

Effect Of Mourning Rituals On Grief Resolution On Immediate Family Members Of The Deceased Among The Luhya People In Busia County

Maximilla Nangira, Eunice Njeri
Kenyatta University

Abstract

Though Christianity and modernization have greatly influenced the mourning process and death rituals, many communities in the world still perform their traditional rites for the dead. Some communities purely bury their loved ones solely guided by traditions (Mwandayi, 2011), others use combined approaches with religious beliefs and modern methods while others accept purely modern or religious burial and mourning practices. These practices presumably have psychological effects on the grieving individuals. With the different approaches of mourning processes, this study was to establish the psychological effect of mourning rituals on grief resolution to immediate family members of the deceased among the Bakhayo, Basamia, Bamarachi, Banyala, to mention but a few in Busia County. The research was informed by the Kubler-Ross Theory of Grief and the Continuing Bonds Grief Model developed by Klass, Silverman, and Nickman. The study was conducted using descriptive and correlational research designs. 205,136 people living in Funyula and Nambale Sub-Counties were the study's target group. A total of 400 residents were included in this research study. The researchers employed a proportionate sampling method to ensure that a well-rounded sample was drawn from both of the Sub-Counties. The actual participants for the study were chosen purposefully from each Sub-County. To test the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted, involving 40 individuals from one of the Sub-Counties who were not part of the main sample. Data collection involved the use of a questionnaire. Linear regression was used to analyze the study's hypothesis. Findings established that the majority of the participants (54%) had a high level of grief resolution, 24.4% had a low level of grief resolution and 21.6% had a moderate level of grief resolution. The mean score attained for grief resolution was 20.33 ($SD = 6.099$), indicating that on average, the participants had a moderate level of grief resolution. Linear regression findings established that mourning rituals had a positive impact on grief resolution ($\beta=0.320, p=0.000$). These findings imply that mourning rituals performed by the Luhya people in Busia County helped the bereaved achieve grief resolution.

Keywords: Grief, Mourning Rituals, Grief resolution.

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I. Introduction

Death is inevitable; the reason people are always prepared to deal with it when it occurs in their family. Most of African communities greatly believe in caring for people in life and in death because the dead are viewed as ancestors who take care of the community from the world beyond. Grief presents with emotional and psychological symptoms that include increased irritability, bitterness, preoccupation with the loss, numbness, and detachment among others (Ntuli, 2018). The African communities have established mourning practices that are believed to transit the deceased from the living to the spiritual arena (Owino, 2017). Mourning rituals are termed as coping strategies for the loss of a dear person and thus are usually tied by culture (Carr, 2012). These rituals include crying, bonfire, listening to music, sharing properties, memorial just to mention but a few. It's likely that people perform mourning rituals to assist those who are grieving in accepting their loss and ultimately finding a way to move beyond their sorrow. However, some people view the rituals as outdated and against Christianity, religion and modernization (Okeke et al. 2017). Past researchers have investigated the influence of mourning rituals on the family of the deceased and established both negative and positive impacts (Zhang and Jia 2018; Rugonye and Bukaliya, 2016; Nwosu et al. 2017; Ngesa et al. 2020; Asatsa et al. 2015). Though these studies have shown the effects of mourning practices on the bereaved individuals and their families, the studies have not clearly shown how these practices influence grief resolution.

Effect of mourning rituals on grief resolution process on the Luhya people in Busia County.

Past researchers have examined the effects of mourning rituals in various cultures on the grieving process. Zhang and Jia (2018) in their study conducted in China explored the effect of familism culture on the grief of shiduerand found out that the mourning rituals performed on the participants were stressful.

Rugonye and Bukaliya (2016) did research on the Zimbabwean Shona people to find out how effective African bereavement counseling practices are and found that Shona cultural methods of aiding the grieving were less helpful because they tended to encourage adolescents to repress their feelings in attempt to speed their recovery, resulting in complicated grief.

Similarly, Ngesa, Tuikong, and Ongaro examined in 2020 whether exposure to intense Luo cultural burial practices could make a bereaved child more susceptible to complex grief among the Luo people in Kenya. The results of their investigation indicated that the participants were not inclined towards maladaptive grief but rather had psychologically adjusted to these rituals.

Objective of the Study

The study was guided by the following objective:

1. To determine the effect of mourning rituals on grief resolution process on the Luhya people in Busia County.

Hypothesis of the Study

H01: Mourning rituals has no statistical significant effect on an individual’s grief resolution process among the Luhya people in Busia County

II. Methodology

This study employed the descriptive and correlational research designs to determine the effects of mourning rituals on grief resolutions. The target population of the study was 205,136 people living in Funyula and Nambale Sub-Counties in Busia County. The study utilized Yamane's (1967) formula to arrive at a sample size of 400 participants. Purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that only persons who had lost a loved one in the past three years take part in the study. Snowballing technique was then used in reaching out to individuals who meet the inclusion criteria (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Data collection involved the utilization of a researcher-designed questionnaire. Linear regression was utilized to test the study hypothesis. Data analysis was aided by SPSS version 23.

III. Results And Discussions

Grief Resolution

Participants were asked to share how much they agreed with statements about dealing with grief. This was done using a 5-point Likert scale, where they could choose from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (5). Participants' individual scores were calculated by summing up their responses to all items. Higher scores indicated higher levels of grief resolution. These total scores were subsequently classified into three distinct levels. A summary of responses found in table 1.

Table 1 Levels of Grief Resolution

Grief Resolution	Frequency	Percentage	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low Level	80	24.4	6	30	20.33	6.099
Moderate Level	71			21.6		
High Level	177			54.0		
Total	328			100.0		

As shown on table 1, the majority of the participants (54%) had a high level of grief resolution, 24.4% had a low level of grief resolution and 21.6% had a moderate level of grief resolution. The minimum score attained was 6, while the maximum score attained was 30. The mean score attained was 20.33 (SD = 6.099), indicating that on average, the participants had a moderate level of grief resolution.

Effect of mourning rituals on grief resolution process

Linear regression was used to assess how mourning rituals impacted the process of resolving grief. The analysis was used to test the hypothesis that mourning rituals have no statistical significance effect on individual’s grief resolution process. The summary of the analysis is presented on table 2.

Table 2 *Effect of Mourning Rituals on Grief Resolution Process Regression Coefficient^a*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound

1	(Constant)	7.334	1.064	.574	6.897	.000	5.242	9.427
	Mourning rituals	.320	.025		12.653	.000	.270	.370
a. Dependent Variable: Grief resolution								

The results presented in Table 2 established that mourning rituals had a positive impact on grief resolution ($\beta=0.320$, $p=0.000$). This relationship was deemed significant as the p-value was below the chosen level of significance (0.05). This indicates that a one-unit increase in the practice of mourning rituals correlates with a 0.320 increase in the level of grief resolution. As per these findings, the null hypothesis, which proposed that mourning rituals have no statistically significant impact on an individual's grief resolution process, was rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. These findings imply that mourning rituals performed by the Luhya people in Busia County helped the bereaved achieve grief resolution. These findings can be supported by the findings of other researchers who have conducted similar studies in other places and found that mourning rituals to be beneficial in achieving grief resolution. Zhang and Jia (2018) conducted a study that explored the influence of familism culture on the grief experienced by shiduers, parents who have lost their only child. They identified three levels of impact: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. The study revealed that the relationships with the deceased child, other relatives, and individuals who shared a similar fate played a supportive role in the grief process. In another study, Nwosu and colleagues (2017) examined the cultural foundations of death, grief, and mourning within the Igbo community of Nigeria. Their research highlighted the interconnectedness of death, grief, and culture, as death initiated the experience of grief, while cultural mourning practices assisted the bereaved in coping with the loss of a loved one. Additionally, Ngesa and associates (2020) evaluated whether exposure to the intense Luo cultural burial practices could predispose a grieving child to develop complicated grief. Their findings concluded that the Luo burial rites did not make bereaved children susceptible to maladaptive grief. Instead, participants had psychologically adapted to these rituals, which ultimately enhanced their grieving process. These findings imply that when the mourning rituals are performed correctly, they enhance grief resolution and hence their importance to the bereaved families.

IV. Conclusion

The study concluded that the mourning rituals had positive psychological effects on the mourners or the deceased's loved ones. These findings mean that the mourning rituals are essential to Luhya people in Busia County as it helps them not only cope with the grief but also accept the loss of a loved one.

V. Recommendation

The findings of the study have shown that the application of mourning rituals is important in the process of grief resolution. This study therefore recommends that the community solely practice the rituals that uphold the dignity of the bereaved family and enhances their grief resolution hence do away with rituals that burden and overwhelm the loved ones of the deceased. The study further recommends that those given the mandate to perform mourning rituals by the community must collaborate with other stakeholders in the community like religious leaders to ensure that all rituals are in line with the needs of the family.

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