the family members, the church and the community. There is also a person who officiates the viewing; the person would normally stand close to the coffin to monitor the viewing.

On the question: what is the value of burial rituals to the Basotho? 5 (25%) respondents said that:

Ba ikholisa hore mofu eo ke oa bona hape ba a mo lumelisa; a tsamaee hantle.

“They ensure that the corpse is theirs and bid farewell to the deceased.”

The quoted excerpt indicates that *ho bona setopo* is done so that the bereaved family and the community can have closure and have the opportunity to pass their last respect to the deceased. They wish the deceased well on their journey. On this account, Opong (1997) states that *ho bona setopo* is the ritual of separation from the deceased and is used to bid farewell to the deceased.

In addition, through the ritual of *ho bona setopo*, the people confirm that *mofu* is theirs. This helps to avoid burying the wrong corpse as in some cases, the mortuaries can erroneously dispatch the corpse to the wrong family. During *ho bona setopo*, the society and the family participate in ensuring that *mofu* is their own. In support of this, Nkoka (2008) states that the public gets invited to the viewing of the corpse so that they become convinced that the person has passed away; and indeed, they are being buried. This aligns with the Functionalism theory, which states that every individual in a society has a function to perform. Consequently, people see to it that the family does not bury the wrong *setopo*.

2.2.3 *Ho Tšela Mobu* “The Throwing of the Sod”

The section is set to examine the significance of *ho tšela mobu* “the throwing of the sod” to the Basotho. According to Matšela (1990), *ho tšela mobu* follows a familial sequence (hierarchy) of the family tree starting with the nephews, the sons and the fathers, where each member throws some spadefuls of soil. Matšela (1990) adds that in some families, the women (nieces, daughters and mothers) participate in *ho tšela mobu*, and they still follow the same hierarchy as the men. Unlike the men, the women throw a handful of soil. When the family is done with *ho tšela mobu*, the eldest member of the family (men) utters *ha bo je!* “Please join us!” which calls for the participation of the society in *ho tšela mobu* until the grave is filled up.

Apart from what Matšela (1990) says, oral tradition states that when participating in *ho tšela mobu*, the spade that is used to throw the soil back to the grave is placed back on the heap of soil. The spade cannot be given directly to other individuals. Each person has to pick it from the heap to avoid re-contamination of *sesila* between mourners. The contamination could have been acquired through the performance of death rituals such as *ho bona setopo* and *ho hlatsoa setopo*, and a bad omen left by the passing on of the deceased.

When responding to the question stated in 2.2.2 above, 9 (45%) participants said that:

Ho ruta leloko tlhatlhamano ea lona.

“It engages in teaching the family its hierarchy.”

The excerpt above shows that *ho tšela mobu* plays an important role in teaching the members of the bereaved family and the community the sequence of the family tree. This also encourages the members of the bereaved family in knowing who they are

and who their relatives are. By doing so, the family contributes to advancing and maintaining their family hierarchy and their values as the Functionalism acknowledges the social order.

2.2.4 *Meetlo e Tšosang “Scary Rituals”*

In the study, scary rituals refer to rites that some members of society are afraid of. In response to the aforementioned question (cf. 2.2.1 above), 2 (10%) participants said that:

Meetlo e kang ho bona setopo ea tšosa, joale ha ba ke ba itlame ka eona hoba ba tšaba ho bona litopo.

“Some rituals like viewing the corpse are frightening, so they do not engage in such rituals because they are afraid of the corpses.”

The citation indicates that some people do not view the corpses due to a frightening aspect of the ritual. In not participating in *ho bona setopo*, the participants are protecting themselves from having nightmares, which could result in viewing the corpse. This is advocated for by the Functionalism, which encourages the society to serve its purpose of ensuring the effective survival of the society. In this case, the respondents guarantee their well-being by not participating in activities that may put their lives in danger.

The section has investigated the significance of burial rituals to the Basotho and has revealed that in category C, 2 (10%) participants (see table 2 above) find no significance in burial rituals. Instead, they find some rituals such as *ho bona setopo* too terrifying to participate in. However, 18 (90%) respondents in category A (which is the majority) have expressed that the burial rituals are significant to the Basotho because they enable the people to pay their last respects to the deceased through *ho*

bona setopo. The study has exposed that *ho hlatsoa setopo* tidies the corpse for its journey to *balimong*. *Ho tšela mobu* teaches the members of the bereaved family their hierarchy.

2.3 The Significance of the Post-burial Rituals to the Basotho

This section is intended to explore the significance of the post-burial rituals to the Basotho. In the study, post-burial rituals refer to the rituals that are performed after the burial of the corpse, particularly those that are performed on the day of the burial and a day after the burial. For the section, the analysis will be made on the significance of *ho hlapa matsoho* “hand-washing ritual”, *mashele-shele* “the communal meal”, *thapo* “wearing of a mourning cord and the mourning clothes” and *ho tlosa sesila* “cleansing rituals”.

The question that was used for the section was: what is the significance of post-burial rituals to the Basotho? Participants’ responses to the question are used as data for the section, which are arranged into categories A, B and C respectively. For clarity, table 3 below displays data distribution into categories.

Table 3 Significance of the Post-burial Rituals to the Basotho

| | Category A | | Category B | | Category C | | Total | |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Unbereaved Basotho women | 8 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 40 |
| Bereaved Basotho women | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Family elders | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 100 |

Table 3

Table 3 above shows data distribution into categories. The section has used data from category A only which is presented in sub-section 2.3.1 to 2.3.4 below.

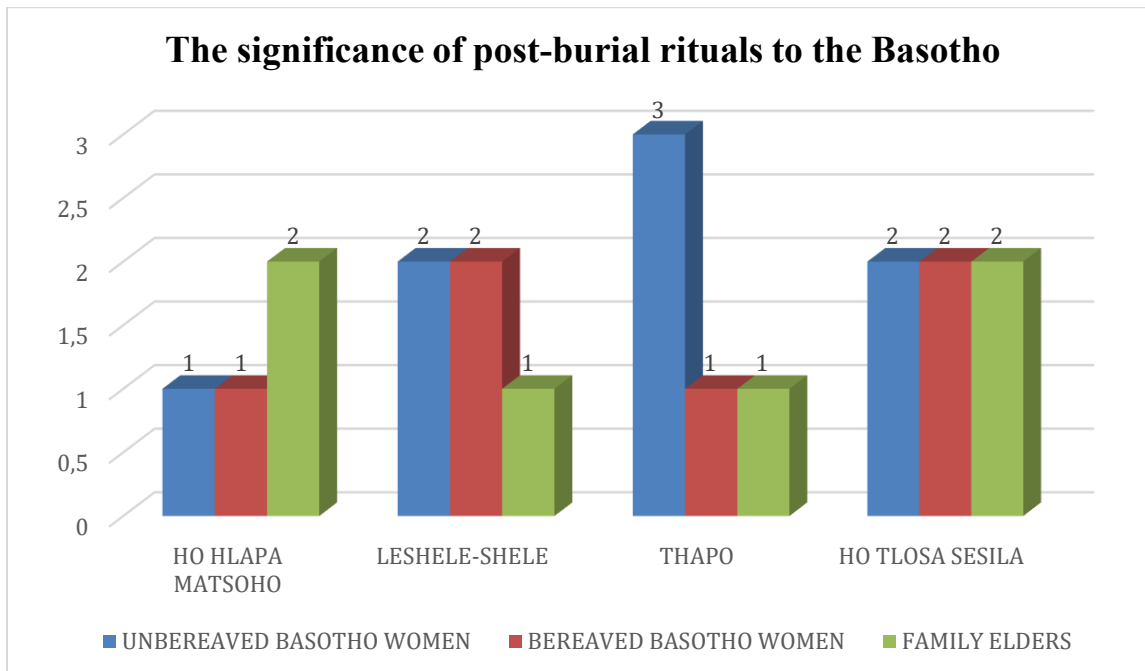


Chart 2E

Bar chart 2E above shows the significance of post-burial rituals to the Basotho. The chart displays participants’ responses based on the following question: what is the significance of post-burial rituals to the Basotho? As the chart indicates, participants’ responses were coded into four themes. 4 participants responses were coded under *ho hlapa matsoho*, 5 for *leshele-shele*, 6 for *ho tlosa sesila* and 5 for *thapo*.

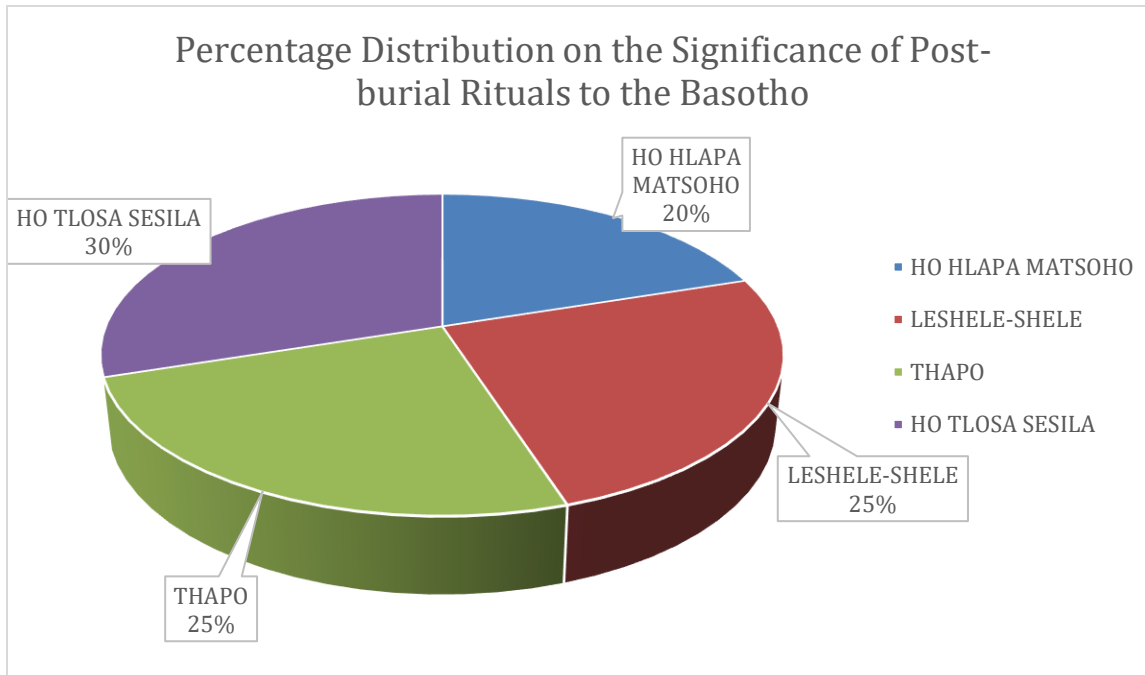


Chart 2F

Chart 2F presents percentage distribution on the significance of post-burial rituals to the Basotho. The chart shows that *thapo* and *leshele-shele* constitute 25% each. *Ho tlosa sesila* constitutes 30% while *ho hlapa matsoho* forms 20% of percentage distribution.

2.3.1 Ho Hlapa Matsoho “Hand-washing Ritual”

This section aims at exploring the significance of the ritual of *ho hlapa matsoho* “hand-washing ritual”. Opong (1997) and Phili (2020) describe the ritual of *ho hlapa matsoho* “hand-washing ritual” as a ritual in which all the people who have gone to

the funeral wash their hands in a bowl of water mixed with the leaves of *lekhala la bafu* “aloe maculata” as they enter the yard in which the funeral had taken place.

In response to the following question: what is the significance of post-burial rituals to the Basotho? 4 (20%) participants exposed that:

Ho tlosa sesila sa mabitleng le sa ho ama mofu.

“To remove ritual impurity from the graveyard and coming in contact with the deceased.”

The excerpt above shows that *ho hlapa matsoho* helps to remove *sesila* “ritual impurity” that is brought by being around the corpse and being at the graveyard. In support of this, Moabi (2016:x) states that the ritual of *ho hlapa matsoho*, “is performed to wash away bad omen attracted at the cemetery”, and “it is a purification rite from cleansing the people from any contact with the corpse” (Opong, 2004:35).

2.3.2 *Leshele-shele* “The Communal Meal”

This sub-section deals with the significance of *leshele-shele* (the communal meal). Matšela (1990) defines *leshele-shele* as the food prepared for people to eat after the funeral. Matšela (1990) states that in the past, *leshele-shele* was *bohobe le nama* “mealie-pap and meat”. This is the meat from *mohoha* which was cooked without salt to emphasise that the people are mourning. In the past, the food had to be eaten and finished the same day. However, Nkoka (2007), Phafoli and Zulu (2012) and Phili (2020) declare that due to modernisation, *leshele-shele* is cooked in a tasty manner and is not different from the food (meat) eaten at the feast.

In participation, 5 (25%) of the respondents expressed that:

Ho fepa ba tlileng phupung, ho ja 'moho le balimo le ho leboha sechaba se u tšehelitseng.

“To feed those who have come to the funeral, to eat with the ancestors and thank the people who have supported you.”

From the excerpt above, the Basotho perform the ritual of *leshele-shele* to feed the people who have come to the funeral. As the people have their meals, it is believed that they are eating with the bereaved family's *balimo*. This is supported by the proverb *pha-balimo o ja nabo* “he who feeds the ancestors, eats with them”. On this issue, Opong (2004) affirms that *leshele-shele* is considered the last meal with *mofu*, which is believed to be shared or eaten with the *balimo*.

Moreover, *leshele-shele* is served as a token of appreciation to the people who have been supporting the bereaved family by offering them *leshele-shele*. Some of these people could have travelled a long distance to the funeral, so it is humane to give them something to eat so that they do not go home on empty stomach. In support of this, Baloyi and Makobe-Rabothata (2014) state that offering *leshele-shele* to the people who have attended the funeral is *botho* “humaneness”. The Functionalists state that it is the duty of the family as a community institute to play its roles, the bereaved families are performing their duties to ensure that the people are given food to eat.

2.3.3 *Thapo* “The Mourning Cord and the Mourning Clothes”

This sub-section aims to scrutinise the significance of *thapo* “the mourning cord and the mourning clothes”. In this part, *thapo* refers to the ritual of *ho roala thapo* “the wearing of the mourning cord” and *ho apara thapo* “the wearing of mourning clothes”.

Ho roala thapo “the wearing of the mourning cord” is defined by Matšela (1990) as a ritual in which the children and the relatives of the deceased gather together to cut their hair and wear *thapo* “a cord or strip of a cloth worn around the neck”. Maloka (1998) and Segoete (2020) state that in the past, *thapo* was made of a plaited cord of *loli* “a cord of *Cyperus marginatus*”. These days *thapo* is a strip of cloth worn around the neck.

According to Matšela (1990), *ho roala thapo* follows the same hierarchy that is followed when doing *ho tšela mobu* (cf. 2.2.3 above). The males are the ones who begin with the shaving of the hair and wearing the mourning cord, and are followed by the females. When the children and the relatives of the deceased have worn *thapo*, the hair is collected and thoroughly burned at *thothobolong* “the place where ash and rubbish are disposed of at home”; and *ho roala thapo* could last for a month. The study adopts Matšela’s (1990) description and regards *ho roala thapo* as a ritual in which the children and the relatives of the deceased wear *thapo* “a strip of a mourning cloth” on their necks for a period that the family can decide upon.

Ho apara thapo is one of the gendered post-burial rituals of *moetlo oa lefu* in which the bereaved Basotho women wear specific set of clothes called the mourning regalia for the entire time of the mourning. This ritual is only performed by the bereaved Basotho women as mothers and/or wives of the deceased. In the Sesotho culture, *ho apara thapo* is performed by the bereaved Basotho women alone.

When responding to the following question: what is the significance of the post-burial rituals to the Basotho? 5 (25%) of the participants revealed that:

Ke sesupo sa hore lelapa kapa motho o bofifing. Hape e thusa ba amehang ho ilela mofu oa bona hantle.

“It shows that the family or a person is in the mourning and helps the bereaved to mourn their late appropriately.”

The citation above shows that *thapo* is a symbol of grief amongst members of the bereaved family of which the members of the bereaved family have to *ila* “abstain” from certain activities such as cutting their hair and having feasts in their homes for the duration of *thapo*. Similarly, Opong (2004) states that *thapo* is a symbol of mourning that follows some restrictions on social activities.

Thapo shows that part of the family has gone and the surviving are indeed burdened by their loss. Therefore, they must be treated with delicacy. On this account, Opong (2004) and Phili (2020) affirm that *thapo* shows people that the person wearing it is agonised, is a sign that part of them has passed on and is in the process of letting go of their loved ones. *Thapo* accentuates African Feminism objectives, which advocate for the well-being of the African women. In this case, the principle does not cater for the women alone but to entire members of the bereaved family. The participation of the bereaved family in the ritual of *thapo* enables others to treat them tenderly with the understanding that the bereaved are still grieving the loss of their loved ones.

2.3.4 *Ho Tlosa Sesila* “Cleansing Rituals”

For the study, *ho tlosa sesila* “cleansing rituals” refers to the rites of passage that are used to ritually purify the bereaved from *sesila* “ritual impurity” that has been caused by the loss of their loved ones. According to Letsosa and Letsosa (2011), *ho tlosa sesila* is the final stage of the mourning period.

Ho tlosa sesila incorporates a variety of rituals depending on the closeness or the relationship of the member of the bereaved family and the deceased. Some of the rituals of *ho tlosa sesila* are *ho rola thapo* “the wearing off of the mourning cord”, *ho hlobola thapo* “the wearing off of the mourning clothes” and *ho tlosa khutsana* “the removal of orphanhood”.

In response to the question presented in 2.3.3 above, 6 (30%) respondents said that:

Ho tlosa sesila ho fa ba bofifing tumello ea ho boela ba tsoela-pele ka bophelo bo tloaelehileng le ho ba hloekisa.

“*Ho tlosa sesila* ‘cleansing ritual’ affords the bereaved a go-ahead to continue with their normal lives and to purify them.”

From the extract above, *ho tlosa sesila* cleanses and reintegrates the bereaved family back into society by lifting a ban that had been reinforced by restrictions of the mourning period. This implies that the bereaved family is at liberty to do anything they would want to engage in. For instance, the members of the bereaved family especially orphans could also participate in other Basotho traditions like *lebollo* “initiation”, which one cannot engage in without undergoing the cleansing ritual of *ho tlosa khutsana* “the removal of orphanhood”.

The reintegration of the bereaved family into society through the performance of *ho tlosa sesila* fits within the Functionalism principle of social cohesion. The incorporation strengthens the social solidarity between the bereaved family and the other members of the society. It enables them to engage in activities, particularly cultural ones, which other members of the community participate in. This allows the bereaved family to conform to their cultural aspects and to engage in the continuity

and preservation of their culture. The reintegration makes them feel part of their community and culture.

The section has examined the significance of the post-burial rituals to the Basotho. In the study, 20 (100%) respondents whose responses were classified under category A (cf. table 3 above for data distribution) have revealed that the post-burial rituals help with the cleansing of the bereaved family from *sesila* acquired through the passing on of their relative, encourage the bereaved to mourn for the deceased appropriately and to feed the funeral attendants.

2.4 Conclusion

In brief, the chapter has examined the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” to the Basotho. The chapter has revealed that *moetlo oa lefu* plays a significant role in the lives of the Basotho through the rituals embedded in it. *Pihi* is used to inform people of the passing away of someone and clears any misunderstandings relating to the death of a person. It serves as an official confirmation that the person has passed away. It motivates the beginning of the performance of *moetlo oa lefu* and all activities related to the loss of a loved one amongst the Basotho. On the other hand, *ho lula materaseng* helps the bereaved Basotho women to be given the assistance that they need because they are always in the company of the elderly women. It also enables the bereaved Basotho women to have some rest so that their bodies and minds can rest.

In addition, the study has found that through *matšeliso*, the Basotho can show compassion and offer to support to the bereaved families through the ideology of *ho lla mosoannng*. The study has also revealed that *tebelo* is done to assist the bereaved family with watching over the corpse and affords everyone (the community and the

relatives of the deceased) to pay their last respect to the deceased. This would help to reinforce the spirit of humanity in the community by not letting the bereaved family to spend the night alone with the corpse. They are being supported by the presence of the community, which conforms to the continuity of the Basotho culture. These align with the Functionalism principle of function, which encourages the community structures to perform certain functions. In this regard, the community functions by physically availing itself during *tebelo* and offering support to the bereaved.

Furthermore, *phelehetso ea mofu* affords the deceased with blankets and ritually accompanies the deceased to *balimong*. *Ho hlatsoa setopo* helps to clean all the impurities that *mofu* might have and makes him enter the ancestral world without any impurities; *ho bona setopo* plays a significant role in the lives of the Basotho because it enables the Basotho to bid goodbyes to the deceased, and to ensure that the bereaved family does not burry the wrong corpse.

Subsequently, *ho tšela mobu* amongst the Basotho teaches the members of the bereaved family and the community the hierarchy of the deceased's family; and *ho hlapa matsoho* is done to cleanse the people from any impurities that they may have contracted from being around the corpse and their presence at the cemetery. *Leshel-shele* is used to feed those who have come to the funeral, eat with the ancestors and thank the people who have supported the bereaved family. The study has also revealed that *thapo* is a symbol that the family is mourning the loss of their loved ones and allows the bereaved to mourn for the deceased well. *Thapo* also encourages the members of the society to treat the bereaved with a delicacy, which stems from the understanding that they are in grief.

Finally, *ho tlosa sesila* cleanses and reintegrates the bereaved family back into society by lifting a ban that had been reinforced by restrictions of the mourning period. For these reasons, the study concludes that the pre, burial and post-burial rituals of *moetlo oa lefu* are significant to the Basotho.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES OF *MOETLO OA LEFU* “DEATH RITUAL” ON THE BEREAVED BASOTHO WOMEN

3.0 Introduction

The chapter analyses the economic impact of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women using the African Feminism and Functionalism as analytical tools. This study takes the economic challenges to denote the financial or monetary problems or challenges that the bereaved Basotho women are faced with. The economic challenges of *moetlo oa lefu* are examined from the pre-burial, burial and post-burial rituals, which form three major sections of the chapter under which, there are some sub-sections.

Data for this chapter have been collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants. Throughout the chapter, the major questions are presented at the beginning of each section. Thus, all the participants’ responses either from major or follow-up questions are used as excerpts for the chapter. Data distribution has been presented through the given tables and charts in the chapter. As indicated in the methodology (1.6.7), data has been classified as categories A, B and C respectively.

3.1 *The Economic Challenges of the Pre-burial Rituals of Moetlo oa Lefu “Death Ritual” on the Bereaved Basotho Women*

The section presents, discusses and analyses data on the economic challenges of the pre-burial rituals of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women. In the study, the pre-burial rituals mean the rites of passage that are done before the burial of *mofu* “the deceased”. The question that was used for this section was: in

what way do the pre-burial rituals affect the bereaved Basotho economically? Participants' responses to the question are displayed as excerpts and data for this section which have been arranged into categories as shown in table 4 below.

The table below presents data distribution on the economic effects of pre-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women into categories.

Table 4 The Economic Effects of Pre-burial Rituals on the Bereaved Basotho Women

| | Category A | | Category B | | Category C | | Total | |
|--------------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| | Num ber | Percent age | Num ber | Percent age | Num ber | Percent age | Num ber | Percent age |
| Unbereaved Basotho women | 8 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 40 |
| Bereaved Basotho women | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Family elders | 3 | 15 | 3 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Total | 17 | 85 | 3 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 100 |

Table 4

The table above presents how data has been distributed for this section. Data classified under category A have been arranged into sub-sections 3.1.1 to 3.1.6 below while data under category B have been arranged under sub-section 3.1.7. As the table shows, there is no data under category C. Sub-sections (3.1.1 to 3.1.7)

constitute participants' responses to the following question: in what way do the pre-burial rituals affect the bereaved Basotho women economically?

Bar chart 3 A below shows the distribution of data into participants' groups.

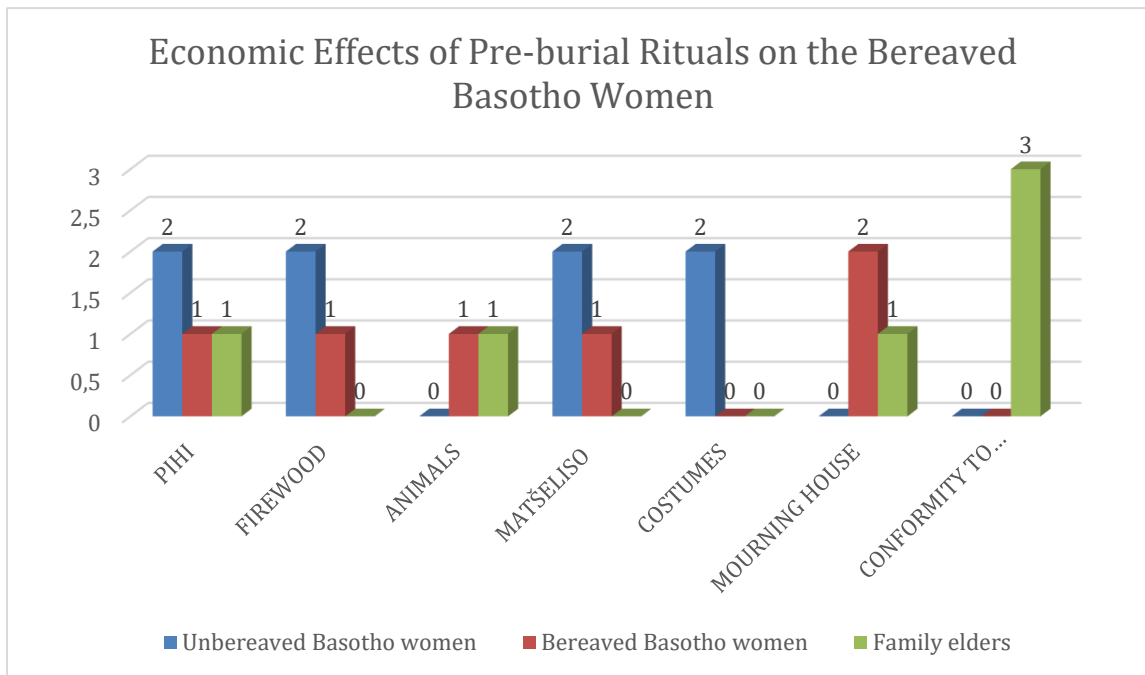


Chart 3A

The bar chart 3A above presents data distribution on the economic effects of pre-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women which has been classified into firewood, animals, costumes, mourning house, conformity to *moetlo oa lefu*, *pihi* and *matšeliso* as themes for the section.

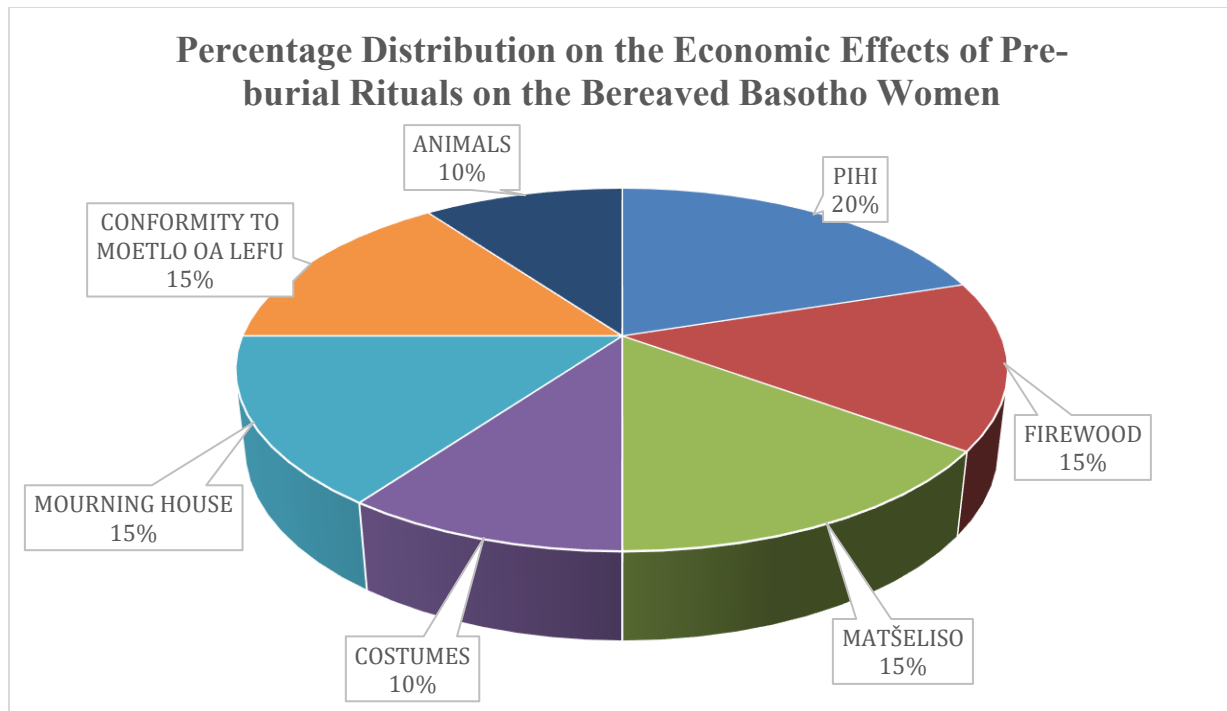


Chart 3B

Pie chart 3B above is a display of the percentage distribution of data on the economic effects of pre-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. Data has been distributed as follows: 10% costumes, 10% animals, 15% firewood, 15% mourning house, 15% *matšeliso*, 15% conformity to *moetlo oa lefu* and 20% *pihi*.

3.1.1 The Expenses of *Pihi* “Death Report”

Pihi “death report” refers to the announcement about somebody’s passing away (cf. 2.1.1). In this sub-section, the expenses of *pihi* are examined to reflect the economic challenges of *pihi*. In response to the following question: in what way do the pre-burial rituals affect the bereaved Basotho women economically? 4 (20%) respondents stated that:

Motho ea rongoang ho tsamaisa pihi oa palamisoa ebile oa feptjoa. Hape, moea o letsang o rekoa ke mosali ea bofifing, o bile o lefella phetsetsano ea pihi se-ea-le-moeeng.

“The person who is sent to deliver *pihi* “death report” is given money for transport and food. The bereaved woman buys airtime for people who are helping with the dissemination of *pihi* and pays for the announcement of *pihi* over the radio.”

Concerning the extract above, for the dissemination of *pihi* “death report” to be done effectively, sometimes the messenger has to be sent to physically deliver *pihi*. That person has to be transported and even offered money for food by the bereaved Basotho women. This is done because in some places, there are no cellphone network coverage, or it would be inappropriate to distribute *pihi* through calls to such people. Where possible, *pihi* is distributed through cellphone calls, and the bereaved Basotho women have to provide airtime for the people who are helping them with the circulation of *pihi*. If the *pihi* is disseminated to the public through radio announcements, the bereaved Basotho women have to pay for the service.

The act of ensuring that *pihi* is distributed appropriately is supported by the African Feminist principle that encourages the African women to do their social duties or roles. In this case, the bereaved Basotho women perform their duty of ensuring that all those related to the deceased are made aware of their passing on by financially sponsoring the delivery of *pihi* to those concerned. Although the bereaved Basotho women fulfill their obligation, little attention is given to the economic burden it imposes on them, which disregards the African Feminist principle of economic empowerment.

3.1.2 Catering for *Matšeliso* “Condolences”

The phrase catering for *matšeliso* “condolences” is used in the study to mean providing food that is offered to people who have visited the bereaved family to pass

condolences. On the same aforementioned question (3.1), 3 (15%) participants revealed that:

Ho feptjoa batho ba tlileng matsʔelisong, ho bile ho jeoa lijo tse mathe-maloli.

“People who have come for *matsʔeliso* are offered food; most of which is classy and tasty.”

In addition, people who have come for *matsʔeliso*, especially those from faraway places or those with certain social standing, are offered something to eat and drink. The food offered is normally exceptionally tasty and costly. The extract indicates that *ho jeoa lijo tse mathe-maloli* “delicious food is been eaten”. This implies that the bereaved Basotho women have to ensure that such extraordinarily delicious food is available for the visitors. On this note, Matobo (1998) confirms that during *matsʔeliso*, expensive and mouth-watering food is served to people who have come for *matsʔeliso*. Having to provide the visitors with delicious food violates the African Feminism principle of economic empowerment of the African women. The delicious food prepared for the guests could be pricy and would increase the financial challenges for the bereaved Basotho women.

3.1.3 The Transportation of Firewood Expenses

For this part, firewood refers to the wood that the bereaved family uses during the pre-, burial and post-burial stages. In their view, 3 (15%) participants expressed that:

Patsi e latoa hole 'me ea palamisoa.

“Firewood is being fetched from far and has to be transported.”

In some villages, the chief offers firewood to the bereaved families from the community forests, most of which are far from the villages. In some villages,

especially the urban ones, some of the villagers would help with spans of oxen or vehicles, but the bereaved family would have to pay a certain amount of money for transportation for the transportation of firewood.

In cases where there are no community forests, the firewood has to be bought. In such instances, the relatives would without charge offer wood and not allow the bereaved Basotho women to buy it from any dealer. As a result, the bereaved Basotho women would transport firewood from the village to their homes. The relatives' free will in giving the bereaved women unpaid firewood, ignores the transport expenses of delivery of firewood that the bereaved Basotho women would incur.

Therefore, the bereaved Basotho women have to ensure that there is transport for the wood despite the expenses incurred. One of the principles of the Functionalism theory states that it is the function of community structures to ensure that order is maintained in a society. The relatives and chieftaincy, being part of the community structures amongst the Basotho, ensure that there is order by providing the bereaved families with the basic requirements in the form of firewood. Members of the society play their role in making sure that the burial proceeds smoothly; the chief offers the wood, and the community members collect it. However, the financial stability of the bereaved Basotho women is disrupted as they are forced by the circumstances to pay the transportation costs for the wood to get home.

3.1.4 Animals Used for Pre-burial Rituals

This part focuses on the economic impact motivated by the use of animals for the pre-burial rituals such as *lebhone* “lamp” and *phelehetso ea mofu* “accompaniment of the deceased”. In this regard, 2 (10%) respondents explained that:

Boholo ba sechaba ha bo sa na liphoofole joale li se li rekoa ka boturu.

“Most people no longer have animals and are expensive to buy.”

Cattle and most domestic animals like sheep have become scarce and quite costly to buy due to lifestyle changes, stock theft and other socio-economic factors. In the Basotho culture, animals are the centre-piece for the performance of most of the death rituals. The scarcity of animals makes it difficult for the bereaved Basotho women to perform pre-burial rituals like *lebone* “lamp” and *phelehetso ea mofu* “the accompaniment of the deceased” because of the scarcity and expensiveness of the animals.

The previously mentioned rituals require either sheep or bovines to be slaughtered for the performance of the rituals. For these reasons, the bereaved Basotho women could be compelled to overspend on buying the animals, others would incur debts where they would have to borrow money to buy the animals to perform these rituals. In a quest for securing the animals, some of the bereaved Basotho women could even end up losing their property or land by bartering them for animals or leasing them for a certain period, which could be lengthier. In support of this, Matobo (1998) confirms that in compliance with the performance of the Basotho death rituals, most women, regardless of their working class, location or economic status engage in some ventures, which respond to the requirements of the pre-burial rituals.

All of these things impoverish the bereaved Basotho women and go against the African Feminism principles, which advocate for the economic empowerment of African women. Stripping the bereaved Basotho women of property or land through a barter system and being forced to borrow some money denies them an opportunity

to financially advance their lives. They would have to use their money to pay debts, instead of progressing their lives.

3.1.5 Funeral Costumes

In the study, funeral costumes refer to clothes that are bought for the funeral. Data have been analysed to investigate the economic challenges brought by the funeral costumes on the bereaved Basotho women. In response to the question presented in 3.1 above, 2 (10%) of the respondents expressed that:

*Ho rekoa liaparo tse ncha tsa mofu le tseo lelapa le tla li
apara mohla lepato.*

“New clothes are bought for the deceased and the family to wear for the funeral.”

The citation above highlights that the bereaved Basotho women are compelled to buy new clothes for the deceased in which the corpse would be dressed. This could be done to avoid being looked down on by the community if the corpse would not be wearing new clothes when viewing the corpse. Some of the close family members could force the bereaved Basotho women to buy clothes for themselves and the children as well. In most cases, these clothes are fashionable and costly. On this account, Matobo (1998) and Nkoka (2008) affirm that the funerals in Lesotho have become more of a fashion show than of grieving. People are more concerned about the dress code of the bereaved. Every member of the family wants to have new glamorous clothes for the funeral and the bereaved Basotho women are forced to participate in this regard. It is the Functionalist’s outlook that individual members of the society have to adhere to the social cohesion principle. By buying new clothes for everyone (the deceased and the family members), the bereaved Basotho women ensure that they feel part and parcel of society. They also conform to societal

standards and expectations but would ignore the economic challenges that would result from conforming to the standards.

3.1.6 Face-lifting the Mourning House

For this study face-lifting the mourning house refers to the renovation and redecoration of the mourning house. When responding to the previously mentioned question (3.1), 3 (15%) participants exposed that:

Ho lokisoa ntlo eo mofu a tlo tsoela ho eona.

“The mourning house is renovated.”

A week before the funeral, the mourning house has to be prepared to welcome back the corpse in it. In most cases, some renovations and maintenance have to be made in the mourning house: walls are smeared, plastered or painted; vinyl, carpets or tiles are installed on the floors; and new curtains are bought. The bereaved Basotho women are the ones sponsoring these activities with money. Similarly, Manyedi (2001) maintains that the bereaved women are challenged with the renovation costs of their property in preparation for the burial. In the view of the African Feminists, this is burdening the bereaved Basotho women with additional responsibilities, which ignore the African Feminism principles. The African Feminism believes that the African women need to be relieved of too many responsibilities. The reduction of responsibilities could discharge the bereaved Basotho women of their financial responsibilities. However, during the preparations for the burial, the bereaved Basotho women are burdened with the financial responsibility of ensuring that everything that is needed for the smooth running of the burial is paid for.

3.1.7 Conformity to *Moetlo oa Lefu*

For the study, conformity to *moetlo oa lefu* refers to adherence to the Basotho death rituals. 3 (15%) participants whose responses are presented below expressed that:

Ha ho ka shebanoa le lichelete, ho ke ke hoa etsoa se lokelang ho etsoa. Boholo ba lintho tse etsoang nakong ena ha ho ka moo li ka qojoang.

“If the main focus would be on the finances, nothing would be achieved. Most of the things have to be done, there is no way they can be avoided.”

The excerpt above shows that some respondents believe that most of the activities embedded into the pre-burial rituals must be done. They are core to everything. This implies that the respondents could be concerned with adhering to their culture. They do not want to focus on financial challenges as they believe that it would not help the family to achieve their goal. In the respondents' view, the value of the pre-burial ritual performance is never juxtaposed with the financial burden, rather far surpasses the value of money and the family economy. According to the functionalists, the family must ensure that order is maintained. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the bereaved Basotho women to ensure that all the requirements of the pre-burial rituals are done orderly. In doing so, the bereaved Basotho conform to the cultural requisites disregarding any financial hardship that the bereaved Basotho women would be challenged with.

In general, the section has presented, discussed and analysed data on the economic challenges of pre-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women in which data was organised into categories A and B (cf. table 3.1 above). In category B, 3 (15%) of the respondents are focused on conforming to *moetlo oa lefu*. For this reason, the participants do not consider any financial challenges embedded in the pre-burial

rituals of the bereaved Basotho women. However, in category A, 17 (85%) of the respondents, which is the majority of the participants have affirmed that there are some economic challenges or effects of the pre-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. The participants' views align with the African Feminism principle of economic empowerment of African women. The principle maintains that the African women have to be liberated from financial hardships.

Based on the majority of the participants' responses 17 (85%), the section concludes that the pre-burial rituals of *moetlo oa lefu* cause economic challenges for the bereaved Basotho women. The performance of these rituals is economically challenging because the animals are scarce and expensive to buy. The bereaved Basotho women pay huge amounts of money for the dissemination of *pihi*. The bereaved Basotho women have to offer delicious food to the people who come for *matšeliso* and buy smart clothes for the deceased, their children, some relatives and themselves. They have to renovate the mourning house and maintain the road for the smooth transportation of the corpse. All these pre-burial ritual activities are costly; they could cause a financial burden on the bereaved Basotho women; and go against the African Feminism principle of economic empowerment of African women.

3.2 The Economic Challenges of Burial Rituals of Moetlo oa Lefu “Death Ritual” on the Bereaved Basotho Women

The section examines the economic challenges of burial rituals for the bereaved Basotho women. The burial rituals refer to the rites of passage performed on the burial day. The question that guided this section was, which factors of the burial rituals influence the financial burden for the bereaved Basotho women? The responses to the question are classified as categories A and B, (cf. 1.6.7 of the

methodology), and their distribution is presented in table 3.2 below. In each category, different extracts are used for the analysis of data.

Table 5 below displays the distribution of data on factors that influence the financial burden of burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women.

Table 5 Factors Influencing the Financial Burden of Burial Rituals on the Bereaved Basotho Women

| | Category A | | Category B | | Category C | | Total | |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Unbereaved Basotho women | 8 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 40 |
| Bereaved Basotho women | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Family elders | 3 | 15 | 3 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Total | 17 | 85 | 3 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 100 |

Table 5

Table 5 above displays data distribution on participants' responses on factors influencing the financial burden of burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. Data used in category A range from sub-section 3.2.1 to 3.2.2 while data classified under category B have been used in 3.2.3 below.

The charts below present information relating to how responses have been disseminated in both numerical and percentage distribution throughout the section.

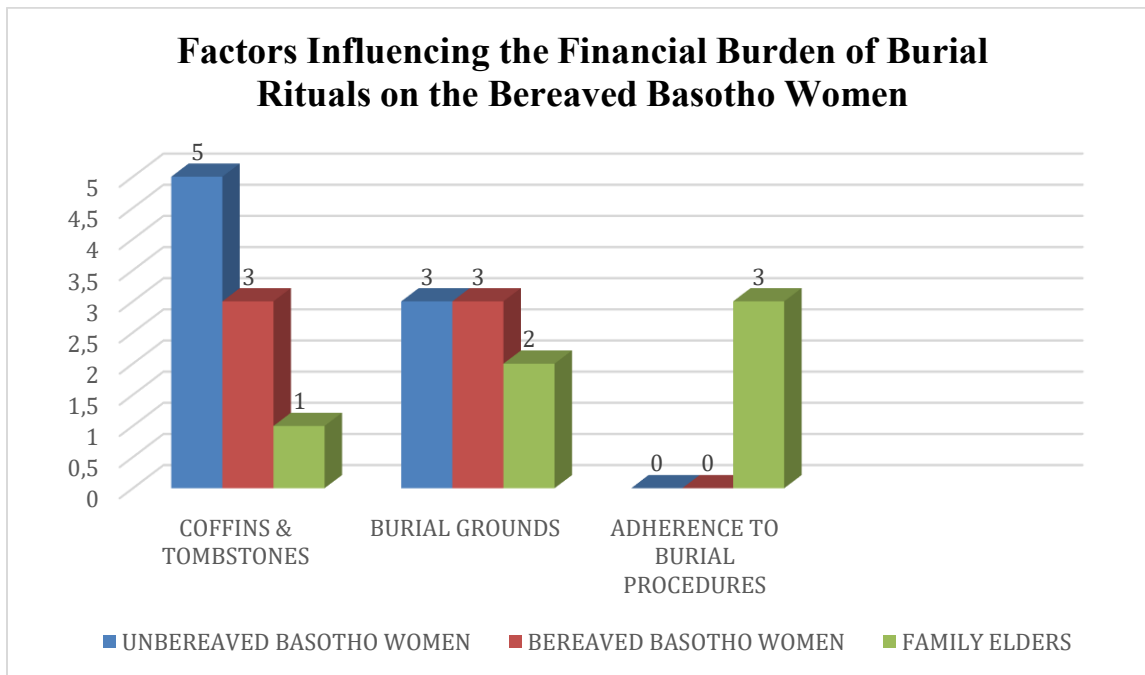


Chart 3C

Chart 3C above is a display of data on factors influencing the financial burden of burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. The chart motions that 9 participants' responses were labelled under coffins and tombstones, 8 under burial grounds and 3 under adherence to burial procedures.

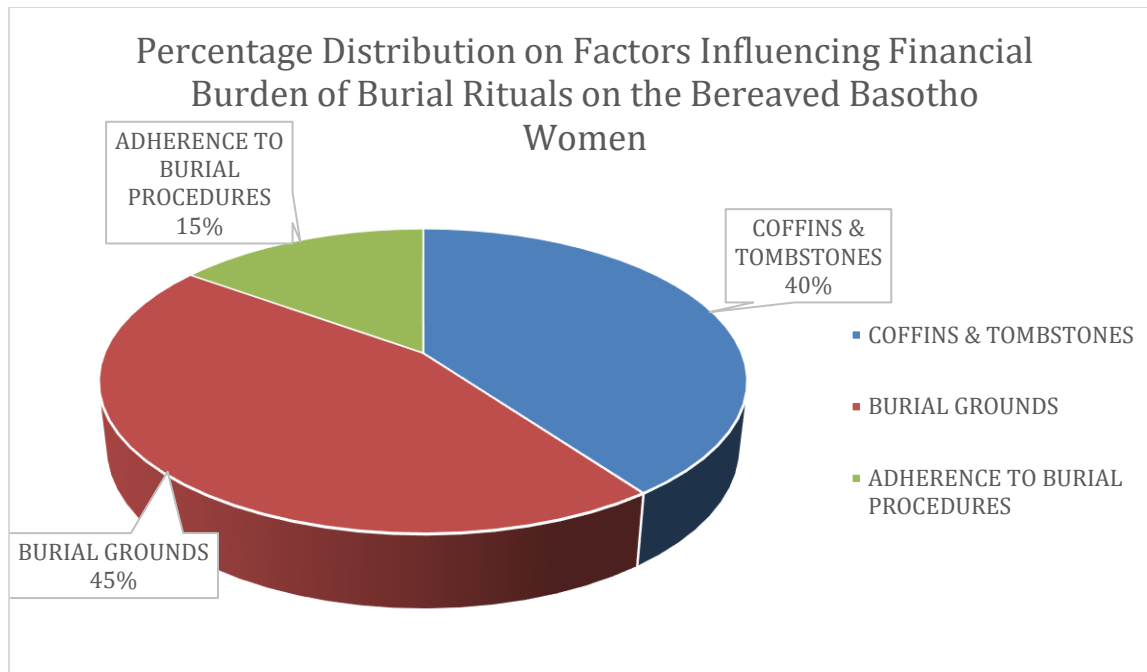


Chart 3D

Bar chart 3D above chart shows percentage distribution of factors influencing financial burden of burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. Percentage distribution presented in the chart indicates that adherence to burial procedures has 15%, burial grounds 45% and coffins and tombstones 40%.

3.2.1 Cost of Coffins and Tombstones

In this section, the cost of coffins and tombstones refers to the price that is paid when buying coffins and tombstones. The question, which guided this sub-section was: which factors of the burial rituals influence the financial burden for the bereaved Basotho women? 8 (40%) of the respondents indicated that:

Ka lebaka la litebello tsa sechaba le lelapa, mosali ea bofifing o susumetsoa hore a reke lekase le lejoe la theko e boima.

“The family and society’s expectations influence the bereaved woman to buy an expensive casket and a tombstone.”

From the citation above, the family and society expect the bereaved Basotho women to buy expensive coffins and tombstones. To avoid being looked down upon, the bereaved Basotho women comply with these expectations and end up stretching their budgets for the funeral and buying costly tombstones and caskets. Some would even go to the extent of taking loans for the purchase of dazzling caskets and tombstones. On this account, Nkoka (2008) affirms that the 21st-century Basotho funerals are characterised by glamorous and expensive caskets and tombstones through which the people showcase their wealth and social status. Societal and familial expectations, which force the bereaved Basotho women to buy costly coffins and tombstones, go parallel with the African Feminism principles. These principles advocate for the women's right to exercise their free individual choices. In this regard, the bereaved Basotho women are not allowed to use their rights, but to observe other people's interests, which negatively affect their finances.

3.2.2 Burial Grounds

According to Crubezy *et al.* (2003), a familial burial ground refers to a cemetery belonging to a certain tribe. In response to the question stated in 3.2.1 above, 9 (45%) respondents exposed that:

Ka nako e 'ngoe mosali ea bofifing o tlangoa hore a bolokele mofu habo. A be a lefelle litšenyehelo tsa ho felehetsa mofu ho ea mabitleng, phutheho le moruti baa palamisoa.

“Sometimes the bereaved woman is forced to bury the deceased at their parents' home. The bereaved woman also incurs expenses of transporting the deceased to the cemetery. The priest (pastor) and the congregation are transported.”

In some of the Basotho tribes, it is mandatory to bury their relatives in one place (the familial burial grounds). Most of these places are far from the deceased's homestead. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the bereaved Basotho women to ensure that the burial takes place at the stipulated cemetery. The bereaved Basotho women would have to cater for the burial services. The cost of living in these places (most of which are rural) could be expensive since they could have limited resources and could not be easily accessible. They would cost the bereaved Basotho women to hold services at such places.

This would force the bereaved Basotho women to transport food, equipment, the deceased's family and the corpse. In this account, Choabi (2016) reveals that the family of the deceased decides on the place of burial and would force the bereaved woman to bury the corpse at the place that the family has decided upon. Most of these places are the deceased's birthplace or home. The Functionalism does not align itself with this. It argues that it is the function or duty of the family to see to it that order is maintained. Forcing the bereaved Basotho women to bury the corpses at the familial burial places disrupts the order in their lives. They would have to cater for the increased burial expenses through transportation of equipment, corpses, relatives and people (friends and neighbours) who could help them with cooking and other essentials. This would disrupt the financial and social stability that could have been maintained by allowing the bereaved women to bury their corpses at their places of residence.

On the burial day, the bereaved Basotho women have to offer transport for the church community, which helps with the funeral and burial processions. These people are not only transported to the burial or funeral venue, but also back to their homes. The hearse or transport for the corpse, together with the women who are guarding the

bereaved Basotho women, is often prepaid; and it is also the responsibility of the bereaved Basotho women.

In most cases, people could be concerned about the type of the hearse (transport for the corpse) or the whole funeral convoy. This puts pressure on the bereaved Basotho women to hire top-of-the-range cars for the funeral. Nkoka (2008) supports this by saying that many people are concerned about the class of the hearse carrying the corpse and the fleet hired to transport the bereaved family to the burial ground. The extravagance does not accommodate both the social and economic empowerment of the bereaved Basotho women.

3.2.3 Adherence to Burial Procedures

In this sub-section, adherence to burial procedures means following the procedural burial of the corpse concerning the performance of rituals and observance of norms and values of the Basotho. When responding to the question presented in 3.2.1 above, 3 (15%) participants revealed that:

Ha e le hantle meetlo ke hore mofu ha a le teng a patoe ka nepo. Mofu ha a ipoloke.

“The most important aspect of culture is focusing on the procedural burial of a person. The corpse does not bury itself.”

From the excerpt above, the surviving relatives are expected to bury their corpses by rigidly following the ritual procedures. This implies that it is the duty of the bereaved to see to it that the corpse gets buried with or without financial muscle. The critical issue could be to avoid leaving the corpse to rot. This complies with the value consensus principle of the Functionalism. The respondents conform to their culture

by focusing on the adherence to the ritual burial of the corpse rather than on the expenses.

The section has examined the economic challenges of the burial rituals of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women. In category A, 17 (85%) of the respondents affirmed that many factors influence the economic challenges of burial rituals for bereaved Basotho women. In category B, 3 (15%) of the participants do not find any factors that influence the economic challenges of burial rituals for the bereaved Basotho women. They (the respondents) revealed that the burial of someone has to adhere to the rituals. This conforms to the Functionalism and advances the preservation of the Basotho culture by ensuring that the corpse gets buried in a manner that follows the culture.

Therefore, the section concludes by considering data from category A, which have the greater proportion of the respondents (cf. table 3.2 above for the distribution of data). In this category (category A), the participants state that due to societal expectations, the bereaved Basotho women are forced to buy expensive caskets and elegant clothes in which they dress their late, themselves and the family for the funeral. These expectations would influence over-spending, which would impoverish the bereaved Basotho women and reflect badly on their character and social standing as women. They could be mocked for mishandling money. These actions ignore the African Feminism principle of social and economic empowerment of women because a lot of expenses are encountered by the bereaved Basotho women and that leaves them financially unstable.

3.3 The Economic Challenges of Post-burial Rituals on the Bereaved Basotho Women

This section is set to explore the economic challenges of the post-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. The following question was dealt with for this section: how do the post-burial rituals motivate the economic challenges for the bereaved Basotho women? For this section, data was classified into A and C only and presented in excerpts. Information relating to data distributed throughout the categories has been demonstrated in table 6 below.

Table 6 The Economic Challenges of Post-burial Rituals on the Bereaved Basotho women

| | Category A | | Category B | | Category C | | Total | |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Unbereaved Basotho women | 5 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 8 | 40 |
| Bereaved Basotho women | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Family elders | 5 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 30 |
| Total | 16 | 80 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 20 | 20 | 100 |

Table 6

The table displayed above highlights how data have been classified according to categories. Data under category A is reflected in sub-section 3.3.1 to 3.3.4 below. Data on sub-section 3.3.5 is organised under category C.

Bar chart 3E below presents data distribution on the economic challenges of post-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women.

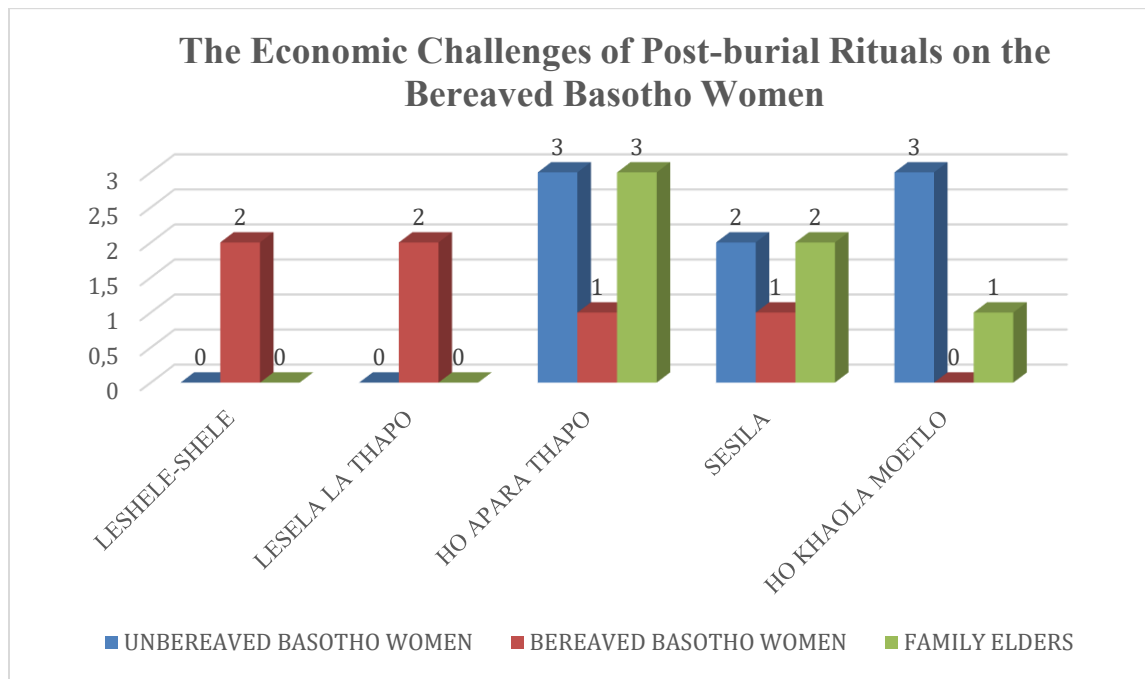


Chart 3E

Chart 3E presents data on the economic challenges of post-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. As the chart indicates, participants' responses were distributed as follows: *leshele-shele*, *lesela la thapo*, *ho apara thapo*, *sesila*, and *ho khaola moetlo*. The chart also shows that 2 participants' responses were classified under *leshele-shele*, 2 under *lesela la thapo*, 7 under *ho apara thapo*, 5 under *sesila* and 4 under *ho khaola moetlo*.

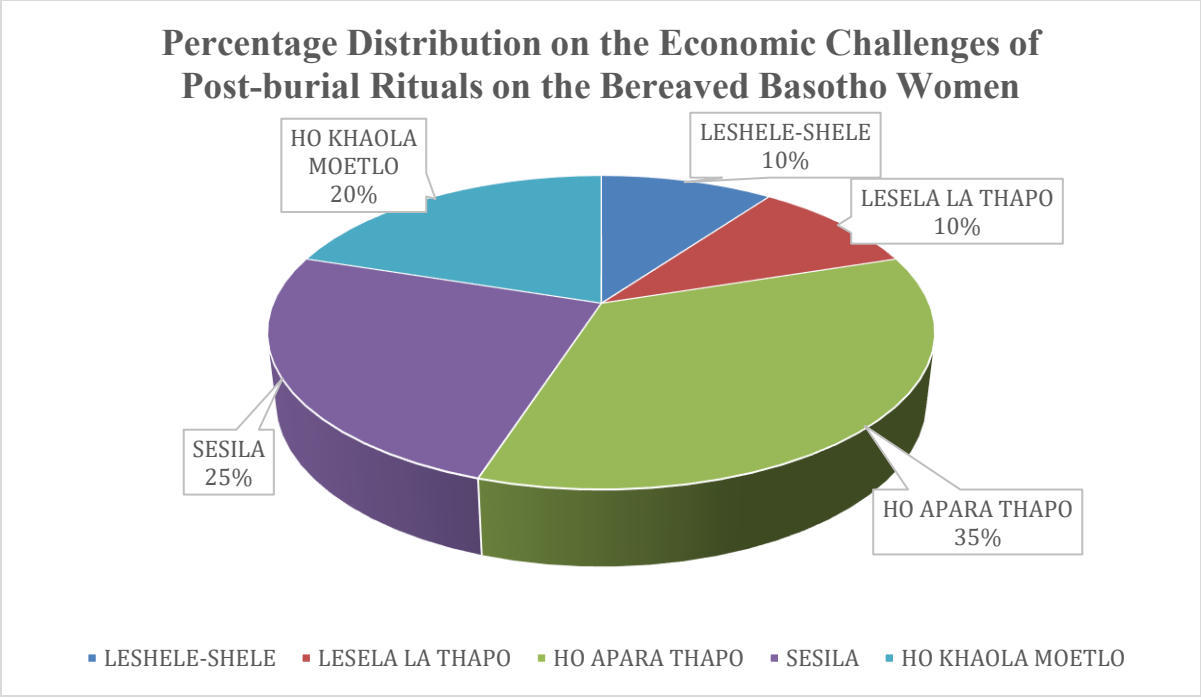


Chart 3F

Chart 3F above, shows the distribution of data in percentages on the economic challenges of post-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. The percentages were distributed as follows: 35% *ho apara thapo*, 25% *sesila*, 20% *ho khaola moetlo*, 10% *lesela la thapo* and the last 10% *leshele-shele*.

3.3.1 The Cost of Leshele-shele “The Communal Meal”

Matšela (1990) defines *leshele-shele* “the communal meal” as the food that is offered to people after the burial. Data that are used in this sub-section emanate from the participants’ responses to the question following question: how do the post-burial rituals motivate the economic challenges for the bereaved Basotho women? In response to the question, 2 (10%) respondents said that:

Leshele-shele lea tura. Ho kengoa lijo tse ngata haholo.

“The menu for *leshele-shele* ‘the communal meal’ is expensive. It comprises a variety of food.”

From the extract, it is evident that it is costly for the bereaved Basotho women to see to it that there is *leshele-shele* “the communal meal” after the burial. *Leshele-shele* comprises a variety of food: starch, meat and some salads, which makes it a costly meal. In support of this, Nkoka (2008) states that on the burial day, it is the expectation that mourners would feed all the attendants with delicious food and the bereaved would be left penniless. Despite the economic complications it brings to the bereaved Basotho women, the bereaved Basotho women seem to be interested in observing the Functionalism principle of value consensus by adhering to the performance of *leshele-shele*. They conform to their cultural norms and values regardless of the economic challenges accompanying the norms.

3.3.2 *Lesela la Thapo* “Fabric for Mourning Clothes”

For the section, the fabric for mourning clothes means the material used for making or sewing the mourning clothes “*thapo*”. The data used in this sub-section arise from the question stated on 3.1.1 above, and 2 (10%) participants exposed that:

Ho lokela ho rekoa lesela le itseng la thapo, hape ho be le thapo tse 'maloa.

“It is a must for the bereaved Basotho women to buy a renowned fabric brand for sewing *thapo*, and to have more than one *thapo* ‘mourning clothes’.”

An essential issue that emanates from the data is that the bereaved Basotho women also have to buy the fabric for making the *thapo*, which they would wear during *ho apara thapo* “the wearing of mourning clothes”. This material might be expensive due to its type (brand) and its durability. It could be influenced by the fact that the period of *ho apara thapo* is lengthier (cf. 2.3.4). As a result, it would be wise for the bereaved Basotho women to use the material that would not tatter within a short period because the culture would not allow them to mend it.

According to Molapo (2005), the bereaved women are restricted from sewing their *thapo* when it gets torn but should tie it in knots. In most cases, the bereaved Basotho women have to buy some distinguished brand of linen that they would feel is appropriate and would be appreciated by the family. On this account, Itsweni (2016) states that bereaved women are sometimes forced by their families to buy the expensive mourning clothes and have to comply because it is the tradition to wear the mourning clothes.

Due to global economic factors, the price of sewing the clothes in Lesotho has gone extremely high. Despite this, the bereaved Basotho women could be forced to have more than one *thapo*. Since the bereaved Basotho women would have to have many sets of clothing worn as *thapo*, this implies that they would have to pay a lot of money for *thapo* despite their financial capacity. This does not align with the African Feminist principle of the economic empowerment of the African women. Having to buy expensive fabric and sew numerous sets of mourning clothes jeopardises the bereaved Basotho women's financial stability.

3.3.3 Economic Challenges Reinforced by ho Aparara Thapo

In the study, the economic challenges reinforced by *ho aparara thapo* refer to the financial challenges influenced by *ho aparara thapo*. In response to the previously presented question in 3.3.1 above, 7 (35%) participants said that:

Ba bang ba basali ba felloa ke mosebetsi ha ba apara thapo. Hape ho aparara thapo ho ama mesebetsi ea masimong le boipheliso ka eona.

“Some bereaved Basotho women get retrenched from work when wearing *thapo*. *Ho aparara thapo* also affects

agricultural work and survival means related to agriculture.”

From the citation, it is evident that some of the bereaved Basotho women lose their jobs while wearing *thapo*. For instance, some women doing domestic work could be retrenched or not allowed to work while wearing *thapo*. This makes it difficult for them to find a new jobs somewhere else. Their lives could be economically challenging since they could be unable to get employment for them to support their families. In support of this, Daber (2003) and George (2012) state that it is difficult for a woman wearing *thapo* to find a job because some people do not want to mix with her. The African Feminism opposes this because some of its ideologies state that the African women should be given the liberty to incorporate both their social and professional roles as the employed women. However, *ho apara thapo* seems to restrict the bereaved Basotho women from performing their duties as working women by not allowing them to work while wearing *thapo*.

Subsequently, *ho apara thapo* affects agricultural work and survival means related to agriculture as the extract states that *ho apara thapo ho ama mosebetsi oa masimomg*, that is, *ho apara thapo* also affects agricultural work. In some villages, the bereaved Basotho women wearing *thapo* are restricted from passing through the fields. This could make it difficult for the bereaved Basotho wearing *thapo* to reach their fields as some of them might have to cross or pass through other people’s fields to reach theirs. In trying to secure their crops, the bereaved Basotho women would have to hire some people to help them in the fields: weeding, harvesting and some other basic agricultural work.

The bereaved Basotho women could be affected financially because the money that would be used to pay the workers could be used for their financial development as

they could have saved or invested the money. In support of this, Manyedi (2001), Choabi (2016), and Amlor and Atta (2016), state that in the villages, a bereaved woman is not even allowed to walk amongst the fields because it is believed that she will bring misfortune to the crops. This diverts from the African Feminist discourse, which fights against the subordination of the African women. By barring the bereaved Basotho women from going to the fields, they are being discriminated against and subjected to the subjugation of women. They are denied an opportunity to work in their fields and are forced to use the money to pay workers, which would reinforce their financial challenges.

3.3.4 Animals for ho Tlosa Sesila “Purification or Cleansing Rituals”

According to Letsosa and Letsosa (2011), *ho tlosa sesila* refers to the traditional purification ritual, which is done to cleanse the bereaved from all the bad omen and impurities caused by the loss of their loved ones. In response to the question (cf. 3.3.1), 5 (25%) respondents indicated that:

Ho rekoa liphoofole bakeng sa meetlo eohle e tlosang sesila.

“Animals are bought for all the cleansing rituals.”

The excerpt above shows that the bereaved Basotho women must buy the animals that are used to perform all the post-burial cleansing rituals. These animals are a prerequisite for the performance of the post-burial cleansing rituals, like, *ho rola thapo* “the cutting of the mourning cord”, *ho hlobola thapo* “the wearing off of the mourning clothes” and *ho tlosa khutsana* “removal of orphanhood”.

Since the post-burial cleansing rituals have to be performed, it could be financially challenging for the bereaved Basotho women to acquire animals used in these rituals.

This could deepen the financial problems that the bereaved Basotho women already have because it is expensive to buy the animals. In this case, they would have to possess more than one animal, which others would have to buy or take from their herd. This would force the bereaved Basotho women to go deeper into the economic hardships because they would have to slaughter the animals that are very central to their family's economic stability. Others would have to purchase those animals for the rituals.

3.3.5 *Ho Khaola Moetlo “Discontinuation of Some Rituals”*

The word discontinuation means to stop participating in doing something. 4 (20%) participants responded to the aforementioned question in 3.3.1 above by indicating that:

Ho qoba litšenyehelo tse ngata, ba khaotse meetlo eohle ea kamor'a mokhohlane.

“To avoid more expenses, they have discontinued all the post-burial rituals.”

From the quotation above, the respondents expressed that *ba khaotse meetlo eohle ea kamor'a mokhohlane* “they have disassociated themselves with the post-burial rituals”. This could mean that they could have been conscious of the unreasonable financial burden that the rituals have on the bereaved Basotho women. The discontinuation of the post-burial rituals situates well with the African Feminism. The African Feminism states that the African women need to be relieved from most of the burdens and duties they are challenged with. By cutting all or most of the post-burial rituals as the excerpt has shown, the bereaved Basotho women are being relieved from the economic challenges that are embedded in the post-burial rituals.

The section has explored the economic challenges of the post-burial rituals of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women in which data was clustered into categories A and C. In category C, 4 (20%) of the respondents (cf. table 6 for the distribution of participants' responses) have revealed that they have distanced themselves from the post-burial rituals. In category A, 16 (80%) of the participants stated that the post-burial rituals have a negative economic impact on the bereaved Basotho women. The majority of respondents 16 (80%) (cf. 6 for classification) conclude that the post-burial rituals influence the economic challenges for the bereaved Basotho women because of the high cost of *leshele-shele*.

The bereaved Basotho women have to buy expensive fabric for *thapo* and have more than one set of mourning clothes. They are unable to work in the fields while some get retrenched from work. They also have to buy the animals for cleansing rituals. All these factors influence the economic challenges that the bereaved Basotho women encounter due to the post-burial rituals and do not align with the African Feminism principles of social and economic empowerment of women. They also violate human rights. For these reasons, the section concludes that the post-burial rituals of *moetlo oa lefu* motivate the economic challenges for the bereaved Basotho women.

3.4 Conclusion

The chapter has investigated the economic challenges of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women. The study has found that the burial rituals cause economic challenges for the bereaved Basotho women because they have to buy the animals that are used to perform some of the burial rituals. These animals

are expensive to buy and force the bereaved Basotho women to lose their property through bartering and accumulate debts so that they could buy these animals.

The bereaved Basotho women also have to pay huge amounts of money for the dissemination of *pihi* and have to offer delicious food to people who come for *matšeliso*. In addition, the bereaved Basotho women have to buy new smart clothes for the deceased, their children, some relatives and themselves. They have to renovate the mourning house for the arrival of the corpse. All these activities are costly and could cause a financial burden on the bereaved Basotho women. The activities go against the African Feminism principle of economic empowerment of the African women.

For the performance of the burial rituals, the study has also uncovered that the bereaved Basotho women are forced to buy expensive caskets and elegant clothes in which they dress their late, themselves and the family for the funeral. The bereaved Basotho women have to hire an expensive fleet for the funeral. The expectations stimulate overspending. This impoverishes the bereaved Basotho women and reflects badly on their character and social standing as women. The actions ignore the African Feminism principle of social and economic empowerment of women and the Functionalism principle of value consensus, which influences the cultural continuity, preservation and conformity.

The chapter has also discovered that the post-burial rituals cause economic challenges for the bereaved Basotho women because of the high cost of *leshele-shele*, which is the responsibility of the bereaved Basotho women to provide the funeral attendants with. The bereaved Basotho women also have to buy expensive fabric for sewing *thapo* and have more than one set of mourning clothes. During *ho*

apara thapo, some are expelled from work and are unable to get new jobs because some people do not want to work with the women wearing *thapo*. They are unable to work in the field. This could affect them financially, as they would have to buy costly food products. All of these do not align with the African Feminism principles of social and economic empowerment of women and violate their human rights because they encourage subordination of women. For these reasons, the study *moetlo oa lefu* motivates the economic challenges on the bereaved Basotho women.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF *MOETLO OA LEFU* “DEATH RITUAL” ON THE BEREAVED BASOTHO WOMEN

4.0 Introduction

The chapter examines the psychological impact of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women using the African Feminism and Functionalism theories. According to Buchain *et al.* (2013), psychological impact refers to something that has a mental effect on a person, which could affect their feelings or emotions and their personal life.

The chapter examines the psychological impact of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women from the pre-burial, burial and post-burial phases. For this chapter, some selected rituals are analysed to examine how far they influence the psychological impact of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women. For the pre-burial rituals, the study has selected *matšeliso* “condolences”; *ho bona setopo* “the viewing of the corpse” is selected for the burial rituals; and *ho apara thapo* “the wearing of mourning clothes” for post-burial rituals.

Data for the chapter was collected through the semi-structured interviews where 20 participants were interviewed. Each section of the chapter uses specific questions that are presented at the beginning of each section. The participants’ responses to the main and follow-up questions are used as data for the study presented in various extracts throughout the chapter. Data for this chapter is classified into three categories, namely, A, B and C (cf. 1.6.7 of the methodology). Charts and tables displaying the distribution of data are presented at the beginning of each section.

4.1 The Psychological Impact of Pre-burial Rituals on the Bereaved Basotho Women

This section investigates the psychological impact of the pre-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. For the chapter, the pre-burial rituals refer to the rites of passage done from the time the passing on of a person is announced until the dawn of the burial day. In this section, *matšeliso* “condolences” is presented as a selected ritual for the section. Therefore, the section examines the psychological impact that *matšeliso* has on the bereaved Basotho women.

Data analysed in the section emanate from the participants’ responses to the following question: in what way does *matšeliso* “condolences” influence the psychological problems of the bereaved Basotho women? The participants’ responses to the aforementioned question are used as excerpts for the section, which are classified into sub-sections and ultimately into categories A and B as explained in the methodology.

Table 7 below shows the distribution of data for this section into categories.

Table 7 The Psychological Impact of Pre-burial Rituals on the Bereaved Basotho Women

| | Category A | | Category B | | Category C | | Total | |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Unbereaved Basotho women | 8 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 40 |
| Bereaved Basotho women | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Family elders | 4 | 20 | 2 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Total | 18 | 90 | 2 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 100 |

Table 7

The table above displays data distribution in categories (cf. 1.6.7). Data in category A have been classified into sub-section 4.1.1 to 4.1.3 below while data under category B is used in sub-section 4.1.4 below.

The chart below shows the distribution of data according to participants' groups and responses.

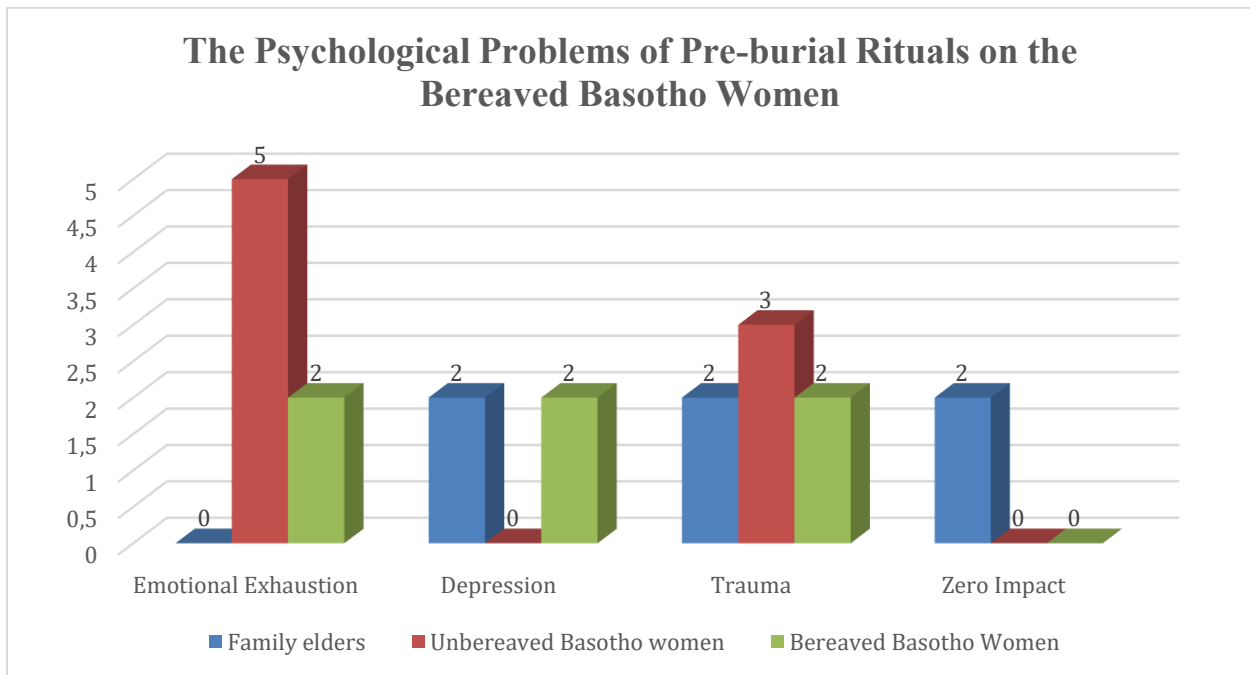


Chart 4A

The chart above shows distribution of data collected from 20 participants selected for the study on the psychological problems of pre-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. Out of 20 participants, 17 participants showed that there are some psychological problems of pre-burials rituals on the bereaved Basotho women which include emotional exhaustion, depression and trauma. 3 participants revealed that pre-burial rituals have zero impact on the bereaved Basotho women.

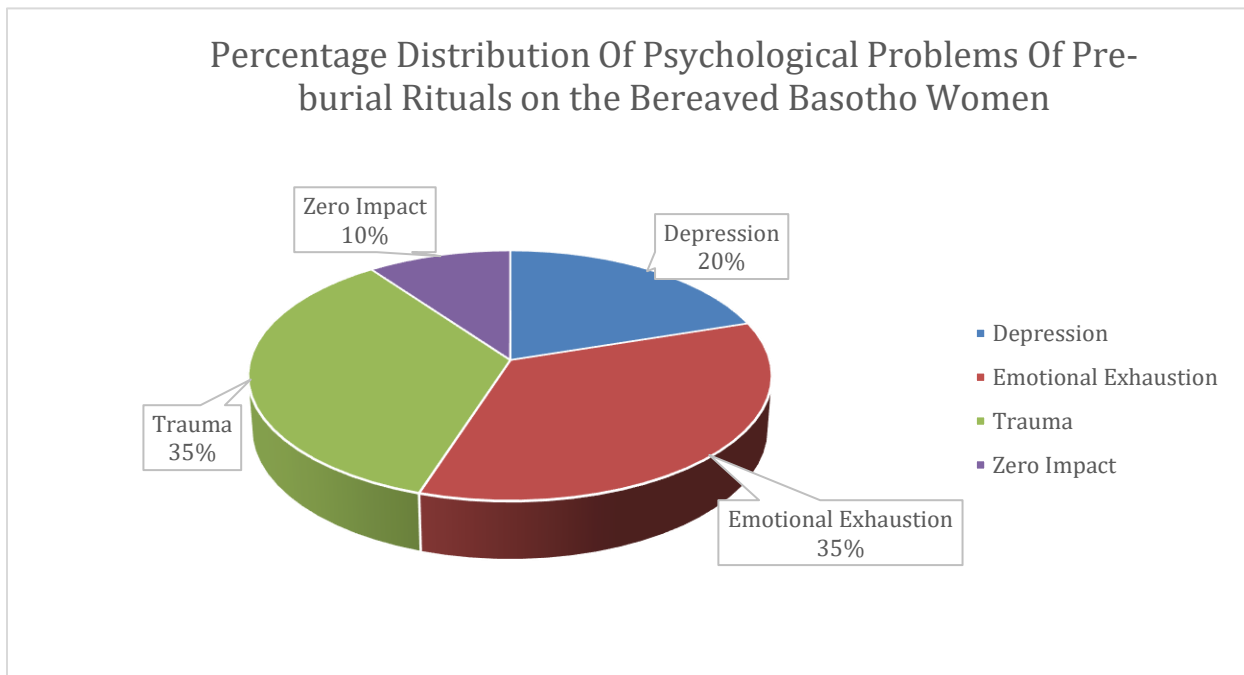


Chart 4B

Chart 4B above displays the distribution of data on the psychological problems of pre-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women into percentages. The percentages were distributed as follows: emotional exhaustion 35%, trauma 35%, depression 20% and zero impact 10%.

4.1.1 Emotional Exhaustion

According to Hur and Moon (2011), emotional exhaustion refers to continuous and emotional fatigue caused by excessive emotional work or some social problems. On the question: in what way does *matšeliso* “condolences” influence the psychological problems of the bereaved Basotho women? 7 (35%) participants revealed that:

*Matšeliso a tima motho monyetla oa ho phomotsa kelello,
batho ba lula ba kena ba tsoa uena u sa khone ho phomola.
Ho a khathatsa ho mamela kapa ho pheta ntho e le 'ngoe
hangata.*

“*Matšeliso* denies a bereaved woman to have some mental rest. People keep coming in and going. It is also strenuous to hear the same thing repetitively or to recite the same thing over and over again.”

Amongst the Basotho, death is considered a communal responsibility (cf. 1.1), hence people visit the bereaved family for *matšeliso* on their own accord. In this regard, the community could go for *matšeliso* at their convenience, which might deny the bereaved Basotho women an opportunity to have for some rest. They would have to listen to the recitation about the cause of death every time there is a visitor. Sometimes the bereaved Basotho women are the ones who give the narrative about the passing away of the family member. As a result, it drains them mentally. Ultimately, this could lead to a problem of mental exhaustion. On this account, Amasiatu and Ihekwaaba (2016) state that some African traditional rites cause mental fatigue on the bereaved women.

The citation above also shows that it is tiring for the person to be repeating a painful encounter. This implies that it would not even allow the bereaved Basotho women to have a break. They would also have to keep welcoming the visitors for the entire pre-burial stage. The ongoing process could be tiresome for the bereaved Basotho women. The repetitive cycle of events does not align with the African Feminism principles. One of the African Feminism principles fights against over-burdening the African women with duties. In this case, the bereaved Basotho women are over-burdened with the welcoming of visitors, the recitation and the receipt of *matšeliso*. This over-burdening and tiring of the mind could also lead to depression as discussed in 4.1.2 below.

4.1.2 Depression

According to Bhowmik *et al.* (2012), depression is a mental disorder that is caused by repetitive and pronged pain resulting from some challenging life situations. When responding to the aforementioned question, 4 (20%) participants expressed that:

Ho khathatsa motho maikutlong le ho mo utloisa bohloko ho bona batho bao u ba ratang ba u bona u utloile bohloko. Boteng ba bona bo u nyotobetsa maikutlo le ho u khutlisetsa morao ebile lefu le lula eka le qeta ho etsahala nako eohle ha ho fihla bao u ba ratang.

“It is depressing and heartbreaking to see people who love seeing you hurt. The presence or visitation of loved ones is disheartening, renews and prolongs the pain. Each time when you are visited by a person you adore, the pain becomes unbearable and makes you feel as if the loss has just happened.”

From the extract above, it is noted that the visitation of the people whom the bereaved women love is depressing for the bereaved Basotho women. This could cause more agony for the bereaved Basotho women. It could renew the pain and would even leave the bereaved Basotho women feeling deeply depressed. This could emanate from the fact that the bereaved Basotho women would not want to meet these people while going through a lot. In support of this, Adatara *et al.* (2014) state that the bereaved women suffer from depression emanating from factors such as compliance to bereavement rituals.

Since the visitation of the loved ones would cause more depression for the bereaved Basotho women, it goes against the African Feminism principle that advocates for the improvement of the health of the African women. In this case, the psychological health of the bereaved Basotho women is compromised as the presence of the loved

ones would renew the dwindling pain, which would cause depression for the bereaved Basotho women.

4.1.3 Trauma

According to Gerber and Gerber (2019:4), “trauma refers to a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress.” In the study, trauma refers to an extremely overwhelming experience that a bereaved woman had during the mourning period. In response to the aforementioned question, 7 (35%) respondents said that:

Sera se ka tla matšelisong se felehelitsoe kapa se tsamaea le batho ba bang hore se tl’o u bona ha u lla, u utloile bohloko esita le ho u tšeha ka meno le ho u utloisa bohloko haholo.

“Your enemy can come for *matšeliso* in the company of other people or alone so that they can see you cry and hurt just to mock you, laugh at you and aggravate you.”

From the extract above, it is evident that people who have sour relations with the bereaved woman could visit the family with other members of the community or sometimes alone. These people, (the enemies) could do this to spite or mock the bereaved Basotho women. These actions could aggravate and traumatise the bereaved Basotho women. Sometimes, the bereaved Basotho women could be upset by the presence of the people they do not relate well. This would cause more trauma for the bereaved Basotho women. In the similar manner, Ba-an *et al.* (2022) states that in various African regions and traditions, the bereaved women are exposed to hostile treatment during the performance of the death rituals which traumatises them.

Using *matšeliso* to spite the bereaved Basotho women is against the Functionalist’s principle of value consensus. This principle encourages the members of a

community to adhere to the societal norms and values. The enemies of the bereaved Basotho women disregard this principle by misusing the Basotho norms. They use the norms to advance their personal vendetta. This does not conform to the Basotho culture.

4.1.4 Zero Impact

The phrase *zero impact* for the study means that *moetlo oa lefu* does not have any psycho-social impact on the bereaved Basotho women. In response to the question: in what way does *matšeliso* “condolences” influence the psychological problems of the bereaved Basotho women? 2 (10%) participants revealed that:

Ha ba tsebe hore a na le mathata.

“They do not know that it has some problems.”

The citation above shows that the respondents are not aware of any problems related to *moetlo oa lefu* that can have a certain impact on humankind. This implies that the participants could not be aware of any psychological impact of *matšeliso* on the bereaved Basotho women. They consider *matšeliso* as their way of life and could only be interested more in the positive aspect of it. This does not conform to the African Feminism theory because one of its principles states that the members of different communities should be allowed to openly refute some aspects of their culture, which could affect its people. This could help the community members to come up with solutions that could help to ease the problems embedded in their culture. By ignoring that *matšeliso* could have a psychological impact on the bereaved Basotho women, the respondents disregard the mentioned principle of the African Feminism.

The section has examined the problems related to the psychological pre-burial rituals *on* the bereaved Basotho women in which *matšeliso* was selected. In the section, data were organised into categories A and B (cf. table 7 above). In category B, 2 (10%) respondents revealed that they are not aware of any psychological impact of *matšeliso* on the bereaved Basotho women. However, 18 (90%) respondents in category A, which is the majority, exposed that there are some psychological effects of *matšeliso* on the bereaved Basotho women.

Data in category A revealed that *matšeliso* stimulates depression for the bereaved Basotho women; it also causes trauma and mental exhaustion. All these factors go against the African Feminists' principles, which advocate for the improvement of the health of the African women. Based on the data from category A that have the majority of responses, the section concludes that the pre-burial rituals have some psychological impact on the bereaved Basotho women.

4.2 The Psychological Impact of Burial Rituals on the Bereaved Basotho Women

This section explores the psychological impact of the burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. For the study, the burial rituals refer to the death rituals performed on the burial day (cf. 2.2). The section has selected *ho bona setopo* “viewing of the corpse” as a ritual for the section. In this section, the study examines the psychological challenges influenced by *ho bona setopo* on the bereaved Basotho women. Data used for the section have been collected through the semi-structured interviews and arranged into categories A, B and C (cf. 1.6.7). The major question for the section was: what is the psychological impact of *ho bona setopo* “viewing of the corpse” on the bereaved Basotho women?

Table 8 below, presents how data for the section has been distributed into categories.

Table 8 The Psychological Impact of Burial Rituals on the Bereaved Basotho Women

| | Category A | | Category B | | Category C | | Total | |
|--------------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| | Num ber | Percent age | Num ber | Percent age | Num ber | Percent age | Num ber | Percent age |
| Unbereaved Basotho women | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 8 | 40 |
| Bereaved Basotho women | 4 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 6 | 30 |
| Family elders | 5 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 30 |
| Total | 15 | 75 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 25 | 20 | 100 |

Table 8

The table above shows the classification of data into categories A, B and C respectively. As the table shows, the data used for the section emanates from categories A and C. Data from category A has been outlined in sub-section 4.2.2 while data organised under category C has been presented under sub-section 4.2.1 below.

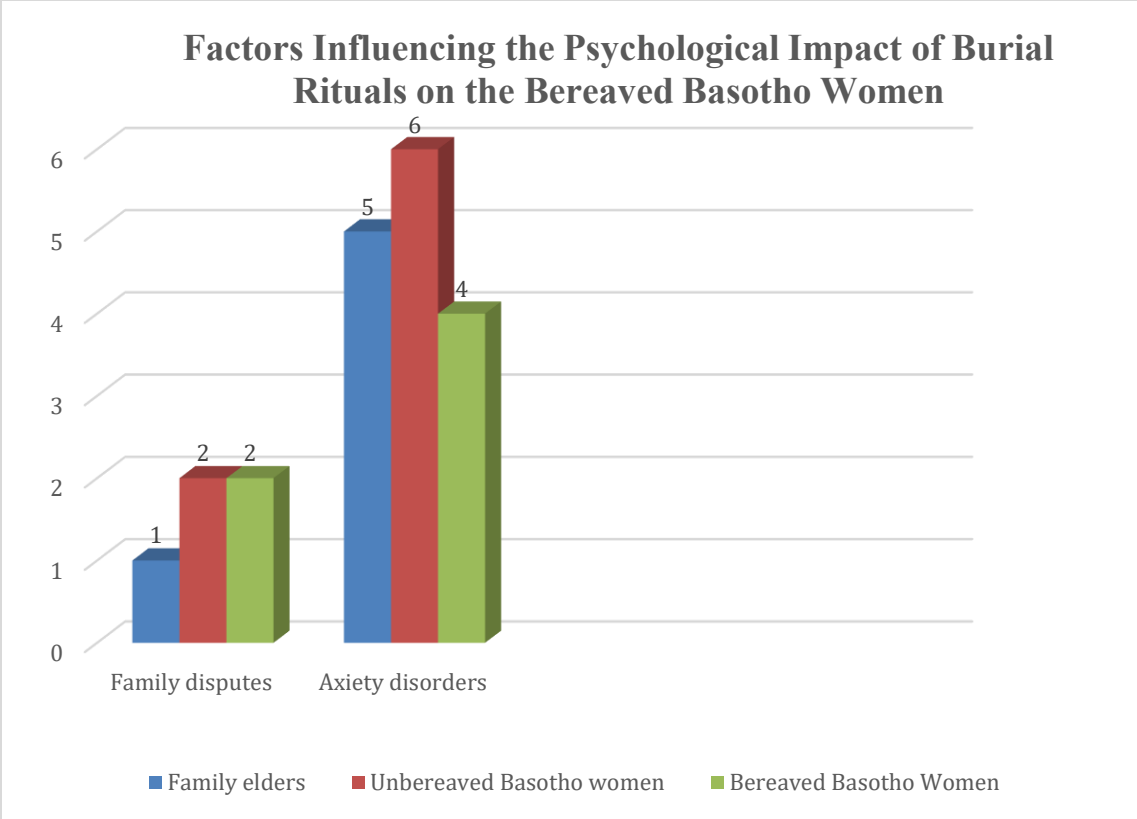


Chart 4C

Chart 4C above presents data distribution on factors influencing psychological impact of burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. The chart indicates that 5 participants have revealed that burial rituals cause family disputes while 15 participants expressed that burial rituals influence anxiety disorders.

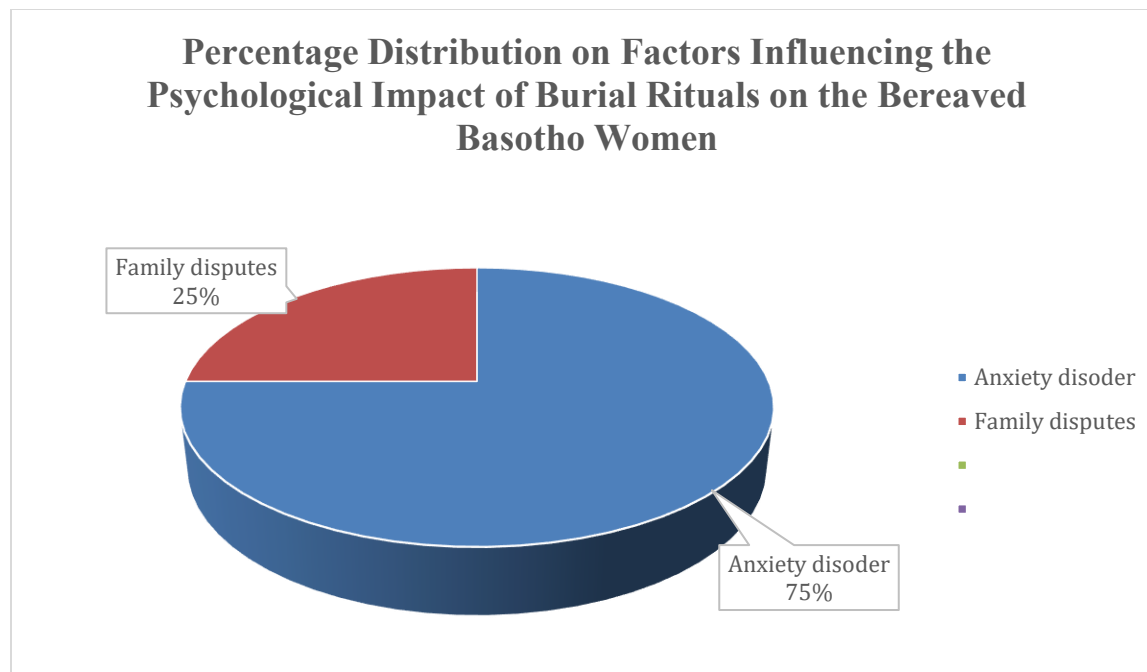


Chart 4D

Pie chart 4D indicates the distribution of data on factors influencing the psychological impact of burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women in percentages. The chart shows that data under family disputes was allotted 25% and 75% for anxiety disorder.

4.2.1 Family Disputes

For the study, family disputes refer to misunderstandings or fights between the members of the bereaved family. When responding to the following question: what is the psychological impact of *ho bona setopo* “viewing of the corpse” on the bereaved Basotho women? 5(25%) participants expressed that:

Mosali ea bofifing o qobelloa ho bona setopo leha a sa itherisetsa ho etsa joalo, 'me sena se baka liqabang lipakeng tsa hae le lelapa.

“The bereaved woman is forced to view the corpse even when she does not intend to. This causes some disputes between the members of the bereaved family.”

From the excerpt above, the bereaved Basotho women are sometimes forced to view the corpse by their family members. This could even tarnish their relationship with the family if they do not agree to such. In support of this, Lange (2016) affirms that the African widows are forced to follow the traditional rituals at their own expense because if they do not comply, they would cause severe conflicts between their in-laws. Forcing the bereaved Basotho women to view the corpse violates the human rights of the African women, which the African Feminism is against. Their human rights could also be violated as they are denied the liberty to exercise their will.

4.2.2 Anxiety Disorders

Bourdeau *et al.* (2008) define anxiety disorders as extreme fear, helplessness and anxiety. In response to the question mentioned in 4.2.1 above, 15 (75%) respondents exposed that:

Setšoantšo sa mofu se lula se bapala ka kelellong nako eohle ho uena; ha se ntho e tlohang 'me motho o sitoa ho lebala ka mofu eo. Ho tlisetsa motho litoro tse mpe, tse mo sisimosang maikutlo.

“The image of the corpse becomes a constant mental picture; it is difficult to forget about the deceased. It influences one to have nightmares.”

The quotation above shows that after viewing the corpse, the picture of the deceased lingers in the minds of the bereaved Basotho women for a longer period. This mental picture would occupy most of the bereaved Basotho women’s mental capacity. It implies that it could make it hard for the bereaved Basotho women to forget the deceased’s last image which could develop anxiety disorders. On this account, Djankpa (2021) affirms that in some African cultures, widows have some psychological challenges such as anxiety disorders which result from the adherence

to their traditional bereavement rites. This does not align itself with the African Feminism principles which advocate for the improvement of the health of the African women. The anxiety disorders that the bereaved Basotho women experience would deteriorate their health instead of enhancing it.

The extract above shows that *ho bona setopo* could trigger the bereaved Basotho women to have bad dreams, which could even disturb their peace of mind. These dreams could negatively affect the bereaved Basotho women as they would be troubled by them. The nightmares resulting from the viewing of the corpse would affect the health of the bereaved Basotho women. In support of this, Amasiatu and Ihekwaaba (2016) state that that widowhood rites in many African cultures cause some psychological problems like hallucinations and some nightmares amongst the bereaved women. African Feminism condones this because one of its principles promote enhancement of the well-being of the African women. If the dreams persist, the bereaved Basotho women could even develop chronic illnesses.

In general, the section has analysed the psychological impact of the pre-burial rituals. Data for the section comes from categories A and C (cf. table 8 above). In category C, 5 (25%) participants have revealed that *moetlo oa lefu* causes the family disputes because the bereaved Basotho women are sometimes forced to view the corpse. In category A, (75%) of the respondents have revealed that *moetlo oa lefu* causes anxiety disorders that result from viewing the corpse. This causes health problems for the bereaved Basotho women. The health problems resulting from the adherence to the ritual of *ho bona setopo* disregard the African Feminist principle that fights for the improvement of the health of the African women. Based on the data from category A, which is the majority, the section concludes that the burial rituals have a psychological impact on the bereaved Basotho women.

4.3 The Psychological Impact of Post-burial Rituals on the Bereaved Basotho Women

This section is set to examine the psychological impact of post-burial rituals. In the study, the post-burial rituals refer to the rituals performed immediately after the burial until a time when cleansing rituals are performed. As indicated in 4.0 above, the section has selected *ho apara thapo* “the wearing of mourning clothes”. In this section, the study intends to explore the psychological impact motivated by *ho apara thapo* on the bereaved Basotho women.

Data for this section was collected through the use of the semi-structured interviews. The following question was used as a major question for the section: what are the psychological challenges motivated by *ho apara thapo* “the wearing of mourning clothes” on the bereaved Basotho women? Responses emanating from this question and the follow-up questions were compiled, organised and used as data for the section. Data distribution for the section is presented in table 9 below (cf. 1.6.7 for data classification).

Table 9 below presents the distribution of data into categories.

Table 9 Factors Causing the Psychological Challenges of Post-burial rituals on the Bereaved Basotho Women

| | Category A | | Category B | | Category C | | Total | |
|--------------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| | Num ber | Percent age | Num ber | Percent age | Num ber | Percent age | Num ber | Percent age |
| Unbereaved Basotho women | 8 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 40 |
| Bereaved Basotho women | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Family elders | 6 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 30 |
| Total | 20 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 100 |

Table 9

Table 9 above shows the classification of data into categories A, B and C respectively. Data under category A has been arranged into sub-sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.2 below.

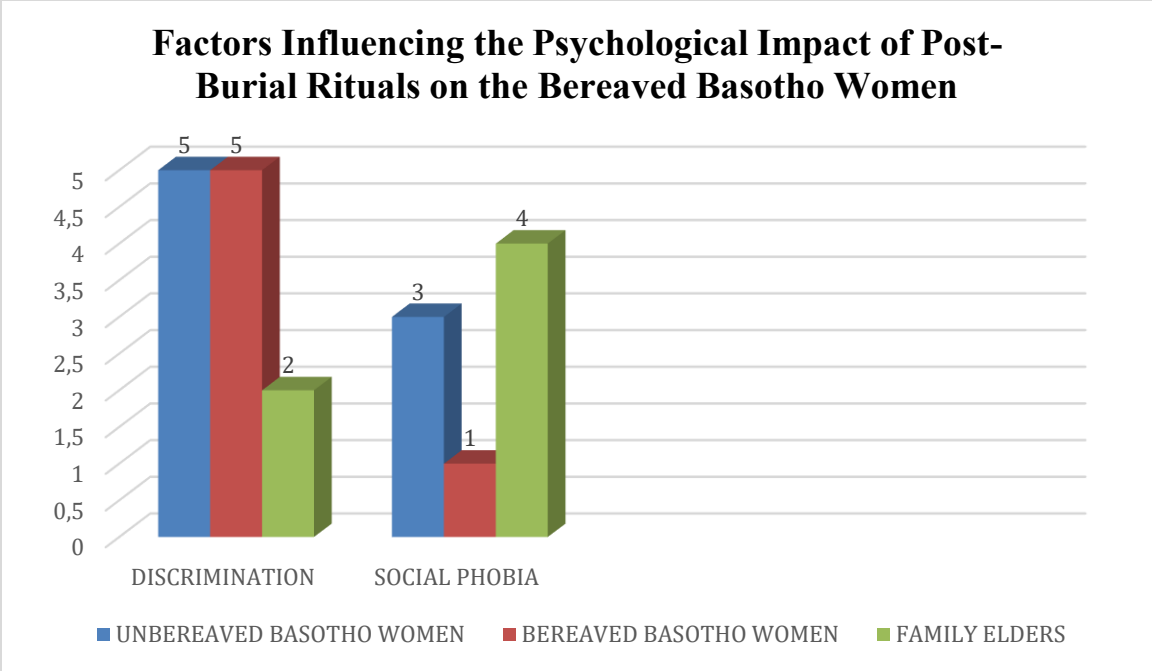


Chart 4E

Chart 4E displays the distribution of data on factors influencing psychological challenges of post-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. The chart shows that 12 participants’ responses were classified under discrimination while 8 participants’ responses were categorised under social phobia.

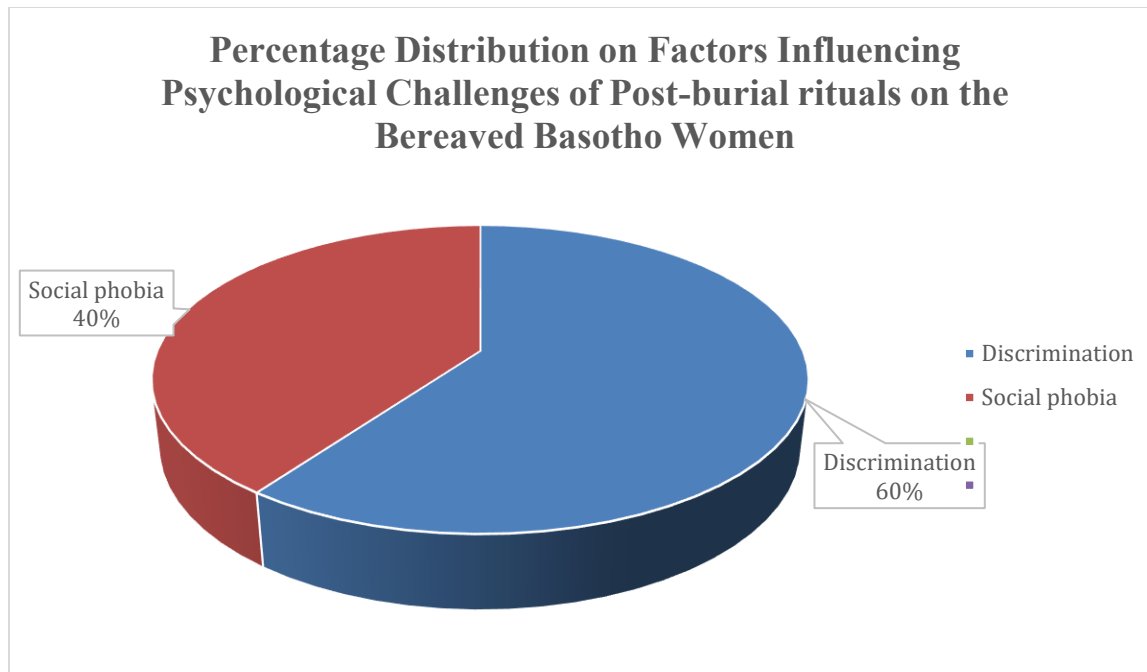


Chart 4F

Chart 4F above displays data distribution in percentages. On the factors influencing psychological challenges of post-burials rituals on the bereaved Basotho women, 40% constituted social phobia and the remaining 60% for discrimination.

4.3.1 Discrimination

According to Kite and Whitley (2016), discrimination refers to unfair treatment of individuals. When responding to the following question: what factors of *ho apara thapo* “the wearing of mourning clothes” motivate or cause the psychological challenges on the bereaved Basotho women? 12 (60%) respondents expressed that:

Thapo e etsa hore batho ba u tšabe hobane u sefifi.

“The mourning clothes make people eschew you because you have *sefifi* ‘ritual impurity’.”

During *ho apara thapo*, sometimes the people could avoid the bereaved Basotho women because of the belief that they have *sefifi* “ritual impurity”. The bereaved

Basotho women are believed to have acquired *sefifi* through the death of their loved ones. The people would even display some abhorrence and discriminate against the bereaved Basotho women. On this note, Itsweni (2018) states that in some African cultures, some members of the community do not want to mix with the women wearing *thapo* “mourning clothes” because they do not want to contaminate themselves with bad luck.

The discrimination of the bereaved Basotho women by the members of their society goes parallel with the African Feminism principles, which fight against the discrimination against the African women. The bereaved Basotho women are being prejudiced by the members of their society instead of being supported by them. The actions of these members of the society could even influence the cultural performance resistance from other women.

4.3.2 Social Phobia

According to Goldmark and Schneier (2015), social phobia refers to the fear of being around other people. When responding to the question presented in 4.3.1 above, 8 (40%) participants said that:

Ho etsa motho ea tšabang ho kopana le batho hobane le uena oa itšaba. Ka hona motho o qetella a lutse hae ho se na moo a eang hobane o tšaba ho tsamaea ka thapo.

“It makes the bereaved woman to feel afraid of meeting people because they feel uncomfortable. Therefore, the bereaved Basotho women stay at home because they have lost confidence of going anywhere wearing *thapo*.”

The excerpt above indicates that *moetlo oa lefu* causes social phobia amongst the bereaved Basotho women, which makes them afraid and uncomfortable to meet other people while wearing *thapo*. For this reason, the bereaved Basotho women end

up staying at home where it is most likely that they could be lonely because they would have no company as they would not have confidence of going out. In support of this, Daber (2003) and Dhyani *et al.* (2009) state that the bereaved women live by themselves because they are afraid of going out. This goes against the African Feminism's social empowerment principle. By going out and meeting other people, the bereaved Basotho women could be socially empowered as being in the company of other people could lift their spirits. If the bereaved Basotho women do not have social phobia, they would interact and share views, concerns, challenges and problems with other people.

In brief, the section has analysed the psychological impact of post-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women. Data used for the section was from category A only (cf. table 9 above). The section has revealed that *moetlo oa lefu* influences social phobia in the bereaved Basotho women which results from *ho apara thapo*. The bereaved Basotho women are being discriminated against by some members of the society because of their *thapo* "mourning clothes". All these encounters undermine African Feminism principles that promote women rights. Based on this, the section concludes that the post-burial rituals have a psychological impact on the bereaved Basotho women.

4.4 Conclusion

The study has examined the psychological impact of *moetlo oa lefu* "death ritual" on the bereaved Basotho women. In the pre-burial rituals, it has been revealed that *matšeliso* causes depression, trauma and mental exhaustion for the bereaved Basotho women.

It has also been revealed that *ho bona setopo* causes anxiety disorders, which could stimulate severe health problems for the bereaved Basotho women. The health problems resulting from the adherence to the ritual of *ho bona setopo* disregard the African Feminist principles that promote the improvement of the health of African women.

The section on the psychological impact of the post-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women has revealed that *moetlo oa lefu* causes social phobia, which is influenced by *ho apara thapo*. It has also been discovered that the bereaved Basotho women are being discriminated by some members of the society. All these issues are against the African Feminism theory because they ignore the bereaved Basotho women's human rights. Therefore, the chapter concludes that there are some psychological impact of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The study was set to make a critical review of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women. It has examined *moetlo oa lefu* through the pre-burial, burial and post-burial rituals. To achieve this goal, different aspects of *moetlo oa lefu* were investigated and analysed in three chapters of the study, namely, chapters two, three and four.

This chapter is organised in two sections: the first section presents the summary of the chapters and the research findings about the research aims and questions. The second section provides the study recommendations.

5.1 Summary of the Chapters and Study Findings

This section presents the summary and study findings on individual chapters of the study.

5.1.1 Chapter One

Chapter one was an introductory part that had the background information and contextualisation of the study, the statement of the problem that triggered the researcher for pursuing the study, the research questions and the hypotheses, the significance of the study, the review of the related literature, the theoretical framework, research methodology, and ethical consideration. Organisation of the study is the last part of this chapter.

5.1.2 Chapter Two

Chapter two was based on the critical examination of the significance of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” to the Basotho. This chapter has been organised into major sections, namely, the significance of pre-burial, burial and post-burial rituals to the Basotho. Under each section, several death rituals were individually analysed as sub-sections of the chapter. The African Feminism and Functionalism theories were used as the analytical tools.

The chapter has revealed that *moetlo oa lefu* plays a significant role in the lives of the Basotho through the rituals embedded in it. The study has found that in the pre-burial rituals, *moetlo oa lefu* is used to inform the people of the passing away of someone and clears any confusion relating to the passing on of a person. It serves as an official confirmation that the person has passed away and prompts the beginning of the performance of *moetlo oa lefu* and all activities related to the loss of a loved one amongst the Basotho.

It has also been discovered that *moetlo oa lefu* also enables the bereaved Basotho women some rest so that their bodies and minds can rest. It further helps the bereaved Basotho women to be given the assistance that they need because they are always in the company of the elderly women. The study has found that through *moetlo oa lefu*, the Basotho show compassion and offer support to the bereaved families through the ideology of *ho lla mosoannng*.

In addition, the study has also revealed that the pre-burial rituals enable the community to assist the bereaved family with watching over the corpse and affords everyone (the community and the relatives of the deceased) to pay their last respect

to the deceased. The study has found that *moetlo oa lefu* affords the deceased with blankets and ritually accompany the deceased to *balimong*.

About the burial rituals, the study has found that *moetlo oa lefu* helps to clean all the impurities that *mofu* might have and makes him enter the ancestral world without any impurities. These rituals also play a significant role in the lives of the Basotho because they enable the Basotho to bid goodbyes to the deceased and to ensure that the bereaved family does not bury the wrong corpse.

Subsequently, the study has revealed that *moetlo oa lefu* teaches the members of the bereaved family and the community the hierarchy of the deceased's family and cleanses the people from any impurities that they might have contacted from being around the corpse and through their presence at the cemetery. Some of the post-burial rituals are used to feed those who have come to the funeral, eat with the ancestors and thank the people who have supported the bereaved family.

The study has also revealed that *moetlo oa lefu* is a symbol that the family is mourning the loss of their loved ones and allows the bereaved to mourn for the deceased well. It also encourages the members of the society to treat the bereaved with a delicacy that stems from the understanding that they are in grief. The post-burial death rituals reintegrate the bereaved family back into society by lifting a ban that had been reinforced by restrictions on the mourning period. All of these align with the Functionalism principles of social cohesion and function. Social solidarity is reinforced by the members of the community performing their duty of treating the bereaved with care. The link that the bereaved had with the other members of the community is also reinforced by the reintegration of the bereaved family into the

society. This helps with the preservation of *moetlo oa lefu* because everyone is doing their duty to make the mourning period less challenging for the bereaved family.

5.1.3 Chapter Three

The chapter has investigated the economic challenges of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women. The economic challenges of *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved Basotho women were examined from the pre-burial, burial and post-burial rituals, which form the three major sections of the chapter.

The chapter has found that the burial rituals cause economic challenges for the bereaved Basotho women because they have to buy the animals that are used to perform some of the burial rituals. These animals are expensive to buy and force the bereaved Basotho women to lose their property through bartering. The bereaved Basotho women also accumulate debts so that they buy these animals. They also have to pay huge amounts of money for the dissemination of *pibi* and have to offer delicious food to people who come for *matšelis* and buy new smart clothes for the deceased and their children, some relatives and themselves. They have to renovate the mourning house for the arrival of the corpse.

For the performance of the burial rituals, the study has also uncovered that the bereaved Basotho women are expected and forced to buy expensive caskets, and elegant clothes in which they dress their late, themselves and the family for the funeral. The expectations stimulate overspending and cause more economic challenges for the bereaved Basotho women.

The chapter has also discovered that the post-burial rituals cause economic challenges for the bereaved Basotho women because of the high cost of *leshele-*

shele, which is the responsibility of the bereaved Basotho women to provide the funeral attendants with. The bereaved Basotho women also have to buy expensive fabric for sewing *thapo* and have more than one set of mourning clothes. During *ho apara thapo*, some are expelled from work and are unable to get new jobs because some people do not want to work with women wearing *thapo*.

It has also been discovered that in some cases, the bereaved Basotho women are restricted from working in the fields during the performance of *ho apara thapo*, which affects them financially as they have to hire people who will work in the fields. The economic challenges that the bereaved Basotho women encounter as a result of performing *moetlo oa lefu* are against the African Feminism principle of economic empowerment of African women.

5.1.4 Chapter Four

Chapter four aimed at making a critical evaluation of the psychological impact of *moetlo oa lefu* “death ritual” on the bereaved Basotho women. The chapter began with an explanation of the key concepts of the chapter. Data for the section was organised into the psychological impact of pre-burial, burial and post-burial rituals. In the study, *matšeliso*, *ho bona setopo* and *ho apara thapo* have been selected as the rituals and analysed to reveal their influence on the psychological impact on the bereaved Basotho women.

In the pre-burial rituals, it has been revealed that *matšeliso* causes depression, trauma and mental exhaustion for the bereaved Basotho women. It has also been revealed that *ho bona setopo* causes anxiety disorders, which could stimulate severe health problems for the bereaved Basotho women. The health problems resulting from the

adherence to the ritual of *ho bona setopo* disregard the African Feminist principles that fights for the improvement of the health of the African women.

The section on the psychological impact of the post-burial rituals on the bereaved Basotho women has revealed that *moetloa oa lefu* causes social phobia, which is influenced by *ho apara thapo*. It has further been discovered that the bereaved Basotho women are being discriminated by some members of the society. All these factors are against the African Feminism because they disregard the bereaved Basotho women's human rights. These challenges could even motivate a lack of interest in conforming to *moetlo oa lefu*.

5.2 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the study findings presented above, the study recommends that the mourning period should not be regarded as a spending spree platform by the family members. The decisions taken during this period must be in consultation with the bereaved Basotho women and should be allowed to have the final say in issues involving finances.

The study also recommends that the members of the community stop discriminating the bereaved women. The bereaved families are also urged to avoid using the death rituals as a platform for the marginalisation and subordination of the bereaved Basotho women.

Moreover, it is recommended that the relatives of the deceased should not impose the practice of some rituals embedded in *moetlo oa lefu* on the bereaved family, particularly the bereaved women in the name of "it's the family tradition". They

have to consider the feelings, social relations, psychological well-being and the basic human rights of the bereaved Basotho women.

It is recommended that in the family setting, issues surrounding the bereavement, such as, what needs to be done, ought to be discussed during family *gatherings* rather than during funerals to reach a common understanding in a relaxed context. The community leaders and family elders should ease some of the restrictions surrounding the culture of mourning particularly *ho lula materaseng* and *ho apara thapo*. The government of Lesotho, as a policymaker, through its relevant ministries, must engage programmes with social workers and other stakeholders to deal with the economic and psycho-social wellbeing of the bereaved Basotho women.

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